**SEND Support**

Children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) will have had some extra support or been working in a slightly different way at school, so it’s helpful to speak to your child’s teacher or the school’s SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) about what worked best for them when learning in school. If you do not already have it, their individual learning profile/ plan may help you understand the skills they were working on. Try not to put too much pressure on yourself or your child to complete a full day of learning, as this is not realistic or possible for most families. This could be a great opportunity to work on specific skills, or learning linked to their interests.

**General Guidance to Support Learning**

* **Work in short bursts** – three separate 5 minute activities with a short break in between might work much better than one longer 15 minute activity.
* **Build in breaks and lots of praise** and rewards, this will make it fun for both of you. Try to use little rewards (e.g. stickers, smiley faces, high fives) that can be traded in for a ‘bigger’ reward at the end of the day or week (such as time playing a favourite game, or completing a chosen activity with you).
* **Try to set up a routine of work then play and keep general routines consistent.** Routine is helpful for children, so try to keep bedtimes, mealtimes the same and add in some structure to the day. It may help to create a visual timetable. See this template for an example: <https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/hackney/fsd/files/daily_planner_to_support_structure_at_home.pdf> .

Having a **work then play system** might include one, two or three learning activities before play, depending on your child’s ability and age. Don’t worry if things don’t always go to plan – leave it and come back to it later - tomorrow is another day!

* Try to have some variety to the activities, but **repetition** is a great way to learn, so don’t worry about working on the same skills or activities a number of times; especially if your child enjoys them. This can help them remember.
* **Encourage learning through play and follow your child’s interests**– children learn best when they are happy, relaxed and engaged. Practical activities may work much better than worksheets for your child (e.g. playing counting games, letter hunts, drawing around shapes, baking, writing a shopping list, working out how much money is needed for the shopping, etc.). Multisensory approaches are often helpful for children with learning needs – this means learning through seeing, hearing and doing. Remember children in school are not following the curriculum, so try not to feel under pressure to replicate a school day.
* If the work you are being provided with feels too hard for your child, speak to your **child’s teacher or their school SENCO**; they should be able to provide you with different/ adapted activities.
* **Twinkl** has onlineresources developed specifically for children with Special Educational Needs and is currently free to access for parents. Ask your child’s teacher what level to look at if you don’t already know (e.g. they may be working at an earlier key stage than their year group) <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/specialeducationalneeds-sen>
* **Look after your own wellbeing.** The following link is to a community chat room where people who have or support someone with learning difficulties can ask questions, discuss issues and share ideas and resources: <https://healthunlocked.com/mencap>

**Managing feelings**

Children and young people with SEND may feel a loss of control in times of uncertainty such as the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. They may need extra words of reassurance, more explanations or adapted explanations about the event, and more comfort and other positive physical contact from loved ones.

Where possible, it can be helpful to explain any upcoming changes to routine and circumstances before they happen and help them to plan and come up with solutions, such as finding a hobby or doing exercises to relax and cope with anxiety.

It may help to support your child to create their own **toolbox of strategies** that they can use if they are feeling upset, worried, confused or angry.



For useful tips for talking about feelings, see [Skills for Care advice](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Topics/Learning-disability/Mental-health/Top-tips-feelings.pdf).

The Special Needs Jungle has produced an article about staying calm and supporting children’s concerns about coronavirus: <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/calming-coronavirus-anxiety-children-everyone-else/>

There are also a number of **easy to read resources and social stories** explaining coronavirus for children and young people, such as:

Covibook: <https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf>

Social story for younger and primary aged children: <https://littlepuddins.ie/coronavirus-social-story/>

Easy read guide for older children/ young people: .<https://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/easy-read-advice-on-the-coronavirus-v1.pdf>

For further guidance on coronavirus (COVID19) for those with learning difficulties please see the [Mencap website](https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/coronavirus) (includes easy read materials).

**Further information**

The Special Needs Jungle website has advice and guidance to support parents of children with SEND at home (e.g. starting gently, ways to address the challenges of learning at home): <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/coronavirus-lockdown-kids-setting-steady-pace-home-learning/>

The website also includes links to lots of visual resources, social stories, and multi-sensory learning and wellbeing resources: <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/distance-education-resources-for-children-and-young-people-with-send/>

The Sensory Projects website includes lots of links to educational activities at home, including those specifically for children and young people with additional educational needs and those specific to learning about COVID 19 and the changes to our lives: <http://www.thesensoryprojects.co.uk/covid19-resources?fbclid=IwAR38l-FHc0oJ9hqmbop6OQz_ziSYlaJwecxWqAgH9q-1QYsWFCmdKlv1NLg>

Inclusive Teach A to Z of sensory learning activities: https://inclusiveteach.com/2019/05/13/the-a-z-of-sensory-learning-activities/

Education Otherwise Includes lots of ideas and links to support practical learning at home: <https://www.educationotherwise.org/index.php/links/37-activities-teaching-and-learning>

Story massage have put together a free resource booklet of 36 stories, email them to be sent a copy: [mary@storymassage.co.uk](mailto:mary@storymassage.co.uk)

GOV. UK - Government guidance on supporting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing during coronavirus, which includes further advice and links: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak#helping-children-and-young-people-cope-with-stress>