

Strategies for Teaching Reading Remotely

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By now, it's obvious that the pandemic has disrupted and complicated the way we teach every subject, especially for our youngest learners in preschool and elementary school. For educators, it's been a struggle to adapt lesson plans and strategies for the very subjects that make up the foundation for all future learning. For parents, the challenge has been in how to support their kids from home while balancing other obligations, such as their own career. Furthermore, adults who don't have a background in teaching might find it difficult to support learning when they aren't familiar with the strategies.

Understandably for some subjects, like reading and math, teaching such foundational skills from a distance may make the job even tougher. For instance, teaching students to read and write often means utilizing hands-on activities and manipulatives that help them recognize and form letters. Reading instruction usually takes the form of whole class modeling and small group work that places children with peers with similar abilities. It's easy to wonder how any of this can be possible during this period of virtual

learning. Let's take a closer look at what to keep in mind during online learning, before discovering ideas for reading instruction that can be done from home.

3 Key Rules for Teaching Reading Remotely

According to the [Modern Language Association](#), literacy rates in the United States have been falling even before the pandemic. That said, teaching reading was tough even before classes moved online last spring. If you're a teacher or a parent who is still faced with ongoing virtual learning, it might be helpful to keep a few basic rules in mind:

- First and foremost, foster an early love for reading

As children learn to decode words and make meaning from them, teachers shift to focusing on a couple key aspects to literacy: developing both fluency and comprehension. Fluency refers to one's ability to quickly and accurately read text with knowledge of how those words are expressed. Without fluency—the ability to recognize words and their intonation or expression—reading comprehension, or the ability to understand text, is impossible. Once kids have all the building blocks to develop fluency and comprehension, the next step is to practice, practice, practice!

Studies have long shown that one the best ways to improve reading comprehension and fluency is through independent reading. That said, before kids can read independently, it's crucial that reading is modeled by adults, particularly by their teachers and caregivers. That's why it's so important that adults foster a love for reading early on in a child's life. Both parents and teachers can do this by reading aloud with kids and selecting their favorite children's books to get them excited.

- Offer a variety of books

Kids should be exposed to a wide variety of books and types of text during lessons and while reading at home with their families. Educators can select different books to engage a whole class with during a designated read aloud time, while also providing children with leveled readers that are appropriate for each student's personal reading level. If families aren't able to borrow or pick-up books at the school, perhaps they can print simple guided readers on their printers at home. Let parents know about opportunities to purchase or borrow books, even if those texts are online.

Parents should also choose and offer a wide selection of books by taking advantage of public library services, or by inquiring with teachers and schools. Try to read different types of texts with children, including informational articles on topics that fit personal interests. The key here is to read as much and as often as possible!

- Be receptive to digital tools

When we think of books, most of us think about the experience of holding one in our hands and perhaps the aroma of a freshly bought book. While many adults prefer to read a physical copy, there is a plethora of online tools that can assist children in learning to read. Some of these tools include:

- Microsoft's Immersive Reader tool that reads text online and highlights and enlarges words
- Apps that contain eBooks that offer audio narrations
- Document cameras that teachers can use to project text from a physical book copy to children online
- Virtual magazine subscriptions and/or articles
- Learning apps and games
- YouTube videos of narrated children's books complete with illustrations. Find the complete collection of kids' favorite fairy tales and [online storybooks on our YouTube channel](#) and in the Talented and Gifted app!



Watch on [YouTube](#)

While there is no substitution for reading with a physical copy of a book in hand, the digital tools listed above can go a long way in supporting little learners' developing skills as they conquer literacy and form an early love for reading!

Kids Academy offers innovative digital tools to help kids learn to read and write. Subscribe to the Talented and Gifted app today to find fun ELA lessons, games, storybooks, and worksheets your kids will love!

Tried and True Reading Strategies to Adapt for Online Classes

Now that we have some basic ground rules in place, what can be done in class and at home to support a child's literacy learning? Whether you're an educator or teacher, try the following strategies:

- Make lessons short and sweet

If you've ever been on a Zoom call, then you already know that staring at a screen for a prolonged amount of time is brutal. As difficult as it is for adults to stay focused when teleconferencing with others, it's even harder for a wiggly, energetic first grader! Think about it: managing student behavior and keeping them all on task and focused is tough, even on a normal day in any classroom. But keeping them attentive when students face distractions all around them can prove nearly impossible.

Even though it may seem as if instructional time is being cut, it is critical that teachers and parents keep learning—and reading—sessions short. Think of lessons that are delivered in short bursts. Engage kids for an appropriate amount of time given their age and take a break. Space out reading and writing tasks throughout the day, so students avoid becoming exhausted from trying to maintain intense focus for too long.

- Try a digital read aloud each day

Many educators plan reading time into their daily routines. Sometimes this looks like starting the day in the front of the classroom on rugs, all gathered around the instructor. In other classes, it may be at another designated time of the day that promotes reading as a positive daily activity. Keep this same routine in your digital classes, choosing a big colorful book that will hook your students' attention. Make it a fun way to kick off the day, begin a lesson, or wind down from lunch.

Parents: the same thing, instead making reading aloud an important part of your child's daily or bedtime routine. The book doesn't have to be digital, but feel free to expand your book selection by utilizing apps or finding informational articles about topics kids love!



- Make reading as fun as possible

One common theme of the above tips is to keep reading engaging, interesting, and downright fun! Make it an exciting celebration in your home or classroom. Try connecting other activities, such as art projects or games to the books children read. By engaging them in the world of the story outside of their reading sessions, they learn to see reading as something they love to do and will want to read more often!

- Get creative! Take reading outdoors or inspire kids to write stories about their adventures

Virtual classes can actually offer a bit of flexibility when it comes to lessons and the time spent on classwork. For instance, from home, it may be easier to task students with going outside to find inspiration for their reading. As parents, sessions can be hosted outdoors for a change of scenery.

That said, get creative in assigning reading and writing tasks; tell families to take a walk outside to find something in nature that inspires them to write a story. Alternatively, challenge kids to read books in different settings, such as on the back porch, under a tree, or laying on a picnic blanket in the backyard to help make reading fun and associate it with positive emotions. Just like a teacher may create a nook or corner in the

classroom, encourage kids to make their own at home, and to share their favorite space with the class!

There's no doubt that the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way teachers teach and parents support their children in learning basic foundational skills such as reading and writing. While the thought of the potential learning loss is frightening, we must learn to adapt practices until school can get back to something closer to normal. In fact, the tips above can assist young learners for years to come as teachers find digital strategies that work in the classroom as well. Utilize these strategies and remember that the most important aspect to teaching reading remotely is about promoting a love for text and practicing as much as possible!

