



## GUIDANCE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

### Tools to Teach: Helpful Tips for Parents

Everyone is involved in the efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to provide support to children while school buildings are closed and typical instruction is on hold.

As parents/guardians, you may be feeling overwhelmed with the thought of becoming a teacher for your children. Even if you have many resources for curriculum (the “what”), you may be struggling with knowing the best way to present the information (the “how”). These basic tips will help you successfully support and teach your children during these challenging times. These tips (the “how”) can be used with any [learning materials](#) (the “what”), in any setting, and are sufficient to support your children until they can access more traditional learning methods.

#### Meet the Needs of Your Family First

- Before focusing on instruction of academics, make sure that your family’s basic needs are met, that you are safe, and that you are talking to your children and providing them with caring support.
- Answer questions and [talk to children](#) in a developmentally appropriate manner about the changes happening around them.
- Try to stay calm, be honest and supportive, listen to your family, and reassure them to ensure safety and security. It is ok to answer questions with, *“I don’t know, but adults know about your concerns and are working hard to figure out how to answer them.”*

#### Supporting Your Children’s Learning At Home

**Remember that supporting your students at home is not the same as “home-schooling” your children.** It is not feasible or appropriate for you to expect yourself or your children to replicate eight hours of school, across multiple subjects, following a traditional school schedule. Follow the [Oklahoma State Department of Education](#) and/or your district’s guidelines for recommended times for instruction each day.

#### Connections Before Content: Relationships Are Key

**Relationships are key – prioritize connections before content.** The best public school teachers know that the greatest learning takes place when students feel safe and connected to the adults around them. Engage in non-academic activities that build positive feelings between you and your children first. This will enable them to gain maximum benefit during structured “learning time”. These are also great opportunities for incidental learning.



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### Connections Before Content: Incidental Learning

These are some ideas to connect with your children and promote learning opportunities from everyday activities.

- Go on walks
- Engage in virtual events: Take virtual tours of museums, national parks, and galleries as a family.
- Engage in your child's favorite extra-curricular activity from school (e.g., have your child give you a private flute concert or have "PE" while shooting hoops with your children).
- Play board games or video games together.
- Read books or magazines together (hint: reading any material together is a fantastic opportunity for learning.)
- Allow students to interact with friends, teachers, and other important people virtually or on the phone to maintain and build social skills.

**Any activity that your family enjoys doing together can promote learning!**

### Creating A Learning Environment

Create a supportive environment for "Learning Time." When engaging in more structured curricular activities, try to do the following to create an area in your home that will support learning. It does not need to be perfect, but the following will help your children recognize the difference between structured "Learning Time" and other activities.

- Create a specific work space for Learning Time. This can be a child's desk or table, the kitchen table (when not in use for meals), a corner of a room, or any place that is set aside specifically for structured Learning Time. When possible, avoid spaces that are used for relaxation or fun (e.g., bedrooms are for sleep, play rooms are for play).
- Create a specific time for Learning Time. Be as consistent as you can and communicate the schedule to your children. For example, you might say, "*Learning Time will be right after Dad gets home from work, from 6:00-6:30.*" For older students, have them commit and be ready to monitor their learning time at specific times each day. Posting the schedule at a highly visible place will serve as a great reminder for all children and caregivers. When life is not normal, routine is key.
- Allow for frequent breaks and be flexible if learning plans change.
- Make sure that materials are ready to be used at the work space. Pencils, papers, work packets, computers, and other supplies should be ready to go at the designated work space.



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### Teaching Strategy: I Do, We Do, You Do

**Use an *I Do, We Do, You Do* learning approach.** One of the best learning techniques is a very simple one- whether you are teaching letters or physics. It is an appropriate learning strategy for any content area or skill, including academics, behavior, or functional life skills. Choose key ideas from a lesson (from curriculum or from a life lesson that occurs naturally throughout the day). In the *I Do, We Do, You Do* learning approach, use the following steps:

- **I Do** = Model the skill or behavior that you want your child to engage in. You can start with, “Watch me [do these math problems; read this sentence; measure the flour].”
- **We Do** = The caregiver and the child should engage in the skill or behavior at the same time, together, or side by side. This is the perfect place to provide positive feedback. This step can be repeated as necessary.
- **You Do** = Your child shows you that they can complete the step independently. Allow them to show you the skill 2-3 times, then praise them for their work.

**This strategy can be used to teach material of any kind.**

### Teaching Strategy: Using Questions

**Use questions to teach.** Children often learn best when teachers ask them questions to reflect. This will help you know how well your child has mastered concepts, encourage them to look for answers, and indicate additional resources you may need or questions to ask teachers. Questions can be asked during any curricular or daily activity.

Types of Questions to Ask:

- **Questions to search for information.** (e.g., “Where could we look to find out how to answer that question?”; “What did the character do in the last chapter?”)
- **Questions to analyze for understanding.** (e.g., “What is the answer to number 3 on your work packet?”; “What animals are nocturnal?”; “Why do you think we turn the oven to that temperature for baking cookies?”)
- **Questions that lead to feelings.** (e.g., “What do you think the character is feeling?”; “Are you excited to learn to ride a bike?”; “How do you think teachers feel about not having school?”)
- **Questions that encourage application.** (e.g., “What kind of table could we make to classify this information?”; “Which wrench do you think we should use?”; “Why do you think this is important?”; “How does this fit with what we talked about before?”)
- **Reciprocal questions.** Have children come up with their own questions on a lesson or concept. (e.g., “What questions do you have about plants?”; “What would you like to know about this book?”; “Which parts do you think will be the hardest?”)



### Other Tools to Teach Tips

- **Have older students teach younger students.** Teaching *is* learning. For families with multiple children, it is appropriate for older children to occasionally help younger siblings learn content. This is beneficial for all children. Teach older children the “*I Do, We Do, You Do*” approach. This frees up caregiver time, allows for important learning opportunities for children, and builds positive relationships within families.
- **Teach from day to day experiences.** Every day activities are amazing opportunities to learn. Not all lessons need to be structured or come from formal lesson plans. Cooking, budgeting for a new pet or household item, household chores, playing games, using kind words for conflict resolution, and completing other family tasks can easily incorporate reading, math, science, research, social skills, and even advanced subjects like chemistry. Look for ways to use *I Do, We Do, You Do* and *Using Questions* in real-life learning opportunities.
- **Touch base with your children’s teachers.** They can help to clarify content, give academic guidance and resources. Have children write letters and/ or allow them virtual space to interact with teachers and classmates whenever possible.
- **Do not be overwhelmed.** Choose a few things to focus on each day and celebrate every learning accomplishment, no matter how small.
- **Prioritize family engagement over structured learning time.** For example, pick playing a game over arguing about completing an assignment.
- **Take time to breathe and engage in your own [self care](#).** We are all learning in this new and uncertain time. Make sure you are caring for yourself as a caregiver.

### References and Contact Information

For Questions or Concerns, contact the [OSDE Office of Student Support](#)

- [Evidence-Based Teaching](#)
- [Intervention Central](#)
- [Oklahoma State Department of Education Distance Learning Website](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists, COVID-19 Resource Center](#)

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