

At this challenging time, our experience of learning at home may be of some help. Although not done through personal choice, all parents are facing the question of how to go about teaching their children during school closures. It may seem very overwhelming. Here are a couple of things to soothe the mind:

1. Learning at home is fundamentally different from school. As a parent, you are facilitating your children's education by encouraging their interests and challenging them in areas where you see they need growth, much as you do already.
2. Learning at home will not look like school. You do not need to follow a school timetable in order for your children to learn adequately. You don't need to do every subject every day. If a discussion or interest develops as you go through some material, you don't need to feel that the subject has to stop because you haven't done XYZ yet. There are no school bells in the home.
3. Learning at home will mean that your children will take less time to do their "schoolwork" than when they are at school. Some schools have stated to parents that there is a five hour daily requirement (in primary and the first years of secondary*). Be encouraged—this is nonsense!
When a child is medically unable to attend school, or is a school refuser, under EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) the LA generally only pays for five hours of tutoring a week, and this is considered an efficient and appropriate education. Children tend to pick up information and ideas much faster in a one-on-one or small group situation rather than in a classroom with 20+ students, so academically they will achieve quicker understanding and attainment.
There is actually no legal stipulation of hours that must be met for a child to receive an appropriate education. Home educators say that education happens 24/7, whether at the supermarket or in the garden or looking at how washing machines work while shopping for a new one (something our family has been doing recently!).
If you get through the material the school gives you in well under five hours daily, that is perfectly acceptable.

*Of course, students studying GCSEs or A-Levels will know themselves their subjects and what areas they need to work on. There is a lot of assistance offered in the resources lists sent as an attachment alongside this document to help students who need practice tests or more information. This current situation could be a boon, as it helps older ones begin to learn how to manage their own time. Offer your help to facilitate when and where you think this appropriate/necessary. It may help to know that those who are 16+ are technically in charge of their own learning.

4. You can “do school” in your pyjamas and slippers! And at any time during the day, evening or night. Don’t feel you need to begin at 9:00am sharp five days a week.
5. It’s recommended by experienced home educators that when you begin to learn at home, take it easy. As stated above, you do not need to recreate school. We don’t know how long this situation will last. The best thing to do in these circumstances is to relax. Initially parents can just do one or two things with their children apart from meals and chores, like play a game, garden or help cook (such as peeling carrots or scrubbing potatoes, let alone sweating onions!). You all need to get used to each other, as this is not the school holidays and sadly, we aren’t able to use extra-curricular activities in the same way we have previously. After a few days, you can begin slowly introducing academic subjects. Some parents will prefer to jump right in and have a strict timetable. Both are perfectly fine approaches. Whatever works best for you and your family will be the best way to go about things. Just don’t be surprised if you find that it changes as you carry on for however long this lasts.
6. You don’t need to study at the kitchen table/desks. And you don’t need to “study” all together like a class unless you want to. You can do it individually, at different times and in different places.
7. It is suggested that you build in some time during the day when you are apart from the children, and they know it, even if it is for only ten minutes. Audiobooks, board games, word games, video games, puzzle books, maze books, puzzles etc. are all helpful in allowing you to withdraw for some valuable headspace time. And they are all educational in more ways than one.

Here are some useful links/resources:

Many home educators use online resources, and have handily gathered together a large list of what they use, from maths and science sites to reading, spelling and much more. The *Resources List for Sharing* is available via the Education Otherwise site, which can be found through this link:

https://educationotherwise.org/index.php/links?fbclid=IwAR06wqiGALRjW1uy-129uMh2ciLkMqUY_k-Wgsa9b4bqWJ4BpO-Tlr3qXiw

A wonderful joint-collaboration has been done between two experienced home educators who are strong Christians. They are calling it Covid19 Emergency

Home-Schooling for those whose schools have been slow to provide material or if that material is limited. It is really lovely and is highly recommended:

<https://covidemergencyhomeschoolinguk.weebly.com/>

A good resource of free audiobook content can be found here:

<https://librivox.org/>

There are many games, books, topics and subjects that we have experienced in our own family. Feel free to ask for suggestions or recommendations, or a listening ear if you feel like tearing your hair out—there will be no judgement, just support, we promise!

God Bless,
Amanda & Tom King