



**COVID-19 RESPONSE**  
Back to School

# Prepare Your Home

One of the most feared and dreaded parts of going back to school for many parents and students is homework.

With the spread of COVID-19 without a cure, most school districts around the country have closed their facilities students. Instead of going to school, your children will have to learn at home. Your children may think being at home is an extended break from school. A good way to prepare the house and your student for getting back into a school mindset is to prepare a part of your home as a designated homework area for students.

Homework can be stressful and time-consuming. A quiet part of the house in which a student can do homework can make all the difference in attitude and work pace. Remove distractions from the area that will take your child's attention away from their school work and homework.

## CREATE A SHELF

As school progresses, papers and graded work can clutter in your child's backpack and folders. Your student can keep and save most of these papers to study for future tests or to help on homework down the road.

Your student will have various books that they may not need to use for school every day that can create clutter in



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their room. One simple way to help keep your home and your student's backpack clutter free is to create a shelf or space in your home where your children can keep those extra papers and books.

A weekly to monthly cleaning out will help to declutter and get rid of papers your child will not need.

## ENCOURAGING STUDENTS

Homework can be a stressful time for some students, so make it clear that it is important for your children that they do their best.

Encourage them, show interest and praise students for the work they do. If your child is showing signs of strug-

gle when doing homework, contact your child's teacher to evaluate what could be done to help them.

Here are some ways you can help your child create some good study habits and prepare them to take on homework, according to [understood.org](https://www.understood.org).

- Help your child identify distractions.

- Teach your child how to create an effective study space.

- Keep track of your child's strengths.

- Work with your child's weaknesses.

- Start making checklists with your child.

- Help your child prioritize.

- Teach your child specific study skills.

# More Frequent Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is important to teach and practice with your children coming into this upcoming school year.

Practicing more frequent and thorough hand-washing will protect your child and other students from getting sick and spreading germs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shares information and tips on when, where and how frequently to wash your hands.

## WHEN TO WASH

According to the CDC, hand-washing is one of the best and simplest ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. To protect your family from germs, first you will need to understand how germs spread.

The CDC says germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you:

- Touch your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Prepare or eat food and drinks with unwashed hands.
- Touch a contaminated surface or object.
- Blow your nose, cough or sneeze into your hands before touching other people's hands or common objects.

Washing your hands is simple and an effective way to stop the spread of germs. Teaching your family to keep their hands clean is a simple way to make sure they protect themselves



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and others around them from the spread of germs.

## HOW TO WASH

In addition, the CDC reports there are five easy steps to washing your hands the right way that you can teach and practice with your family.

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap and apply soap.

- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.

- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Use your phone or hum the “happy birthday” song from beginning to end twice.

- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.

- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

It is very difficult for your children to wash their hands at school as frequently as they can when they are home. If water isn't ready available for them at school, pack their backpacks with a 60% alcohol hand sanitizer. If they aren't able to get to a bathroom, a sanitizer is the second best

thing.

Although sanitizers do kill germs and keep your hands clean, the CDC advises people to know they do not get rid of all types of germs and they are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy. Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands such as pesticides and heavy metals.

# Organize Your Backpack

One of the most overlooked and simplest ways to prepare for school is to organize your backpack and your supplies.

Your children may not be able to go to school due to COVID-19, being organized is one of the few things that can help clear your head and can affect how stressed you feel. As school progresses, your backpack can easily clutter and become more foe than friend.

Choosing a backpack that fits the need of your child is just as important as the organization. Helping your child find their ideal backpack will be another way to help them prepare for school this upcoming year.

Here are some things to look for when choosing and organizing the right backpack for your child.

## CHOOSE A BACKPACK THAT FITS

Even though your students are schooling from home, a good backpack is still an essential item that can help them remain organized and focused. There are many types of backpacks that have different styles of compartments and uses. There are all types and sizes of backpacks such as camping backpacks that are built with many zippers for pencils and pens and miscel-



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laneous school supplies.

Does your child's school supply them with an iPad or other type of technology? There are backpacks with compartments for laptops and iPads.

Does your child play a sport? There are backpacks such as duffelbags that are big enough to carry their cleats and other equipment along with school supplies.

Take time to talk to your child about the kind of backpack that meets their school and after-school program needs.

## UTILIZE POCKETS

Does your child like a backpack with tons of pockets and compartments? Do they carry plenty of pencils and miscellaneous objects like a lunch and laptop? The best way to organize the pockets of your backpack is to completely empty the bag and organize the items that will fill the bag into organized piles.

Only allow your child to place essential day-to-day items in their bag. Find and assign a place for each item. Along with teaching and practicing everyday actions to pre-

vent the spread of germs, there are a few items that should be essential for your students to have with them, according to the CDC:

- 60% alcohol hand sanitizer.
- Cloth face mask to protect them and others from coughs and sneezes.
- Disinfectant cloths so that your children are able to clean and disinfect laptops, desks, books and other items.

If your child will be around various students, it is crucial that they keep those tips in mind to protect themselves

and others.

## KEEPING THE BAG CLEAN

As the school year passes by, the bag will clutter with assignments and other objects that your child will gather throughout the year.

To keep the backpack from turning into a cluttered mess, assign weekly to monthly clean-out sessions that will allow your child to reorganize the bag. Give your child a folder that they can fill with papers from school to keep at home so the bag does not clutter with unnecessary papers.

# Identifying COVID-19

With the uncertainty during the global COVID-19 pandemic comes the possibility for children to catch the disease from people they encounter, even if they are taking classes at home.

COVID-19 can spread quickly if you do not know how to identify the symptoms, when to seek help and how to care for others if they have contracted the disease. It is important to teach your family how to identify the symptoms for the novel coronavirus.

COVID-19 has a wide variety of symptoms ranging from mild to severe illness. It is important to know that anyone can have symptoms or can carry COVID-19 without even realizing they have it. Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure.

Here are symptoms people with COVID-19 may have, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell.

The CDC reports that these are not all the possible symptoms. Other less common symptoms have been reported, including gastrointestinal



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effects such as nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease or diabetes are at higher risk for developing

more serious complications.

## WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If you suspect that you, your child or another family member has COVID-19, the CDC encourages you keep track of

the symptoms and look for emergency signs. If someone is showing emergency signs, seek emergency medical care. Here are those emergency signs, according to the CDC: trouble breathing, persistent

pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, and bluish lips or face.

If you or your child shows any emergency signs or symptoms, call 911 or call your local emergency facility immediately.

## STAY HOME IF YOU'RE SICK

If someone in your family has contracted COVID-19, there are precautions you will need to take to protect your family and others from the spread of germs. The CDC shares a list of precautionary steps to take:

- Continue to practice everyday preventive actions.
- Keep the ill person in a room away from the rest of the household members, follow recommended precautions and monitor your own health.
- Keep surfaces disinfected.
- Avoid sharing personal items with the ill person.
- If you become sick, stay in contact with others by phone or email.
- Stay informed about the local outbreak situation.
- Contact your child's school to let them know that you or a family member has contracted COVID-19.

These are all preventative, cautionary steps to take that will prevent the spread of germs. If you or your family member contracts COVID-19, all members of the family should enter a quarantine period of 14 days, the CDC recommends.

# Creating an Escape

COVID-19 has affected the lives of many people. School and work from home can be stressful for everyone in the household. It is important that your family can escape the events going on in the world to have fun with one another.

As school progresses, homework may become overwhelming and stressful for your students. Remember that you control their hours while they are home. It is OK for you to give your children a little more time to sleep in or a longer lunch break.

While school is important, the mental state of your children is just as important. Creating an escape from school and the events of the world to let them get away can help to relax their minds.

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE INTERNET

The internet has an extensive amount of data and information. Find what your child's interest or hobbies are and explore online resources that will allow them to work on those hobbies.

Websites such as YouTube have many how-to-do videos. You can find various videos about gardening, building



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items, learning instruments, cooking and more. Screen time is important, but there also are many fun learning websites, documentaries and movies that can teach your child important life lessons.

There are other websites that contain downloadable PDFs on topics and hobbies your child might want to pursue. Supporting your child's hobbies and helping them explore their options is important.

## CHASING PASSION PROJECTS

One of the advantages of being home is that your children may have more time to chase passion projects. These include skills or hobbies they may have wanted to get into but haven't had the time because of school and extracurricular activities.

YouTube contains various videos that can instruct your child on how to practice and

learn these hobbies. If your child is struggling to find an escape from school, encouraging them to begin a passion project can be their greatest asset during these difficult times.

## TEACHING LIFE SKILLS

Along with having the time to chase passion projects, this is also a good time to create and sharpen life skills that will help your child down the

road. Teaching and practicing things like cleaning, cooking, doing laundry and learning how to use hand tools can help your child find a hobby or prepare them for the road ahead.

Life will go on eventually, and taking advantage of being home will help them later. These life skills help build character and show them how to be more responsible. It's important to make sure your children understand they're not doing chores. They are building a foundation for their future lives.

## PLAYING OUTSIDE

Screen time and studying are very important while at home, but being outside and playing are just as important. Make sure your children get an appropriate amount of exercise each day. The CDC recommends that your child get about 60 minutes or more of physical activity a day.

Although it may sound like a lot, it's vital to their mental and physical health that they do. It is even more critical now that we are spending more time inside due to COVID-19. The CDC recommends making a physical activity part of your family's daily routine.

Activities such as walking, playing active games and playing with the dogs can all be effective. Taking your kids to places where they can be active like public parks, community baseball fields or basketball courts are all good ways to let your children freely be active.

# Create a Routine

The routine your children had during school slowly faded during the summer break. Now that physically attending school is questionable due to COVID-19 your children must spend time to create and get into a school routine that will allow them to get work done while learning from home.

## DAILY SCHEDULE

Attending school from home can feel like an extended vacation for your children. It's easy to be distracted by television, being at home and siblings. It's important that your student does well while attending online school from home so that they are not behind when school and life return to normal.

Time management when attending online school from home is crucial. Create a schedule for your kids to follow that will allow them to wake up at an appropriate time, attend online school and complete homework.

Plan lunch breaks and breaks for your children to relax a bit during school hours. It's important to make sure your kids stay in a school mindset.



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Remember that it is okay to be flexible with the hours. Giving your children a little more time to relax or sleep is OK as long as they are getting their work done.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HOMEWORK

Creating a time at home to get work done can help your children stay on track during this difficult period. The U.S Department of Education says homework can help children develop strong study habits and positive attitudes. According to ed.gov, home-

work helps students:

- Review and practice what they have covered in class.
- Prepare for class the next day.
- Learn to use resources, such as libraries, reference materials and websites.
- Explore subjects more fully than classroom time permits.
- Extend learning by applying skills they already have to new situations.
- Integrate their learning by applying different skills to a single task, such as book reports or science projects.

- Learn to manage time and meet deadlines.

## HELP WITH HOMEWORK

Parents can help their children with homework by setting a regular time and place for it that removes distractions that may interfere with their progress. The U.S Department of Education advises parents to provide supplies, identify resources and show interest in what your child is learning.

Remember that communication with teachers and counselors at their school is very important for helping

your child with homework. If your student is struggling at home, contact his teacher about online tutoring or work that can help your child sharpen their weaknesses.

## SLEEPING BETTER

The United States Department of Health and Human Services advises children to get plentiful sleep each night. Sleeping is not only about the number of hours you sleep, but more about the quality of sleep that is gained each night.

Placing yourself and your children on a sleep schedule will make it easier for your body to get good quality sleep. Here is a list of the recommended hours of sleep various age groups should get each night, according to the HHS:

- Most adults need seven to eight hours of good quality sleep on a regular schedule each night.
- Preschoolers need to sleep between 10 and 13 hours a day, including naps.
- School-aged children need nine to 12 hours of sleep each night.

- Teens need eight to 10 hours of sleep each night.

Staying on a consistent sleeping schedule can benefit the body in a variety of ways. Good quality sleep reduces stress, can help you maintain a healthy weight, think more clearly and do better in school and at work. Sleep can also lower your risk for serious health problems such as diabetes and heart disease.

# Talking to Kids about COVID-19

COVID-19 can be a very difficult topic to talk to your children about. It is important to help them understand what is going on in the world right now and why society is different than before the pandemic.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Your children may watch TV, listen to radio or read articles about COVID-19. It may be hard for them to understand what the virus is. They may have concerns for friends, family members or teachers.

Here is a guide to help adults have conversations about the coronavirus with their children and take preventative actions, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

## REMAIN CALM AND REASSURING

Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.

Children often mimic their parents' reactions and emotions. By remaining calm, you'll help your child see that disease is something to take seriously but not something they have to be fearful or anxious about.

## MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE

Make time to talk. Be sure children know they can come to you when they have questions.

This is good parenting advice any time, but it's especially important when children might be experiencing stress from the news they see about the public health crisis.



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## PAY ATTENTION

Watch closely what children see and hear on television, radio or online.

Reduce the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information can lead to stress.

It's important for children to have accurate information, but they also could possibly obsess over the continually changing news.

## PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION

Give information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the internet and social

media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.

It is important to know where the stories are coming from and if those sources are reliable.

## REDUCE THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Your children might find it odd that people all over the country aren't interacting with one another the same way.

Make sure your children understand that life is very different right now and there are extra precautions they need to take to protect themselves and other people.

Here is a list of topics you can speak to your child about regarding the pre-

vention of the spread of germs, according to the CDC:

- Do not touch your eyes, mouth or nose if you have not washed your hands.
- Remind children to wash hands as often as they can.
- Stay away from people who are coughing and sneezing.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- Discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help protect children and school staff. Increased hand-washing and cancellation of events or activities are all possible when students return to school.