

How can I support my teen while he learns online?

PARENT TIP SHEET

Whether your teen has been learning online for a while or has adjusted to a hybrid schedule, he may be struggling with current or changing expectations. Here are a few tips to help support your teen.

Tip 1: Set up an organized workspace.

When they're in school, middle and high school students often work at an assigned desk that is only large enough to fit an open textbook. Keep it simple! Your teen's workspace doesn't need to be picture-perfect.



Say This

- "Let's create a new workspace to help you focus while you learn online."
- "How can we organize your workspace so you can keep track of your assignments?"



Do This

- Encourage your teen to help set up the new workspace. If he can add a personal touch, he may feel more invested in his workspace.
- Small kitchen table? No problem! Separate his workspace from other children or family members using binders, cereal boxes, or even house plants.



Check This

- Is the new workspace helping? Can he easily find his notebook? Does he have trouble finding a pencil?
- If your teen has trouble sitting or working at a table for hours, let him sit on the couch or work while standing. You can also let him use headphones to limit distractions from outside noises, pets, or other family members learning or working from home.

Tip 2: Help your teen with time-management.

Unlike the typical seven hours of daily structured face-to-face instruction, your teen's virtual school day most likely includes a mix of virtual instruction, independent learning, and teacher office hours. With less structured time "in class" and more time to complete work independently, focusing on time management skills is key.



Say This

- "Let's make a schedule of what you need to do (each day, each week)."
- "Make sure you schedule time to complete each assignment. For example, schedule time to read chapters 1–2 on Tuesday from 3:00 pm–4:00 pm."

"Zoom fatigue" is real! If your teen seems irritable or just "can't attend another Zoom class," encourage him to take a break between classes. Listening to music, drawing, or even taking a walk are great ways to re-energize his mind after long hours of screen time.



Do This

- Help your teen create a to-do list of his assignments by due date or order of importance.
- Teach your teen to break down bigger tasks. Even though a project isn't due until the end of the quarter, scheduling time to work on it each week will help make sure he doesn't leave anything for the last minute.



Check This

- Check your child's schedule and to-do lists frequently.
- Point out ways he can improve his time-management (e.g., highlight assignments that are due the next day, set reminders on his phone in case he forgets to look at his schedule).

Tip 3: Talk to your teen.

During such an uncertain and stressful year, it's easy to forget how important it is to sit down and talk with your teen. In addition to having school-related conversations (e.g., about assignments, tests, grades), it is important to talk to him about his feelings, needs, and worries during this time.



Say This

- "How are you feeling about school? What can I do to support you?"
- "Your teacher said you had some missing assignments. What's going on?"



Do This

- Let your child ask questions. Maybe he's worried about falling behind in his classes. Maybe he's anxious about rising COVID cases in the area. You might not have all the answers, but it's important that he knows you're there to listen and support him.
- Be gentle. If your teen feels overwhelmed, remind him that this won't last forever. Encourage him to find the good in each day!

Remember to be positive. Praise your teen for working hard on schoolwork. Remind him how proud you are!



Check This

- Set up a time to check in with your child each day. Even if it's just a 5–10 minute chat.
- If you find that your teen has a hard time communicating his thoughts and feelings out loud, encourage him to write them down in a notebook or type them in a text.

References

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3. Jargon, J. (2020). *How to motivate teens struggling with remote school*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-to-motivate-teens-struggling-with-remote-school-11607432420>