

10 ways to create routines in learning at home

Your child's school is now closed and all learning is online. Suddenly you have been thrust into the role of teacher helping your child engage in virtual learning. You have no experience of it and it can be frustrating. It's a big change for them and a big one for you. It may start as fun and a something of a novelty but that is unlikely to last. You are in it for the long haul. How do you stay sane?

Make it clear from the start that they won't have to work as long.

It's hard to sustain a full day of engagement. Remind yourself and your child that learning comes in many forms and that just talking and playing games is a form of learning. So maybe just the morning doing formal school work and more informal activities after lunch.

Keep a routine for getting up, breakfast and starting work.

Most children learn best in the mornings so make the most of that productive time. Keep to the routine you had when they were in school and instead of heading out to school start work at home. It's tempting to go for an extra lie in but avoid it.

Clear a space before starting work.

We need to show that children are entering a 'school' space and that their attitude and behaviour – and yours - is going to reflect that. If you have a space that can become the 'school room' then that is ideal but more likely this will be the kitchen table.

Help them get started.

Rather than helping them download the material from schools and then saying, "OK off you go, I will be back in an hour to check on you", instead take five minutes to make sure they understand the lesson or task and can get started. You'll be interrupted less this way.

Make sure they have everything they are going to need.

When teachers are trying to make activities interesting they often ask children to do practical tasks. This may involve drawing. It helps to have paper, pencils, felt tips, safe scissors etc. There's nothing more annoying that a constant stream of requests for things.

Build in time for breaks.

If your child is older, especially if they've started secondary school, you can challenge their lack of motivation by highlighting the importance of working hard. They need reminding that the work they're doing now is preparing them for future success, and that it's worth putting in the effort now.

Show an interest in what they are doing.

Children are not used to working alone. You'll need to judge when they cannot do more but you can extend the point at which that occurs by showing an interest in what they're doing. If you helped them get started, when you in check ask them some questions.

Celebrate effort rather than achievement.

This is always better for the child. If your child struggles to motivate themselves, it can be tempting to offer incentives. The problem with bribery is that it creates a mentality where children are just looking for what they have to do to "win the game". It's better to reward effort.

Build in rewards but keep down the sugar.

We all like to have a reward when we have done our work and stayed on task. Little rewards can make a big difference but do avoid too many rewards that involve sugar, for example, sweet and biscuits. Otherwise they will be 'bouncing off the walls'

Share the burden with someone else if you can.

If you have a partner, it's likely that you're both working from home. Rather than both of you being half available, decide who is supervising the children over a given period of time and take it in turns. Employers know they need to be flexible in these extraordinary circumstances.

Finally, show them some love.

At the end of the 'school' day and also during it keep showing that you love them. It's a tough time for everyone and tempers may fray. It's understandable but in the end a child needs to have the reassurance of knowing that they are loved so – show them some love.