


# 8 Home-schooling Strategies for Parents and Caregivers

University of Missouri

 Center for Evidence-Based Youth Mental Health  
Psychological Services Clinic  
*Turning Evidence-Based Practice into Everyday Practice*

 Missouri Prevention  
Science Institute  
University of Missouri

## Home-schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic

As schools across the country remain closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parents and caregivers are now faced with the task of supporting their children's learning at home. Home-schooling can be an especially difficult task as families balance childcare, work, and self-care. Schools also vary widely in what sorts of learning activities, resources, and supports they are offering. As parents figure out how to best support their children's learning in the face of ever-evolving changes to daily life, we provide the following 8 home-schooling tips, strategies, and resources for parents.

### 1. Familiarize yourself with your school's learning plan

A key first step to effective home-schooling is to familiarize yourself with your school's learning plan. A school's learning plan will help to provide guidance on distance/online learning activities that children are expected to complete while schools are closed. As a parent, you can learn about your school's specific learning plan through your school's website, communicating with administrators or teachers, and/or by reviewing materials sent home with your children.

### 2. Access necessary resources and support

School learning plans may vary in terms of what sort of learning activities, resources, and supports they offer to families during this time. Your school's learning plan may require that you have internet access and/or certain technology (e.g., laptops, tablets). If access is unavailable and not provided by your school or community, schoolclosures.org has created a [free hotline](#) parents can call or email, in addition to information on [how to get a free tablet or computer](#), [free internet access](#), and [technological support resources for distance learning](#).

### 3. Dedicate space and time to learning

Children may feel that the current break from school is similar to a typical school break or summer vacation. By providing structured time and space for learning, you can help your children see that schoolwork is still a priority during this time. In particular, it is important to have one or two designated spaces for learning in your home. Creating a designated learning space helps maintain kids focus and provides a place for relevant learning supplies. Similarly, it's good to establish a schedule with dedicated learning time each day. Schedules should be more general and flexible than typical school routines that are full of structured coursework, transition times, lunch, recess, and other activities. Two to four hours of academic work is a good goal to shoot for within a home-school schedule. See [example schedules](#) provided by the Khan Academy.

### 4. Support academics through online learning programs

In addition to resources provided to you as part of your school's learning plan, there are a number of free resources available online. Programs such as [Khan Academy](#), [CK-12](#), [Scholastic](#)



[learn-at-home](#), and the [PBS Learning Network](#) offer a variety of instructional videos, interactives, and lesson plans students can complete during school closures. [The Colorado Department of Education](#) has also created a comprehensive list of resources for learning at home organized by categories such as age (e.g., early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school) and school subject (e.g., general education, science, mathematics, computer science, etc.).

### **5. Create a variety of learning opportunities for you children.**

Beyond traditional schoolwork, children’s learning can also be supported through a number of different activities and methods. Providing a variety of activities will also help to keep children occupied as parents work from home. For example, a number of educational and entertaining podcasts for children are available, including [Animal Safari](#), [WOW in the World](#), [Brains On!](#), and [Story Pirates](#). [Audible has also created a free website](#) for children to stream a large collection of stories spanning across six different languages. Many popular children’s authors are also offering [free daily read-alouds](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **6. Incorporate physical activity**

As kids are being kept indoors more than usual, be sure to allow opportunities for physical activity throughout the day. Being physically active is an essential part of child health and wellbeing. Physical activity can be incorporated into your child’s day in a number of ways, including creating assignments for your children to do in the backyard, going to a local park as a family, walking around your neighborhood block, or interacting with online programs aimed at getting kids moving. For example, the [Kidz Bop YouTube channel](#) has dance-along videos, [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#) has free yoga resources for children, and [Go Noodle](#) has many short videos focused on getting kids active.

### **7. Provide opportunities for safe social interactions**

Being away from friends, extended family members, and social activities can be especially difficult for children. As a parent, it is important to consider how you can help kids connect with others while also maintaining appropriate social distancing. To help, parents can setup virtual playdates with FaceTime, Skype, or Zoom. Also consider ways in which you can create more opportunities for social interactions between you and your child. For instance, you can participate with your child in activities around your home such as cooking, watching movies/TV together, playing games, creating crafts, gardening, or drawing. Depending on your school’s learning plan, you may also be able to have children participate in learning activities together using remote learning (e.g., creating a project together, participating in lessons at the same time).

### **8. Be forgiving with your child and yourself**

As a parent, children look to you for reassurance and guidance during times of uncertainty. That said, it is okay to recognize that this is also an uncertain and challenging time. Being honest, creating an opening dialogue, and problem-solving with your children as problems arise, are incredibly important during this time. It’s also important to recognize that home-schooling may be a difficult task for you and your child. Children are used to a particular structure at school, and it is important to recognize that you won’t be able to completely replicate school at home. Acknowledge that your home-schooling schedule and expectations may vary from day to day and know that it’s okay if you and your child take a break some days. Be forgiving and flexible with yourself and your child through your homeschooling efforts, and recognize that, above all, keeping your family safe and healthy is most important,

