



**THE GOOD SHEPHERD CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
The Catholic Diocese of Northampton  
*"Following Jesus, The Good Shepherd, in all we say and do"*

Top Tips for Home Learning!

Children may or may not talk much about the virus, distance learning, or how the pandemic has affected their social lives -- but they're feeling it. Strong relationships with children make for positive educational experiences.

With that foundation in place, here are some nitty-gritty tips to help parents and caregivers keep kids focused, interested, and balanced while learning from a distance:



## Setting Up for Success

### Make a space.

- Create a special, personalised corner of a room dedicated to learning, creating, and reading. Use a movable box or crate if space is precious. Let your child help prepare the space for school, even if that just means putting a decorated pencil box next to the device they'll be using. Getting the space ready will help them get ready to learn. Ensure there is nothing behind them and remember they and whatever is behind them can be seen by lots of families if their camera is switched on.

## Set a routine.

- Little children need more structure, so make sure to let them know what to expect. You can create a visual schedule they can follow. Older children can use a calendar, planner, or digital organiser to keep track of what's happening each day.
- Have them follow a routine as if they're going to school (getting dressed, brushing teeth, etc.) instead of lying in bed in their pyjamas, which could lead to less learning.
- Breaks are really important, especially for children with learning and attention issues, so make sure to build those in and break tasks into smaller pieces.

## Review expectations.

- Go over what the school and teachers expect around online learning.
- Set some expectations of your own as well. When can your child expect to spend time with you? When should they avoid interrupting you? What can they do in their downtime? Come up with a list of "must dos" and "may dos" together to cover the essentials and activities of choice.
- If kids are sharing devices with siblings, make sure they understand how the devices are to be shared, including who gets to do what on the device and when.



## Staying Focused

### Keep them close.

- When it's hard for your child to focus, try to keep them close. Consider setting up non-verbal or one-word cues to help get them back on track.
- Depending on your circumstances, it may not be possible to keep your child in sight all the time, but it'll definitely be harder to keep them on track if they're completely unsupervised. Try to make sure you or another family member has eye on them as much as possible.

### Encourage self-regulation.

- Talk to children about the connection between bodies and brains and what happens in their bodies when they feel frustrated, excited, or sad. This awareness helps children to recognise and manage their emotions.



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- If you have other devices in your house, keep them out of your child's workspace if possible. This can also mean shutting down phones, keeping phones in a designated place for the day, and putting away remotes if temptation takes over.

## **Play pretend.**

- Little children feeling at loose ends might respond to some role playing. Cast your child in the role of work partner, teacher, or researcher to help them stick to a task (and let you stick to yours!).
- Though older children won't want to play pretend, they may respond to an honest conversation about taking on more responsibility (like helping around the home, self-regulation, etc.) because they're older and gaining maturity. You might be surprised how they rise to the challenge in response.



## **Encouraging Ownership & Effort**

### **Follow children's interests and get input.**

- If there are gaps in your child's school day, remember that whatever your child is into -- animals, Minecraft, magic -- can be used for learning. Read books, create science experiments, and do math related to favourite topics.

### **Display work.**

- Let children hang up their drawings, writing, or other projects in your home. It shows them you're proud of their work and helps them value their learning.
- Even older children like when you show pride in their work by showing off their work. (But always ask before you post anything!)

### **Give detailed praise.**

- Instead of saying "good job," try giving specific details about your child's work. If they tried hard, let them know you noticed. Have they made progress? Used a new technique? In what ways are their efforts kind, clever, beautiful, or insightful?
- Also, encourage a growth mindset, which means reminding children that it's not about being good or bad at something, but working toward getting better at it.



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## Managing Motivation

### Start from strengths.

- Build a bridge from things your child loves to school subjects they don't love -- yet. If they love sports but dislike reading, find a book about football to spark interest.

### Presentation is everything.

- How you present an activity makes a huge difference in how children feel about it. For little children, whenever you can, frame tasks as games to make them more fun.
- Sometimes tweens and teens seem to have a "bad attitude" that's really masking insecurity, boredom, or anxiety. They're often hoping we'll help them through it, even when it seems just the opposite. Staying calm, not taking things personally, and maintaining a sense of humour can go a long way.

### Use natural consequences.

- While it might be tempting to "reward" your child with screen use, that can set children up to see screens as a coveted commodity. Instead, you can frame it as a timing issue: "We have three hours in the evening, so if you put strong effort into your work and finish, you'll have time to play your video game."
- If intrinsic motivation is hard to come by, you can incentivize effort and progress in a way that makes sense. Come up with ideas with your child, set benchmarks, and praise the process along the way.



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# Making Room for Well-Being

## Be a good friend to yourself.

- If your child gets caught up saying negative things about themselves, encourage self-kindness by asking them what they would say to a friend in the same situation.
- The same goes for you: We often beat ourselves up as parents, but what would a good friend say to you? What would you say to your friend?
- Try creating a gratitude list together to give you a fresh perspective and focus.

## Get help when you need it.

- You won't always know how to help your child. Think about who could help fill in the gaps -- look to family, friends, teachers, and others for help. Sometimes having another adult take over removes the tricky parent/kid homework battle dynamic and lets you go back to just being a parent.
- Communicate with the school about how things are going, leading with positives first. Everyone's doing their best, AND it's important for teachers to know what's working and not working for your child so they can get the help they need.

## Use movement and humour.

- Sometimes we just need to move our bodies. Physical activity can lift our spirits and get our minds refreshed for learning. Try a lunchtime block walk or a 5-minute dance party to help everyone reset and bring new energy to the day.
- Finding the funny right now is helpful on every front, including learning and well-being. Be silly, make wacky connections, come up with crazy answers so your child corrects you -- whatever works

You are all doing an amazing job, thank you!



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