



10 Tips for Parents During Distance Learning

The transition to distance learning will be challenging for families. Parents will need to think differently about how to support their children; how to create structures and routines that allow their children to be successful; and how to monitor and support their children's learning. Some students will thrive with distance learning, while others may struggle. The ten guidelines provided below are intended to help parents think about what they can do to help their children find success in a distance learning environment.

1—Establish routines and expectations

From the first day DCS implements its Distance Learning Plan, parents need to establish routines and expectations. We encourage parents to set regular hours for their children's school work. Keep normal bedtime routines for younger children and expect the same from your MS and HS-aged students, too. Children should move regularly and take periodic breaks as they study. It is important that parents set these expectations for how their children will spend their days starting as soon as distance learning is implemented, not several days later after it becomes apparent a child is struggling with the absence of routine.

2—Define the physical space for your child's study

Your child may have a regular place for doing homework under normal circumstances, but this space may or may not be suitable for an extended period of time. We encourage families to establish a space/location where their children will learn most of the time. This should be a public/family space, not in a child's bedroom. It should be a place that can be quiet at times and have a strong wireless internet signal, if possible. Above all, it should be a space where parents are present and monitoring their children's learning.

3—Monitor communications from your children's teachers

Teachers will communicate with parents through email. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your children's ages, maturity, and their degree of independence. DCS wants parents to contact their children's teachers. However, we ask parents to remember that teachers will be communicating with dozens of other families, and that communications should be essential, succinct, and self-aware.

4—Begin and end each day with a check-in

Parents are encouraged to start and finish each day with a simple check-in. In the morning, ask your child what are you learning today? What are their learning targets or goals? How will they spend their time? What resources do they require? What support do they need? This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they've received from their teachers. It helps them organize themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins with parents (that's normal!), but they should nevertheless. Parents should establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day. Not all students thrive in a distance learning environment; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines need to be established early, before students fall behind or begin to struggle.

5—Take an active role in helping your children process and own their learning

In the course of a regular school day at DCS, your son or daughter engages with other students or adults dozens if not hundreds of times. These social interactions and opportunities for mediation include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification, collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. While some of these social interactions will be re-created on virtual platforms, others will not. Human beings learn best when they have opportunities to process their learning with others. Beyond the check-ins recommended at the start and end of each day, parents should regularly circle back and engage with their children about what they're learning. However, it's important that you child own their work; don't complete assignments for them, even when they are struggling.

6—Establish times for quiet and reflection

A huge challenge for families with multiple children will be how to manage all of their children's needs, especially when those children are different ages and have different needs. There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction. Parents may even experiment with noise-cancelling headphones (no music necessary!) to block out distractions.

7—Encourage physical activity and/or exercise

Make sure your children remember to move and exercise. This is vitally important to their health, wellbeing, and to their learning. Think also about how your children can pitch in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Don't let your children off the hook – expect them to pitch in!

8—Remain mindful of your child's stress or worry

Help your child/children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of emotions they may experience. Difficult as it may be, do your best not to transfer your stress or worry to your children. They will be out of sorts, whether they admit it or not, and need as much normal routine as parents can provide.

9—Monitor how much time your child is spending online

DCS does not want its students staring at computer screens for 7- 8 hours a day. We ask that parents remember most teachers are not experts in distance learning and that it will require some trial-and-error before we find the right balance between online and offline learning experiences. Administrators or teachers will periodically check in with you to assess what you're seeing at home and what we need to adjust. We thank you in advance for your patience and partnership!

10—Keep your children social, but set rules around their social media interactions

There's always excitement when school closes school for weather days. This excitement will fade quickly when students start missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Help your children maintain contact with friends through phone conversations, Facetime, or even writing letters and sending through "snail mail"! Please also monitor your children's social media use, especially during an extended school closure. Older students will rely more on social media to communicate with friends. Social media apps such as SnapChat, and Instagram are not school sanctioned channels of communication. Remind your children to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values in their interactions with others. A student's written words and tone can offend or cause harm to others

Guidelines for Students During Distance Learning

1. Establish daily routines for engaging in the learning experiences.
2. Regularly monitor online platforms (FACTS, email, etc.) to check for announcements and feedback from your teachers.
3. Identify a comfortable, quiet space in your home where you can work effectively and successfully .
4. Complete assignments with integrity and academic honesty, doing your best.
5. Do your best to meet timelines, commitments, and due dates.
6. Communicate proactively with your teachers if you cannot meet deadlines or require additional support.
7. Collaborate and support your peers in their learning.
8. Comply with Discovery Christian School's Acceptable Use Policy, including expectations for online etiquette.