



Covid-19 (Corona Virus): A Guide for Parents on supporting children and young people with daily routines while schools are closed

The Government has closed schools in order to slow down the spread of the Covid-19 virus and keep as many people as possible safe and well. We have been in this situation before, however if we follow the right advice we will get through this, and in time we will be proud of how we responded and worked together to support our country. This decision has impacted on all of our lives and changed everyone's daily routines.

Some children and young people may be coping well with [social/physical distancing](#) and completing school work at home whereas others may be struggling with these changes. There will be challenges in the weeks ahead as your child will miss their friends, school and their extra-curricular activities. There are things that can help you and your children to get through this challenging time.

During this time children and young people need your support to create new routines that will keep them busy and give them a sense of control of their lives. Routines and schedules are key to helping them through this unprecedented phase in their lives. By having a structured and predictable day they will feel more secure and reassured. Having these routines for your children can also help you manage if you are working from home at this time.

Children and young people can help themselves to get through this time by creating a [Plan for the Day](#) every evening for the day ahead, and they may need your help with this, particularly younger children. The [Plan for the Day](#) should include where possible:

- 1. Schoolwork**
- 2. Normal Daily Routines**
- 3. Physical Activities & Housework**
- 4. Social Activities**
- 5. Enjoyable/Creative Activities**

1. Schoolwork:

- Encourage your child to fully engage with the remote learning routine provided by their teacher(s).

- For post primary students it may be helpful if their schoolwork routine on weekdays mirrors the normal school day, as much as possible. Primary school children are usually engaged in 'active learning' when they are in school, which means that they move and change tasks frequently throughout the day. Break up the schoolwork routine with physical activities and creative/ enjoyable activities.
- Sticking to a full schoolwork timetable will not work for everyone. Insisting on one may lead to heightened stress and tension at home, particularly if you have a number of school-going children. Be flexible and sensible. What's important is that your child makes a good effort each day to complete some schoolwork.

- 2. Normal Daily Routines:** It's important to encourage your child to eat healthily, to drink lots of water and to take care of their personal hygiene.
- Taking exercise, showering, getting dressed and getting a good night's sleep should be included in their daily routine.
 - Having regular mealtimes as a family, as well as dividing up the day, is a valuable opportunity to connect with your children and allow them to air any worries or concerns.
 - It is important to keep to the normal bedtime routine. Encourage your child to go to bed and get up at the usual time during the week. Sleep is very important for our health and wellbeing and eight to twelve hours is recommended each night.
 - Help your child have a good night's sleep by asking them to leave their devices (phone/laptop/tablet) outside of their bedroom each night.
(Remind your child to discuss their plan with you to make sure access to the computer and access to the shower, work for everyone in the family.)

- 3. Physical activity & housework:** Physical activity is important for children and young people's health and wellbeing. Helping others makes us feel good and gives us a sense of purpose. Consider encouraging the following:
- Timetabling physical exercise into each day. Your child may already have an exercise routine or preferred physical activity. If they don't or are looking for something new, there are lots of ways to exercise (depending on the weather), for example, going for a walk or run/doing weights, following an exercise routine on line or by using an exercise App.
 - Your child may be spending more time in their bedroom so encourage them to take pride in their personal space by taking responsibility for how it looks, they can do this by, making their bed/vacuuming their room/ keeping their space clean and tidy.
 - Helping with the extra housework (empty and load the dishwasher/vacuum/ help with the shopping/cooking/washing & ironing/mow the lawn/wash & vacuum the car).
 - **Social activity:** Many young people are finding it hard to practice social/physical distancing from their friends. Encourage them to use

technology to stay in touch with friends. You can encourage other types of social contact by supporting them to:

- Telephone relatives, family or neighbours who may be lonely or live alone
- Spend time with the family watching TV together, playing board games/ making a jigsaw or helping with the housework
- Help a younger brother or sister with their schoolwork

4. Enjoyable/creative activities, should also be included in the *Plan for the Day*:

- Using the time to try something new. Technology/ YouTube can be helpful when learning something new.
- Encouraging your child to try a crossword, draw, paint, write or listen to music.
- Encouraging your child to capture each day by documenting it through drawing, writing, recording or photography
- Write/email a letter to a friend, relative or elderly neighbour.
- Watch a favourite TV programme.
- Share and enjoy fun TikToks with friends.
- Prepare a meal. Bake a cake.
- Read a book.

Ten Useful Tips for Parents

1. Younger children may respond well to setting up routines and taking your advice and guidance while older children may resist having a ***Plan for the Day***. Remind them that this is still the school term and schoolwork is continuing. **Talk to them about the importance of routine for their health and wellbeing at this time, as well as the importance of keeping up with the curriculum, in preparation for their return to school.**
2. Remind yourself that having to work independently without the stimulus and face to face interaction with teachers and peers may be challenging. While it may be important to support your child to engage with learning at home by using technology, it's not and cannot be exactly the same for your child as learning in school. Your child is likely to be less focused and attentive than they would be in school. **If this is the case, consider helping them to start small and increase their study/schoolwork time gradually. Encourage them to take short breaks between study blocks.**
3. It may be stressful for parents and carers of younger children if they believe that they have to be a 'substitute teacher'. Remember you are not a teacher and there is no expectation that you should be doing extensive hours of tutoring or completing schoolwork with your child every day. **Be realistic and sensible about your child's needs and your own, during this time. Be flexible and open to adjusting to both your needs and your child's needs – do what you can!**
4. **If you have older children in the house encourage them to help their young siblings and build this in to their *Plan for the Day*.**
5. **Remember that learning isn't just about sitting with a pen and paper at a desk. Children can learn through baking, gardening or other activities of interest to you or your family.** For example, baking can involve reading the recipe, following written instructions, learning about weight and measurement and the development of life skills, such as how to clean up after yourself, how to share and how to take turns.
6. As you know every child is different and you may find that your individual children respond to this situation in different ways. That's ok. **If needed, try to support them individually to adjust their schedules depending on their age, additional needs, motivation etc.**
7. **No matter what age, allow your children choices in relation to their *Plan for the Day*.** Choosing the activities and the order in which they engage with those activities will be motivating and empowering for your child.
8. If your child's first few attempts at the ***Plan for the Day*** have not worked,

remember this is a time of learning and adjusting so it may take time to get it right. **At the end of each day, your child may want to discuss with you what worked well about the plan and what was challenging. Help them to think about how it could be improved for the next day.**

9. For many children and young people it may be difficult to stay motivated and focused when working alone at home. This is normal. The *Plan for the Day* will help. **Encourage them to take regular breaks and praise and reward them for working hard and trying their best.** You may need to consider building in a reward or incentive system in order to help them experience success learning at home. Rewards don't have to cost money and can be daily or weekly depending on the age of the child. Examples include choosing a game for the family to play, having their favourite meal for dinner, choosing a family movie or extra phone or PlayStation time etc.
10. This may be a challenging time for families. **Be patient and kind with yourself.** If you can, take breaks during your day, get plenty of sleep, connect with friends and family using social media, exercise and eat well. Remember that the most important thing that you can do is love and care for your child and reassure them that Covid-19 will pass.

Check out these websites (list is not exhaustive):

- [HSE](#)
- [Department of Education](#)
- https://twitter.com/@Education_Ire
- [Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#)
- [National Parents Council Primary & Early Years](#)
- [National Parents Council - Post Primary](#)
- www.spunout.ie
- www.youth.ie
- [Jigsaw](#)
- [Little Things Campaign](#)