

8 Ways to Reduce Digital Distractions During Remote Learning & Homework

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Staying productive to reduce digital distractions during online classes and homework time can pose a challenge to students. This is especially true now as many families have students who must complete some or all of their education online, and from home, during the pandemic.

Keep reading to learn **tips from eight experts** to help your student manage remote learning and homework time without letting social media, games, and apps get in the

way.

1. Set up a designated school space in your home

Melissa Scatena, CEO of [Scattered Solutions](#)

I suggest setting up a homework/homeschool space in your home. Things to keep in mind:

- Try to **choose a quiet space in a less busy part of the house**, an environment that will naturally minimize distractions. It's important to choose this area and stick with it
- Choose functional furniture and stock up on supplies. **We suggest avoiding couches or lap desks and instead opt for a traditional desk or a small table and chair.** Consider adding a soft cushion on the chair — when kids feel uncomfortable, they're more prone to stirring and squirming, leading to distraction and disorganization. With regard to supplies, be sure to stock up on pens, pencils, and markers. We also suggest including a timer on your supplies list, which you can use to give your child a brain break for intervals of uninterrupted work
- **Reserve space for a calendar and to-do list.** Important, visible anchors like these will make your child's in-house homeschool/homework space an area

that encourages building on small tasks to reach larger goals

Melissa recently came on the SmartSocial.com Podcast to share her tips to reduce digital distractions during online classes:

2. Have everyone in your family sign a screen time agreement to help reduce digital distractions

[Josh Ochs](#), Founder of SmartSocial.com

Josh
Ochs

Parents ask me all the time how to know if their child is paying attention to their online class and doing their online assignment- or if they're actually playing Fortnite or scrolling through TikTok. Unless you're always in the same room as your child, it can be difficult to know exactly what your student is up to online. **I always recommend having everyone in your family sign a [smartphone and social media agreement](#) and keeping the dialogue open about digital expectations and consequences.**

The agreement can serve as an icebreaker for parents to cover key safety issues like screen time limits, sexting, cyberbullying, and more. It gives kids a glance at their own responsibilities as internet users and reminds them that using social media in a negative way or when they're not

supposed to can lead to consequences. Make sure the agreement is kept somewhere visible, like on the fridge or on their desk. Regularly referring back to the agreement will remind students of the commitments they made while they are taking remote classes or doing their online homework.

3. Help your students keep their senses activated

Karen Gross, [Author and Educator](#)

Karen
Gross

Parents need to recognize that **many children cannot concentrate for long periods of time in an online class learning setting**. So, distractions are not necessarily all bad. They may give a student a needed breathing space to refocus and settle their minds before they re-engage.

- Offer food to students that they can snack on between classes or while online learning (if the teacher allows). This helps them concentrate more effectively and adds comfort to the experience
- Give students fidget toys to keep their hands busy while they are learning online. This will allow them to get some of their excess energy out
- Let them access online in different physical positions: a chair, a bed, standing, a countertop. Switch up where they learn and see which setting is best for concentration

- Let students do something constructive if they are going to be distracted. That is one reason I wrote a [word play book](#). A riddle book or joke book works too
- Provide students with paper and amazing colored pencils or unique crayons or cray-pas and let them doodle while learning online

The key is to **keep their senses activated and to enable them to use distractions constructively.**

4. Allow teens to take scheduled social media breaks to communicate with friends

Arash Fayz, Executive Director of [LA TUTORS 123](#)

Arash
Fayz

Doing as much homework off the computer as possible will help minimize distractions and prevent burnout from too much screen time. For assignments that do have to be completed online, parents should recognize that it may be impossible for students to completely resist checking their social media or playing a quick game. Here, the flexible schedules of remote learning can actually be a benefit.

Parents should **encourage their child to take short, regular breaks where they are allowed to do whatever they'd like on the computer as long as they then get back to work once they are done.** Something like 25

minutes of studying followed by 5-10 minutes of TikTok is perfectly reasonable for teens, and may get better results out of your child than attempting to ban social media entirely.

During Zoom classes, when students really need to be dedicating their full attention, then parents can be stricter about forbidding social media. Confiscating phones during class time is probably a good idea, and in extreme cases, parents may want to discuss disabling apps for younger students.

In every case, parents should keep in mind that many students are stressed and missing their classmates, so a little more leeway regarding student's attempts to digitally keep in touch with their friends is perfectly reasonable.

5. Create new study habits to embrace a new normal during remote learning

Laura Adams, Analyst at [Aceable](#)

Laura
Adams

Use these tips to minimize distractions, maintain focus, and create new study habits to make the most of digital learning during the pandemic.

- **Turn off unnecessary alerts:** Getting incoming notifications and alerts can derail a student's ability to

concentrate. Make sure computer and phone apps, such as social media, weather, package delivery, and email, are set to be silent during class and study times

- **Keep reminders handy:** Get your student in the habit of writing down one to three goals or tasks they need to accomplish each day on a sticky note. Keeping these goals as a note on their computer or nearby can be an easy way to refocus when distractions arise
- **Use a study partner:** If your student would enjoy social interaction with another good student, having a dedicated partner may help them achieve more. Consider putting a time limit on their communication to make sure the lessons get completed
- **Consider getting a tutor:** At some point, your student is likely to have trouble with a subject. Make sure you communicate the importance of asking for help. If a teacher can't spend enough time with your child, consider hiring an online or in-person tutor, such as an older student
- **Match tasks with energy:** If your student finds it difficult to concentrate on studies during a particular time of day, encourage them to work at a different time. For instance, if they have more focus at night, consider allowing them to study later
- **Use study blocks:** It can be challenging for young people to maintain focus for long periods. Consider setting a timer for study blocks, such as 30 minutes,

and then a 10-minute break. This structure gives students a quick reward for putting in some hard work

6. Create structure with a daily plan

Dylan Howard, [21stCentEd](#) Virtual STEM Academy

One approach to help students focus and to reduce digital distractions is parents helping their kids create structure at home. You do this by creating a plan for the following day at the end of every

Dylan Howard

day. What assignments need to get accomplished? What order do they want to do them in? And by what time do they want to have them done?

For many students, learning remotely gives them the freedom to do their work when, and how they want. Schools not only provide social interaction, but structure to their life. **By creating an at-home structure for school, remote students can be more productive by knowing what they need to do and by what time they would like to be done with it.** This allows time for breaks, lunch, relaxing, etc.

7. Gradually build up restricted device time to reduce digital distractions

Quincy Smith, Founder of [ESL Authority](#)

All students will eventually need the self-discipline to manage this issue themselves, but I have some suggestions for parents who are starting from scratch with kids who have never had any kind of device restrictions before.

Quincy Smith

Our first tip is to slightly limit something outside of school work. For example, a parent of one of my students started by limiting their kids to one hour of video games per day. This was a big adjustment for this student, but eventually, they came to really value this one hour.

Once the student is familiar with the idea of being restricted, apply the same tactic to another device. Our suggestion is to first deny access to their phone for a certain time in the evening, maybe during dinner. Reinforce that it is not permanent and make sure to give the device back on time in order to build trust.

From there, either increase the time period, add an additional hour somewhere in the day, and move into homework time if it's going well. We suggest establishing a set time for homework and limiting phone access during

that time.

This process can continue to scale as needed, but the trick is not to go too far in the beginning. **Parents and teachers need to make it doable for students just starting out and then build up trust and consistency**, so it simply becomes part of the routine.

8. Help your student understand the importance of the schoolwork and homework

Zoie Hoffman, [Hoffman Tutoring Group](#)

As a certified elementary teacher and tutor, Zoie Hoffman has dedicated herself to spending time helping individual students reach their educational goals.

Zoie Hoffman

On this episode of the SmartSocial.com Podcast, Zoie shares her best tips parents can use to prevent screens from turning into homework distractions:

Hoffman says to have a mindset shift about what homework and school work is all about. Some kids think that homework is something they have to get through because their parents and teachers say so. Parents can help by placing the responsibility for getting those things done with

their kids and help them understand why they need to do it.

Have discussions with your child about why homework is important. Here are some talking points:

- Homework allows students to move towards mastery
- The more they practice, the more results they'll see in what they can do academically
- Routinely doing homework will help increase grades and help students better reach their goals

Conclusion

Parents should also show students how to reduce digital distractions when they are working or concentrating on a task. For example, put your phone away when you sit down to write work emails, pay the bills, or make a grocery list. If your child sees you without your phone during those times, it will speak louder than you simply telling them. Model what you want your child to do.

Join Josh's Free Parent/Educator Webinar To Learn The Hidden Safety Features on TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Fortnite, Youtube & Netflix ([Register Here](#))