

General Strategies for Home Programming

Here are a few things we (occupational therapists) feel are important to consider and engage in while at home during the suspension of classes.

If any or all of this is too much, do what's best for your family. Our goal is make sure you feel supported and able to help your kids while they're away from school. Use as much or as little as you like. You are mom, dad, auntie, uncle, grandma, grandpa, etc. Be that for your child! Don't feel pressured to be teacher, program planner, or entertainer – just love your kids and stay healthy! Washing your hands doesn't hurt either. You've got this!

Schedule and Routine

Having a schedule and routine at home will be helpful to ensure your child(ren) know what is happening in their day and provide some predictability. Routine is the best way to keep your child(ren) ready to learn and engage in activities. It will also help with the transition coming back to school in April. Here are some things you may want to consider.

1. The schedule can consist of the activities that you plan to do for the day including the time frame.
 - a. These activities can consist of academic work, free or choice time, movement breaks, housework, self-care tasks, outside play
 - b. You can use actual pictures or words for the schedule.
2. Use timers such as egg timers or timers on your phone or devices. "Kiddie Countdown" is a free app for iPhones and iPads.
3. Use "first/then" language when introducing activities. Example, "first we are going to color and then we will go outside."
4. We usually suggest engaging in non-preferred activities followed by a preferred activity.
5. Make sure each activity has a clear beginning and a clear end. This will help your child(ren) transition from one activity to another.
6. See example of what a schedule could like. Remember your schedule and time frames can be different from the example. You can modify to make it work for you and your child(ren)! We've attached a similar blank template that you can adapt to your needs.
7. Here is a link to a printable/editable visual schedule that can be posted on the wall:
<https://cdn.thisreadingmama.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/VSSC-SF-TRM.pdf>

Regulation and Calming Strategies

Some children need strategies to regulate and calm their bodies to ensure they are ready to learn and participate in everyday tasks or activities. Here are some strategies you can try with your children if they are feeling overwhelmed, bored, upset, or wiggly.

1. If your kids are feeling anxious, overwhelmed, upset, or just wiggly try:
 - a. Heavy work activities
 - i. These provide sensory input (deep pressure) to our bodies that tend to be calming. It makes us feel grounded.
 - ii. See handout.
 - b. Calming strategies
 - i. See handout.
 - ii. These calming strategies are also helpful for caregivers and parents – feel free to do them with you children.

2. If your kids are feeling bored, tired, unmotivated, or difficult to engage, try:
 - a. Movement break activities:
 - i. Helps to increase attention skills and “wakes-up” our bodies to be ready to learn
 - ii. Some ideas: Dance party, play outside, change locations within the home, active games (hide and seek, tag, red light/green light, Simon Says), play with cold items (frozen playdough, ice cubes),
 - iii. Online resources such as gonoodle.com

Environment

At home, it is also important to consider making some adaptations to the environment to help your child(ren) learn and focus during academic tasks. Here are some suggestions to try:

1. A designated space for academic tasks.
 - a. This could be the dining room table, coffee table, on the floor etc. where ever you have the space!
 - b. This space should be in a quiet area with limited distractions – such as turning off the T.V. or music. Music can be used if it is slow and rhythmic.
2. You can work on activities in standing, sitting, laying on the floor.
3. And do some learning OUTSIDE – make it fun!

Screen Time

As much as possible, limit screen time. Sometimes easier said than done, but important if you can manage it.

Think about using screens as a tool:

- as a preferred task following a non-preferred task (with a time limit)
- when you need a minute to complete a task (i.e. cooking dinner – but include your kids in this if you can!)
- as a way to stay connected with friends and family, using Facetime and video chats