

ONLINE LEARNING TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR



Many of the nation's largest school districts plan to begin the fall semester online-only. Studies show that in online learning, parents often take on the role of a teacher. Making school a priority will help keep kids from treating online learning as a vacation.

Research suggests that some types of parental participation has a greater impact on children's academic achievement than others. Here are some tips for you and your kids to help make online learning enjoyable and stress-free!

Reduce distractions

A report in 2016 found that students spent about one-fifth of class time on laptops, smartphones and tablets, knowing that doing so could harm their grades. They check these devices for "non-class purposes" 11.43 times a day on average. It might be a good idea to limit the use of these devices until the schoolwork is done. Some students may need an adult to help keep them focused.

Brain breaks for online learning

It may be hard for some kids to sit through an entire class. Some children might need more frequent breaks than others. Include "brain breaks" in between learning. A young child may need a quick break after staying on a task for 5 to 25 minutes, said Linda Carling, an associate research scientist at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education Center for Technology in Education.

One way to give your child a "brain break" is by encouraging physical activities. Repeated physical activity during school can improve children's attention. Exercise is one of the best ways to reduce stress and prevent anxiety. Additionally, you may consider having the computer on a raised surface, as some children focus better on tasks when standing.

Time management tips

Having a consistent schedule for schoolwork will allow parents to plan the workday and let students more easily transition in and out of school time. Research shows that students who have higher GPAs are usually better at time management. Try to build as much structure and consistency as possible, setting times for meals, schoolwork and other activities.

Try to get children on the same schedule they had when they were going to school. That means the same wake-up time. Have kids start schoolwork at the same hour they used to start classes.

Every kid is unique and it's important to find out what works best for your child. Set some time a few days into the semester to observe your child and figure out the optimal length of learning sessions, the times that they are most engaged, and what helps them maintain focus.

Try to maintain a planner to keep track of all school activities and homework. For some children, a basic visual checklist of tasks will help keep them focused. It allows them to see the full scope of what they have to accomplish and what steps to take.

Provide positive feedback

Many children miss receiving reinforcement and reassurance from teachers and counselors. Building a reward system can help maintain motivation. After kids complete a task or finish a class, consider praising them.

Putting a check mark, star or sticker on a work assignment

can go a long way to encourage a kid. Other options that may work well with younger kids are giving a sweet treat, allowing playtime with a favorite toy or an extra 15 minutes to play before bedtime. For high schoolers, watching a movie or getting extra tablet time might be a good reward.

Be flexible

You may need to adjust your schedule as you go. If some class activities or subjects are more difficult, consider setting aside another time to work on that assignment. Try working with your children on more challenging tasks during the times of the day when they are most alert and engaged. Encourage your child to continue working on the things that come more easily when you are not readily available. It's helpful to share with the teacher what works best for you and your child.

Reach out to your child's teacher

Maintain consistent dialogue with your kids' teachers. Carling recommends setting up a day and time each week to connect. Difficulties with schoolwork and technology challenges are some of the reasons to contact the teacher.

A lack of communication with the parent can be challenging for a teacher, particularly in the online learning environment. Being proactive is essential if your child is struggling in school. If your student has difficulties meeting deadlines and you can work with your child only during the weekends, the first thing to do is get in touch with the teacher.

Kids with special needs

The worst consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are experienced by the most vulnerable students, such as children who require an individualized education program (IEP), Carling points out. The first thing parents need to do is to meet with an IEP team and discuss what strategies and tools the school can put into place to support students in virtual learning. Work with your child's teachers to identify and remove any learning barriers.

Many children may need more support during classes. Carling recommends starting with smaller amounts of time for an activity. Reward the child for his or her accomplishments, then gradually increase the duration of learning sessions.

Cybersecurity for online learning

Make the space where your child learns and grows as safe as possible – including the technology they use! One way to ensure that your kiddo is safe is to install or update your antivirus software. Many people are not aware of the benefits of antivirus software, and a cyberattack on your computer could be prevented because of your software.

Another thing to keep in mind is to avoid using public Wi-Fi. Many fraudsters can garner information from your computer if it's connected to a public Wi-Fi point, putting the technology that your child uses and your personal information at risk. If you are doing online learning, connecting to a password protected Wi-Fi is best.

Every student is unique and it's important to find out what works best for your child. Here at Blackhawk Bank, we want to make sure that you and your family have an enjoyable school year. Want to learn more about Blackhawk Bank? Contact us today!

Excerpted from:

Karina Zaiets and Janet Loehrke, USA TODAY