

HELPING PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS TO SUPPORT REMOTE LEARNING

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Introduction

When schools are closed, parents or other caregivers may be the only adults who can support children's learning. Good teacher–parent communication can help to continue the role of the school. This guide has ideas and advice that teachers can share with parents to help children continue learning English. Most of the advice applies whether or not families have access to the internet. Remember that in some places, many parents won't have strong English skills themselves. However, they can still guide and motivate their children, and help them to learn.

Getting started

Find out how you can communicate with parents and give information to them

- Ask the administration of your school if they have an email address, phone number or other contact for parents of children in your classes.
- Find out who can send messages and communicate with parents. Can you do this, or can you send messages and questions to a person who works for the school, who then communicates with parents?
- Send messages to parents in their own first language if you can.

Communicating with parents who do not have email or online access

- Can you make a phone call or send a text message? Text messages (SMS) have a length limit. Longer messages will be divided into two or more messages. Some mobile phones can only receive text. Ask parents what their phones can receive. Parents' connections will be different because of:
 - where they live
 - the contract with the mobile company
 - the type of phone they have
 - how they can use the phone.
- Smartphones can use messaging apps, but many less expensive phones can send and receive pictures and record and send speaking. Parents need a working data connection to receive or send files like pictures or sound, using multimedia messaging service (MMS).
- Use a short call or message to introduce yourself and ask how the parents/caregivers and children are. Tell them what you will do. How often will you send a message or make a call, and when can they reply? For you and the parents, is the morning, afternoon or evening better?

Setting up learning

- Send parents and caregivers a basic list of the topics that would be used in school study.
- Use language that parents will understand – not grammar terms they may not know.
- Tell parents about topics that connect to things in and around the home and family.
- Suggest activities that are linked to these topics or to topics the child studied before at school, which they may remember.
- If the family has the textbooks, suggest sections that they can work on without a teacher.

Continuing communication

- Plan what you will do. Think about how much time it will take, and what times and on what days you will communicate.
- Check your messages before you send them. Are they clear enough? Can the parents understand what you are suggesting?
- Don't send too many messages each day.
- Try to find out if the person who has the phone is the one who spends the most time with the child. Check that messages are being passed on, if not.
- Try to find out what the children enjoy doing at home and suggest activities around this.
- Tell parents about any English language radio or TV programmes that you think are suitable for their children. You could send reminders of the programme time by SMS on the day.

Things to consider

- Think about families' different situations (financial, language and otherwise). Plan how you can support them according to what they can do in their situation.
- If the parent or caregiver cannot use English, suggest how they can take interest in what their children know and how they can use any games or resources with their children. Can they ask their children questions, and ask their children to 'teach' the parent? This gives the child a reason to remember and use what they know.
- Communicating with caregivers now could build a better relationship with school, which will help teachers, families and students when it reopens.

Useful links

- Choose which ideas can work for the parents of your students. Remember what they have and don't have at home.
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/parents>
- Advice for parents during Covid-19.
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/covid-19-support-for-parents>