

How can parents help students learn online?

With schools across the country dismissing for weeks due to COVID-19, parents and students have been thrust into the world of online or virtual learning. While not every student is a fantastic candidate for online learning, this will be the “new norm” for many. If you have never experienced online learning before, you may have some questions and fears. Here are some tips for parents to facilitate online learning in their homes.

- **Create a workspace** – Your student needs a workspace that is comfortable and is free from distractions. Be sure things like lighting, internet connection, and supplies are readily at hand. Keep the workspace consistent to develop the “I’m in school now” mindset.
- **Post a calendar** – Put a calendar on or near their workspace to track assignments and due dates. It is easy to get confused when multiple teachers have multiple assignments and due dates. This also minimizes the chances they miss an assignment and you can assist with time management.
- **Determine your technology supplies/needs** – It’s best to have a desktop or laptop computer and a printer available. However, you may have to be flexible and utilize tablets or personal devices to complete assignments. It’s possible you may have to redesign some of your space at home to give your student access to the technology they need. Other helpful accessories would be headphones, flash storage drives, and an ethernet or “hard wire” internet connection.
- **Communicate with the teacher(s)** – Unlike being in the classroom, teachers cannot read body language so they cannot see a student nod in agreement or a face of confusion. Your student is going to have to communicate with the teacher in ways other than speaking. Allow your student to communicate with the teacher, but feel free to guide them in that communication. It should not read like a text message using abbreviations if it is an email. If you have trouble with technology, an assignment, or understanding a concept, contact the teacher *immediately!*
- **Allow for breaks** – Online learning takes tremendous focus and brain power, so you are going to need to allow for breaks. These breaks should provide some physical activity. Activity can be simple, such as stretching, going for a walk, or using one of OPEN’s Active Home or Active Classroom activities! Remember younger students will need more frequent breaks.
- **Eliminate distractions** – Keep the learning environment free of as many distractions as possible. Cell phones, personal devices, pets, televisions, and other potential disruptions should be kept to a minimum.
- **Be flexible** – This opportunity allows students to explore how and where they learn best. If the weather is nice, think about an outside learning day. Younger students may enjoy “pajama day” for school. Think creatively to keep the learning fun and engaging!

OPEN National Trainer Brian Devore spent three years supervising online health and physical education teachers and students for Cobb Virtual Academy in Marietta, GA. He was also a contributor to SHAPE America’s *Guidelines for K-12 Online Physical Education Guidance Document*. In addition, two of Brian’s children have utilized online courses to complete a part of their public-school education.