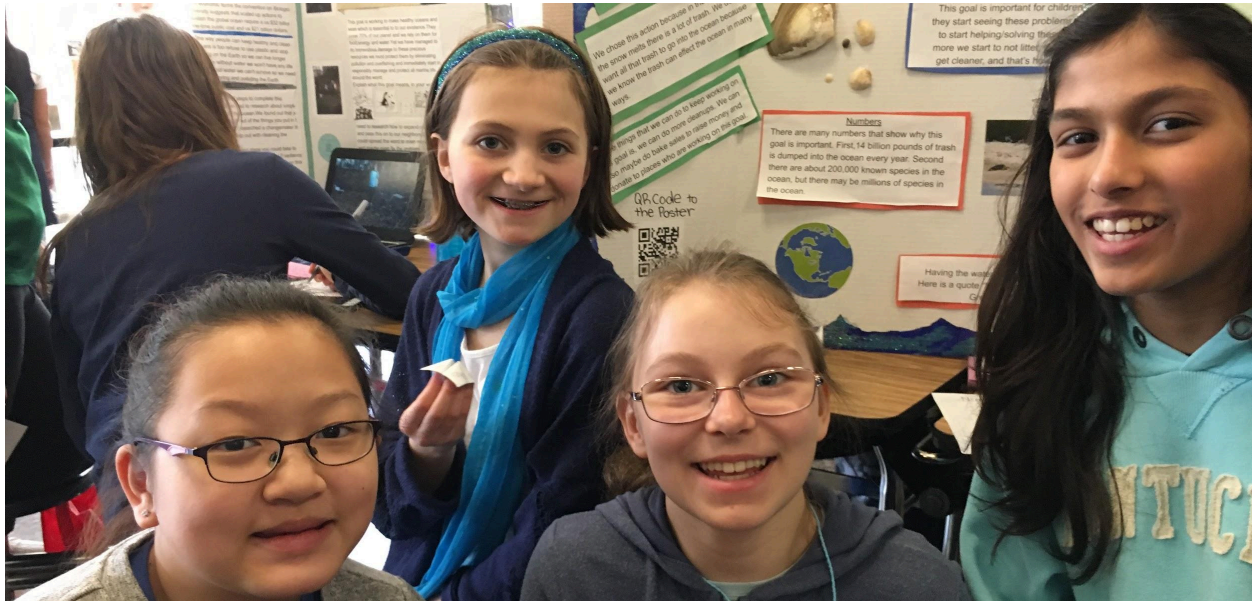


## 10 (plus 1) Strategies for Creating a Structured Learning Environment at Home



This is an unprecedented time that is causing uncertainty and worry. Parents/guardians are juggling their own employment and familial health concerns, and are asked to assist their children and teens with academic enrichment. The CDC states that “consistency, predictability, and follow-through” are the keys to creating structure” (CDC, 2019) and it matters little that the focus of this article is for children. This list provides suggestions and resources for building that structure.

1. Acknowledge that this is a surreal and stressful time and that having a schedule can truly help normalize what is atypical.
  - Encourage your child's voice into the creation of their daily routine
  - Turn your child's routine into a checklist
  - Have younger children create their own calendars
  - Keep a predictable schedule and flow to your day
  - Post your schedule for everyone to see and keep track of

## Sample Daily or Weekly Schedule

Task	Start Time	End Time	Done (✓)

## Sample Daily Schedule

Time	Daily Activities	Materials Needed
8:00 - 9:00 am		
9:00 - 10:00 am		
10:00 - 11:00 am		
11:00 - 11:15 am	Snack time	
11:15 - 12:15 am		
12:15 - 1:00 pm	Lunch and break	
1:00 - 2:00 pm	Art project or virtual museum visits	
2:00 - 3:00pm	Afternoon air (Outdoor time)	
3:00 - 4:00pm		
4:00 - 5:00pm	Reading hour	
5:00 - 6:00pm	Dinner	
6:00 - 8:00pm		
8:00 - 9:30pm	Get ready for bed	

## Scholastic's The Age-by-Age Guide to Teaching Kids Time

Use [these tips](#) to help your child discover how to plan and prioritize their time.

### 2. Establish a routine.

Creating a wake/sleep routine prepares everyone for the day ahead. Although teens would love to sleep until 3pm and go to sleep at 3am it is very important to maintain a healthy wake/sleep pattern. And they may well argue with you but remember it is their job to push the envelope and your job to set limits and say no. The longer they are able to have a relatively healthy routine, the easier it will be for them to access their internal resources. Showering and changing clothes each morning helps prepare for the day. Set meal times can also be opportunities for learning about nutrition, cooperative meal preparation, and communication. Finally, give everyone a job. Whether it's sorting laundry, cooking meals or picking things up, there are chores that even the littlest of helpers can do.

### Sample Schedule/Routine

Task	Check when Done (✓)
Get up	
Get dressed	
Have breakfast	
??	
Lunch	
??	
Bedtime	

3. The ages of your children will determine what they can do, how long they can stay focused and absorb material.

For younger children, 20 minutes of an assignment followed by 10 minutes of physical exercise may work effectively and longer stretches for older children (healthychildren.org, 2020).

Age	What can they do	Prompts
Preschool	Tidy bedroom	Verbal reminders, visual schedules
	Perform simple chores	
	Follow simple directions	
Kindergarten To Grade 2	Tidy bedroom	Verbal reminders, visual cues, schedules, lists, alarms etc.
	Perform simple chores	
	Follow simple directions	
	Complete independent work for up to 20 minutes	
	Follow two- to three step direction	
Grade 3-5	Perform chores that take up to 30 minutes	Verbal reminders, visual cues, schedules, lists, alarms etc
	Complete simple project-based activities	
	Can vacuum, dust, etc.	
	Complete independent work for up to an hour	
	Can keep track of daily schedule	
Grades 6-8	Complete chores and daily responsibilities taking 60-90 minutes	Verbal reminders, visual cues, schedules, lists, alarms etc
	Follow complex schedule	
	Carry out long-term projects and assignments	

High School	Manage complex sets of responsibilities	Can text them reminders or leave notes
	Establish and plan long-term projects	
	Make plans for meeting goals	

#### 4. Delegate a specific area for activities.

Make a plan for where your children/teens will complete their school work. It is all too easy for teens to seek their beds when doing work but that will only accomplish creating fatigue and a desire to fall asleep (Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard University, 2007). Encourage them to use a desk or table - somewhere their bodies/brains will learn that this is the place to be focused and learn.

- Find a work/studying area with minimal distractions
- Establish a good location for play/leisure activities

#### 5. Be sure to include time for breaks, meals, exercise (ie., a walk outside) virtual time with friends and mindfulness/ meditation.

Encourage everyone in the home to stay hydrated: drinking water is so important and, if possible, include some humor together. "Lightening the mood" does help."

- [NES-ST](#)
- [25 Fun Mindfulness Activities for Children and Teens](#)

#### 6. Ask about the work they are doing and talk about the process.

This is new to them and if you are working from home, there may be new tasks you are learning. Share with them your challenges and frustrations and try to see how you can help them manage problems before they occur.

- Before a problem, rehearse possible challenges and discuss how they might handle it
  - During a problem, coach, remind them of strategies and try to understand barriers to effective coping
  - After a problem, provide praise/reinforcement, debrief what worked and what didn't and what could be done differently next time
7. Let your children know what your work schedule is (either from home or from work) so they are aware of your availability and when your work day is over.
8. Monitor for appropriate use of technology
- Set times for screen time throughout the day
  - Too much screen time can negatively impact brain functioning, mood, sleep & behavior
  - Discuss time to turn off electronics before bedtime
  - Given recommendations for social-distancing video-chats with family and friends as well as other media learning platforms may naturally increase use of screen time.

Age	Recommended number of Hours/Day
Toddlers (18-24 months)	Less than 1 hour
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	Up to 1 hour
Elementary School Aged (6-10 years)	1.5 hours per day
Middle School Aged (11-13 years)	2 hours per day

9. Agree on a time to have a “family meeting” to plan out the day and the expectations.

Tips for holding a family meeting:

- Stay upbeat

- Encourage full participation
- Give everyone a chance to lead and record
- Be creative with the agenda
- End each meeting with a fun experience
- Help each other resolve problems/issues

**10. Reach out to your children's teachers, counselors and administrators.**

Please know you are not alone and we are a community working together.

**11. Remember things won't always go perfectly.**

Try to be kind and patient with yourself and others and take the time to celebrate all accomplishments both great & small.

Other schedule options on [NPS Student Services Resource page](#)

## References and Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics, 2020. Working and learning from home during the COVID-19 outbreak. Retrieved on March 25, 2020 from <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/Working-and-Learning-from-Home-During-the-COVID-19-Outbreak.aspx>

CDC, 2019. *Building structure*. Retrieved on March 25, 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/structure/building.html>

Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard University. *Twelve simple tips to improve your sleep*. Retrieved on March 25, 2020 from <http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/getting/overcoming/tips>

Quartz, 2020. *We are all teachers now: resources for parents and kids cooped up at home*. Retrieved on March 25, 2020 from <https://qz.com/1819166/how-to-teach-your-kids-at-home/>

Psychology Today. *10 Tips for Holding a Family Meeting*  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/emotional-fitness/201209/10-tips-holding-family-meeting>

*Screen Time Guidelines by Age: As recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and World Health Organization (WHO)*