



**Homeschooling During COVID-19:
7 Stress-free Ways to Keep Your Child On
Track**

[By Ann Dolin, M.Ed.](#)

As healthcare professionals work to maintain COVID-19, schools across the country are closing their doors. Even as we trust healthcare experts to lead us well in this crisis, there's no question that these sudden and drastic changes to your child's education can leave you feeling stressed and anxious.

In talking to parents every day who call our office looking for help for their kids, one common problem is that kids want to use this free time as an extended spring break. They're ready to transition to "vacation mode." Parents, on the other hand, know that this "break" could last for the rest of the year, so they want to keep their kids on track and in "study mode." The result? Conflict, stress, and tension in many homes across the country.

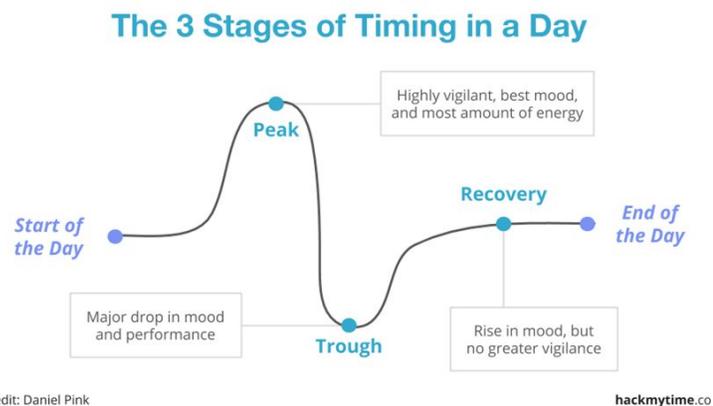
In this guide, you'll discover 7 tips for homeschooling during the coronavirus crisis, minimizing stress for your whole family, and keeping your child on track academically. While every family will find unique solutions to fit their needs over time, we hope this gives you a solid head start in a confusing and unprecedented season.

If you still have questions after reading through this guide, please feel free to [schedule a consult](#) with one of our education directors.

#1: Create a Routine (And Put It in Writing!)

Kids thrive on routine. Don't consider yourself the color-coded-planner type? That's okay! You can keep this simple and it will still make a big difference in your kids' days.

Start by determining set times for waking up, eating each meal, and going to bed. That consistency will help you and your kids feel grounded in a season where everything seems unpredictable and up in the air. From there, you can fill in the rest of your day with ranges of time dedicated to studying, playing outside, exercising, or enjoying some time together as a family.



As you decide how to schedule out your days, keep in mind that kids focus best before lunch. As the afternoon goes on, energy and focus will start to wane. That's normal and okay! Even adults often have a 3:00 slump (check out the "trough" in the 3 Stages of Timing). Whenever possible, make the most of your child's best hours by planning to do school work before lunch.

Once you decide on your new routine, **put it in writing** and post it on the refrigerator for everyone to see. When we simply tell kids a new schedule, they tend to take it “in one ear and out the other.” When you have visual reminders of your routine in your home, however, kids will be far more likely to abide by the new rules and rhythms.

So, what does this schedule look like? It depends on who creates it. In fact, there are two kinds of schedules, and these are largely based on the person creating them.

If you're naturally organized, creating and sticking to a schedule will be inherently easier for you. You know you're this type of person if you love 'to-do' lists, post-it notes, organizing closets and being on time. Attention to detail and managing time are a natural strength. And if this is the case, you'll do well with a detailed schedule for your kids. Here's an example:

8:15 - 9:15 - Wake up and chill
9:15 - 9:45 - Breakfast
9:45 - 10:00 - Get ready for the day - make bed, brush teeth and hair
10:00 - 10:30 - Physical activity of choice
10:30 - 12:00 - Academic time - homework, research, educational websites (screens as needed for the assignment)
12:00 - 1:00 - Practice a sport outside or take a walk
1:00 - 1:30 - Lunch
1:30 - 2:15 - Reading (screens ok if e-book)
2:15 - 3:00 - Free Time (no screens)
3:00 - 3:45 - Family activity - baking, arts and craft, board game etc. (no screens)
3:45 - 4:00 - Snack
4:00- 4:30 - Free writing
4:30- 5:30 - Family Exercise - walk, bike, soccer game, wife ball game etc.
5:30 - 6:30 - Screens allowed
6:30 - 7:30 - Dinner/conversation/clean up
7:30 - 9:00 - Free time/Family Movie/Board Game

On the other hand, you might be more like me. You *want* to be organized and structured, but these abilities don't come naturally. You have to work a little harder at it. Creating an intricate schedule on the half hour and sticking to it is difficult and likely not to end with success. If you're in this category, create a routine with broader swaths of time, instead of strictly defined parameters.

8:00 - Up and out of bed, shower
8:45 - 9:30 - Breakfast
9:30-11:30 -Study Time
12:00 - 1:00 - Break/Lunch
1:00 - 2:00 - Reading/relaxation time (no screens)
2:00 - 4:00 - Get outside, walk the dogs, or hang out (screens ok)
5:00 - 6:00 - Help prepare dinner/help around the house
6:00 - 7:00 -Dinner and conversation
7:00 - 9:00 - Family free time

#2: Don't Wait on Schools to Provide Structure

These coronavirus closures are uncharted territories for not just parents, but educators as well. Some schools and teachers are already establishing structured routines with online instruction times and assignments. If that's true for your family, great! Let that structure shape your new schedule as a family as much as possible.

On the other hand, if your school is leaving it up to you or presenting work as optional, you may have to create this structure and routine on your own. In this case, it can be easy to feel like the bad guy—especially if your child thinks this should just be an extended spring break. The trick here is to strike a balance between authority and compromise.

As the parent, you can absolutely say, "No matter what other families are doing, we're going to have some structure and routines in our home." With older kids, however, you can balance that out with some compromise.



Explain that this could potentially go on for months.

What expectations do they think would be fair?

Would they like to try a block schedule, where they only focus on a couple of subjects each day? Would they like to try out some creative projects or find online courses on topics that interest them? Having these open discussions will encourage older students to take some responsibility for their education and reduce pushback over the coming weeks.

#3: Set Realistic Expectations

While having some structure and routine will certainly be helpful, it's also important to balance that with realistic expectations. Kids can only sustain their attention for so long, and it's unrealistic to think they'll be able to sit still for hours on end and power through a long list of assignments.

Instead, consider using the **Pomodoro Technique** to guide your student through more manageable study periods. The Pomodoro Technique is a time management tool designed to help you sustain focus over long periods of time. It's also quite simple. You set a timer for 25 minutes and say to yourself, "I'm going to work as hard as I can for 25 minutes. Then, I'll get a break." Then, you take a 5-minute break to reset. For most students, a few Pomodoros in a row is about right. The research on adults has found that attention tops out at four Pomodoros (four 25-minute chunks), so consider that maybe two or



three in a row might be all your child can manage. If they're able to sustain four Pomodoros, a longer break of at least a half hour is ideal.

This is a great guideline to use when homeschooling, but remember it's just that: a guideline. You can experiment to find the rhythms that work best for your kids. Younger students may need shorter stretches of "study" time, and that's fine. The important part is to maintain realistic expectations for how long your child can focus so they don't get burned out on day one.

#4: Designate Study Areas

Having a set place to study can help kids get in the zone and focus on their work. However, one common mistake we see parents make is to designate a desk in the child's bedroom as the study area. Kids are already feeling isolated from their friends and peers right now, and we don't want them to feel closed off in their bedrooms all day to top it off. Try to find one or two other areas in the house where they can work and still feel more connected—perhaps at the kitchen table or in the home office where you're working.

For elementary kids, you can draw from the examples of a Montessori education. This is an approach that is very activity-based and organized around various stations. There could be a reading station, a station for building blocks, a station for puzzles, and so on. Kids can rotate after a certain amount of time or choose to stay at their station.



To follow this method in your own home, you can turn an area on the couch into a comfortable reading station with their books nearby. You might make a handwriting station at the kitchen table with some practice sheets and stations for building with legos, working on puzzles, or practicing math throughout your home. Just remember to set a timer and allow them to rotate! This will keep younger kids interested and engaged for much longer than they would be at a single desk for hours on end.

#5: Use Online Resources

As we said before, some schools are assigning particular homework and tasks. Others are leaving it up to families to decide if and how to use this time for school work. If your child doesn't have any assigned work, there are a plethora of online resources you can use to keep your child mentally engaged and academically on track. Plus, during this coronavirus crisis, many paid resources are being made temporarily free for families suddenly thrown into this homeschooling world! Here are a few online resources worth checking out:



- Scholastic Learn at Home - This program is really easy to use and kids can learn virtually any subject on the platform.
- Brain Pop (6th Grade and Up) and BrainPop Junior (Under Sixth Grade) - Older kids may think this site's branding is too young for them, but there is actually some very advanced content on this site. You can pick from a wide range of subjects or even take classes on computer coding! There's also a little course for kids on the science behind the coronavirus. You can find that at [BrainPop.com/coronavirus](https://www.brainpop.com/coronavirus).
- IXL - This is a great resource, particularly for math. We love it because kids take a pre-test at the start, then the site scopes out their activities based on what they need to work on.

In general, any program that incorporates quizzes is worth checking out. Quizzes are a powerful tool to help kids test their learning, discover what they've mastered, and decide what they need to review.

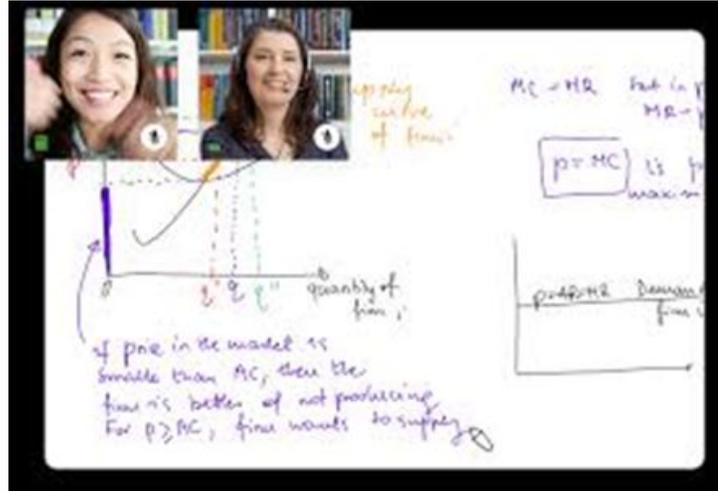
To get reluctant kids on board, give them some say in which platforms they'll use and what they'll study. This is a great opportunity to maybe dive into an unusual topic or subject that interests them. The above online resources—and others like them—can provide ways for kids to explore new subjects that just might reignite their love for learning!

#6: Maintain Social Interaction and Encourage Personal Connections

COVID-19 precautions are important, but kids still need social interaction. Many are struggling with sadness over the sudden loss of their social environment. As you homeschool, it's important to look for ways to keep your child connected with their peers and educators as much as possible.

As an in-home tutoring company, we've switched to online tutoring sessions. We are striving to maintain that one-on-one personal connection between our tutors and students, because kids need it now more than ever.

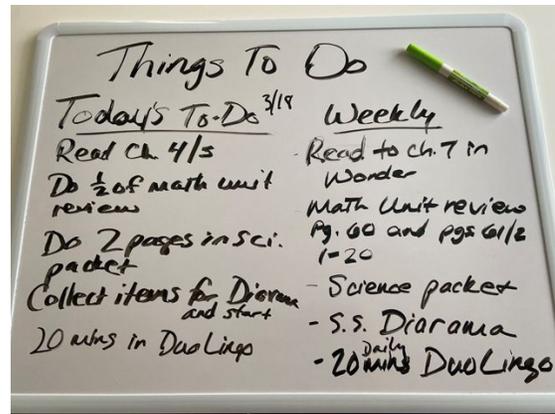
Software like Zoom, Google Drive, and Bitpaper.io (a white board app shown here) make it easy for kids to collaborate on projects together or with a tutor, even from separate homes. You can set up online study groups or discussion groups to allow your child to connect with their peers, discuss the books they're reading, or practice math together. We aren't yet sure how long schools will remain closed, so don't just wait this out. Look for ways to keep your child connected now!



#7: Get and Stay Organized

As inconvenient as involuntary homeschooling certainly is, there is a huge opportunity here for students to learn how to work independently and manage their time well. With remote jobs becoming more and more common (especially during this crisis!), there's a good chance your child could work from home one day. This is a valuable practice run for them! Make the most of it by helping your child establish organizational systems that work for them.

One thing I recommend is having a whiteboard for each child in your family. It can list everything the child is going to do for the week, then have designated to-do lists for each day of the week. This helps kids figure out weekly goals and translate them into daily objectives. Plus, everyone



loves the thrill of checking off or crossing through tasks! That visible evidence of progress is rewarding and fuels the desire to keep going.

You'll also want to figure out a way to keep kids' work physically organized. We recommend Google Drive for housing any online documents, then using an accordion binder to organize any loose papers. (Kids who struggle with organization do much better with accordion binders than three-ring binders that require them to punch holes and snap each paper in the right place!)

From there, designate a space in your home for kids to keep their school stuff. This could be a cubby, a basket, or even a specific place on the kitchen counter. This makes it easier to find things when you need them and also prevents your kids from feeling like they "live at school" all the time. It gives you both some healthy boundaries to continue enjoying your home when the school work is done—especially since we'll all be spending so much time at home for a while!

Bonus Tip: Don't Go It Alone!

We've talked to a lot of parents since this crisis began, and many are understandably worried. If you're like most parents, you may be wondering how to keep your child on track academically—especially if they aren't being assigned much work from their teachers. You may be worried about the friction it will cause in your relationship with your child if you have to become a taskmaster. We get that, and we are here to help.

When you schedule a free consult, we will talk with you to better understand your child's academic needs, then match him or her with their ideal tutor. That tutor will then meet with your child over video tutoring sessions to guide them through this uncertain time.

We'll help your child set up a schedule for the week and create to-do lists for each day. Then, we'll provide support in any areas that are particularly challenging —whether that's math, science, spelling, or simply staying organized and focused—and offer accountability to keep them on-track without you turning into the homework police.

You may be home alone, but you don't have to do this homeschooling thing alone! Call **703-593-3424** or click below to schedule a free consult with one of our staff. We're here for you!

We have three options of online support, no matter where you live:

1. **The Comprehensive Solution:** Our expert tutors will take care of all the details of homeschooling, engaging and motivating your child to master material and get it done without your involvement. Whether there are school-issued assignments, optional and ungraded work, or nothing at all, we'll create, oversee, and teach your child. Two hours a day, M-F of online support with a credentialed tutor.

2. **The Daily Dose:** Our one-hour-a-day solution for structuring your child's day. Perfect for the student who benefits from a clear plan, structure and accountability. Feel free to carve this five hour weekly plan into four days or even three. The hours are your weekly hours to use as you wish.

3. **Six-Hour Solution:** Looking for content support for a specific subject or help with organization and staying on track? Our Six-Hour solution provides six hours of online time to be used as needed. Two 45 minute sessions per week? Three 30 minute sessions? it's up to you. This is a great option if your child needs help staying on track and moving forward with academics during this uncertain time.

[Schedule a Consult Today](#)