

Remote Learning Strategies for Students on the Autism Spectrum



Designate a space: Find a quiet area in your home that can be used for remote learning. Try to avoid areas that are commonly used by your child for other activities like eating, gaming, or sleeping as it can be difficult to transition back to learning from those other activities.

Consider the basics: At a minimum, your child will need a surface to work on and a device to use for remote learning. Think about your child's height when selecting a working surface and whether they can pay better attention sitting or standing. Make sure there is room to set up a computer, tablet or other device on that surface that gives a good camera angle for your child and allows them to see images and text for remote lessons. Chairs should be supportive such that your child's back and legs form an "L" shape and allow your child's feet to rest on the floor. If the chair is not the correct height, they can also rest their feet on a step stool or box.

Personalize the space: Consider your child's learning needs and interests when designing the space. Include your child in choices about the space when possible. Try using special interests like TV characters to personalize and motivate your child to use the space and think of it as a fun place to be.

Set up a routine: Before the start of online learning, it may be helpful to set up a routine of going to the online learning space daily. It may help to have a similar routine as you did when your child went to school in person (regular wake up time, morning routine). Another idea is to practice "going to school" by setting up video calls with family or friends in the space. Some children may need to build up to the amount of time they will spend in that space, so you may have

your child start working there for an amount of time you know will be successful and then build up gradually.

Many students with autism have sensory regulatory needs that impact their ability to thrive in a learning environment. We recommend Talking to your child's teacher of record, (TOR) and IEP team about adapting any individual accommodations to your home.

General ideas to consider include:

Seating: Some students with autism may attend better to online learning using simple alternatives to sitting at a desk. Your child may prefer to stand up during online lessons or even walk back and forth across the room. If available and needed, you may want to have a seating option like a bean bag chair or sensory seat cushion to help your child focus.

Fidgets: Many children and adults fidget to stay focused during online meetings. Students with autism may find light sensory input from fidgeting helps them focus too. Some good silent fidget toys to try include liquid timers, foam stress balls, rubix cubes, fidget spinners, and marbles. Some students find chewing gum or doodling with a pen and paper helpful as well. Check in with your child's teacher to see when/if fidgets are appropriate during online lessons.

Headphones: Consider using headphones to reduce auditory distractions, especially if your child will be working with other people in the room (siblings, parents) or in a busy area of the home. Headphones will make the teacher's voice clearer and help your child engage in online learning. Noise cancelling headphones or playing soothing music through headphones may be helpful during independent work times.

Motor movement breaks: Even with other supports in place, it is important to build in time for movement breaks during the day. Depending on what works with your family's schedule and in your home and neighborhood, you could try activities like taking a walk or run, doing jumping jacks, or jumping into a pile of pillows