

COVID-19: Tips for Elementary School Families

Families across the country are coping with unprecedented events as the nation takes steps to manage the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Millions of students are home from school, and families are wondering how to keep their children healthy and learning. Here are some tips from our education experts.

Talk with your child

- **Speak calmly.** Your calmness will help your child be calm. Find out what your child knows about what is going on.
- **Tell your child the truth,** but leave out unnecessary information that may increase anxiety. Let your child know you will always try to answer questions. You can find facts about COVID-19 at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.
- **Listen to your child's feelings.** Some children may be afraid. Some may be disappointed about missing cancelled activities. Say that it is OK to feel that way, and say that you will cope with this together.
- **Reassure your child.** Explain that by following instructions, like washing hands thoroughly and practicing social distancing, your family is taking action to keep yourselves and others safe.



- **Reduce background noise.** Noisy environments can contribute to anxiety. Turn off TVs, radios, etc. when not in use. Create a quiet, cozy corner where your child can unwind.
- **Create routines.** A daily routine for waking, eating, learning, playing and sleeping helps your child maintain a sense of order.
- **Find ways to exercise.** Physical activity is a great stress reliever, and it is a great way to spend time together as a family. Have a family jump rope contest; work out to an exercise video; walk 10 times up and down the stairs; put on favorite music and dance; even do some spring cleaning together.

Support learning at home

Relieve your child's anxiety

- **Limit your child's access** to the news.
- **Share positive information,** such as the increasing numbers of people who are recovering from the virus and the wonderful acts of kindness occurring all over the world.
- **Give your child** a daily responsibility to carry out.
- **Establish a family reading time.**
- **Designate a study area,** and a daily time for learning.
- **Set limits** on recreational screen time.
- **Ask your child** open-ended questions that promote thinking: What if people had no hands? What ways can you think of to make learning more fun?

- **Help your child** draw maps. Let your child hide something and draw a map for you to find it.
- **Play listening games**, like Simon Says.
- **Give your child** step-by-step instructions. Gradually increase the number of steps.
- **Get out old clothes** for costumes and act out favorite stories.
- **Go on a virtual field trip.** A quick search online will turn up countless free trips you can take with your child.

Strengthen reading skills

- **Take turns reading aloud.** First you read, then let your child read to you. Ask older children to read to younger ones.
- **Discuss the reading.** Talk about the plot and the characters and your child's reactions to them.
- **Label household items** with their names. Ask your child to spell the words, then check the label to verify.
- **Challenge your child** to find letters or words on boxes, cans of food or household supplies. (For example, find three words that start with "ch.")
- **Make a book.** Have your child write or dictate the text and draw the pictures.

Have fun with math

- **Play Math Concentration.** Write a math term on an index card. Write its definition on another card. Repeat until you have several pairs. Then deal

out five or six pairs of cards face down. Your child can only turn over two cards at a time. The goal is to make a match by turning over a math term and its correct definition.

- **Play Find the Missing Math Symbol.** Write four equations, such as $4*5 = 20$, $4*5 = 9$, $5*4 = 1$ and $8*2 = 4$. Tell your child to replace each asterisk with the correct symbol. Your child must figure out whether the two numbers need to be multiplied, added, subtracted or divided to get the right answer.
- **Play Math Fact War.** Remove all the jokers and face cards from a pack of cards. Now deal out cards—half to you, half to your child. To play, each of you turn over two cards. Add your cards together, and have your child add his or hers together. The person with the highest sum takes all four cards. Continue through the deck. The one with the most cards at the end is the winner. The game also works if your child is learning the times tables. Just multiply instead of adding.

Stay connected

- **Help your child** keep in touch with classmates, friends and family through phone calls, video chat, or social media.
- **Encourage your child** to write letters or draw pictures and send them to friends and family.
- **Decorate** your driveway or walk with inspirational messages and pictures for neighbors to see.