



DISTANCE LEARNING: A FAMILY SURVIVAL GUIDE

Tips to Maximize Learning and Household Peace



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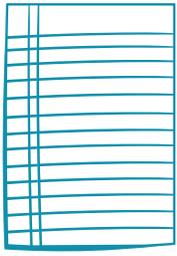
Think Like A Teacher

During distance learning, we are ALL first-year teachers. Thankfully, teaching is more similar to parenting than you probably knew.



Advice for First-Year Teachers

- * Be clear about your priorities and values.
- * Build community and ask for help.
- * Listen instead of making assumptions.
- * Treat each student as if they are your own child.
- * Accept that some days are better than others.
- * Remember every single success.
- * Look for the joy and humor.
- * Rest and recharge.



Assess The Situation

Like anything else, distance learning has both opportunities and challenges, and to navigate them successfully you need to know what matters most to you.

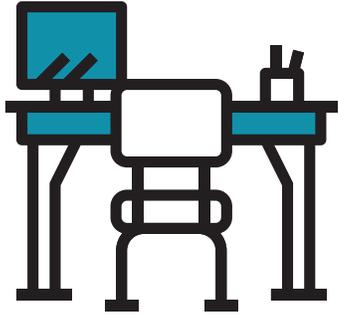
-  **Opportunities:** What is working best so far in distance learning?
-  **Challenges:** What are the pain points and challenges?
-  **Matters Most:** What three things will make you feel like distance learning has been a success for your child and your family this year?



Develop Effective Routines

In your home, you are all co-workers now with different responsibilities and needs. Take control of and be intentional about your household's schedule and routines.

-  Make a weekly calendar for each person in your household that shows blocks of commitment and activities.
-  Post the calendars somewhere visible and accessible to all.
-  Consider the following when making the calendars.
 - When are you each working?
 - When is it ok to be interrupted? When do you need quiet?
 - When will meals (and meal prep) happen?
 - When will you come together as a family?
 - Schedule stretch breaks and other mini diversions.



Create the Environment

Everyone needs a productive space to work. Consider everyone's distinct working style, needs, and the limitations of your home.



Talk with your children about the best environment for their learning (and listen to your own instincts too).

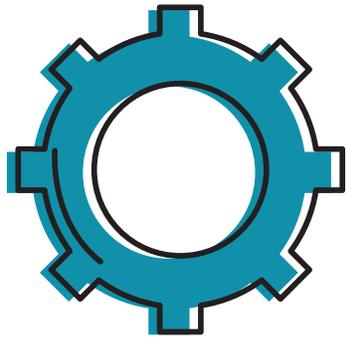
- What do they need to be successful?
- Periodic check-ins? Privacy? Sitting near you?
- What is more effective: sitting at a table/desk or being more comfortably situated?



Brainstorm ways to make work spaces feel personal and effective, even if it's as simple as a box of school supplies or a special pillow.



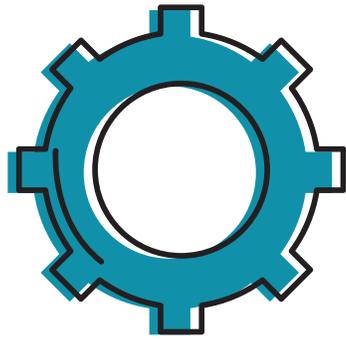
Create a space to display student work to show pride and to start conversation.



Manage Tools and Technology

Distance learning depends upon a dizzying array of technological tools, resources, and skills. Tame them by learning the purpose of each and proactively managing the ways you access them.

-  When it comes to technology, your child is your best teacher.
-  Know the tools.
 - What technology is being used by school and for what?
 - What are the links, passwords, etc.?
 - Which tools are solely for students and which are also intended for families?
-  Put most important technology information all in one place. See sample launchpad!



Sample Launchpad

Distance Learning Links

Calendars

[School calendar](#)
[Weekly schedule](#)
[Family calendar](#)

Tech Tools

[Google Drive](#)
[Duolingo](#)
[Padlet](#)
[Quizlet](#)

Stuff I Am Using

[Biology Google Slides](#)
[Research on slime](#)

[Music I love](#)
[Everyday Leadership](#)

[Reading Notes](#)
[Math Notes](#)

[Brainstorms](#)
[Wish List](#)

School Links

[PowerSchool](#)
[Google Classroom](#)

Passwords

[School passwords](#)
[Personal passwords](#)



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Learn School Resources and Policies

Many school policies and practices are different this year due to distance learning, and it's more important than ever to know school expectations as well as resources available.



Many schools have created new sections of their websites to share distance learning expectations, resources, and tools. These are treasure troves of information!

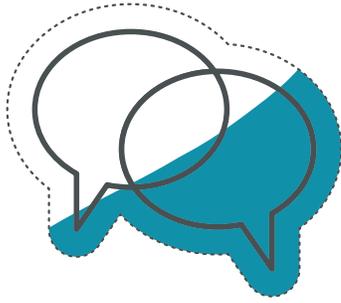


Can you answer all these questions?

- What is the weekly school schedule?
- When is learning synchronous vs asynchronous?
- What is optional vs required?
- What is the grading policy?
- When will grades and assignments be updated?
- What are expectations for attendance, participation, cameras, virtual backgrounds, homework completion, etc.



Expectations and policies will likely vary slightly from teacher to teacher. Read class overviews carefully, and reach out directly to teachers if you have questions.



Communicate with School

Put reading school emails and checking in with teachers at the top of your to-do list!



Learn the ways school communicates with families and be diligent about reading and staying informed.

- Ex: Emails from school leaders and teachers, official newsletters, website updates, online message boards, etc.



School might also be communicating directly with students. Know those methods of communication and ask about them.



Look for information about community events, virtual clubs, and other ways students and families can stay connected during these isolating times.



Don't be afraid to reach out to teachers and school leaders. Always lead with gratitude for all the great work they are doing, but also be honest about your family's experience, questions and challenges. The more we communicate, the greater the chances of success!



Heart Tips

These are the most important.



First and foremost, always remember how great your child is.



Ask “how are you?” before you ask if they finished their homework or why they are walking around the house.



When things go wrong, think like a really good doctor. Don’t simply treat the symptoms (missing assignments, frustration, tears). Try to diagnose and understand the underlying issues.



Reframe negative self-talk. (Theirs and yours!) We can do hard things. You will get this. This does not define you.



Laugh at the absurdity of all this.

ABOUT SHARON



Check out everydayleadership.blog to read more from me or to subscribe.

Sharon Olken is the Executive Director of Gateway Public Schools in San Francisco, where she has worked for 20 years as a teacher, school leader and school founder. Sharon loves her work because she sees education and leadership as two essential tools for personal growth and social change.

Gateway's schools, Gateway Middle and Gateway High, serve 800 students who represent the rich diversity of San Francisco and help them discover their unique potential, what they love, and the impact they hope to make on their communities.

Sharon recently founded Everyday Leadership, a website dedicated to providing models of positive leadership and helping others cultivate their power and voice. Sharon earned her B.A. from Harvard University and her M.A. in Education from Stanford University.

