

# Balancing Working from Home and Homeschooling

I had the worst dream last night. In my dream my husband and I were both working from home, and (this is the wacky part) all of the schools closed, so we were also trying to homeschool our child. Then I woke up and realized it wasn't a dream. It was my life.

Over the last few weeks, COVID-19 has turned the world upside down. Some parents are living in areas that are in lock-down, while others are practicing voluntary shelter-in-place. With schools closed indefinitely, working parents are in uncharted territory.

Many working parents are doing their best to keep their children on track academically while also keeping up with work assignments. While today's technology makes it possible; it's not easy. Here are some steps you can take to make this extremely difficult situation more manageable.

**Communicate with your child's teachers.** It's important to remember that teachers were no more prepared for this than parents. Like everyone else, they are learning on the fly. Since they are the experts on your child's education, keeping the lines of communication open is important.

How much work homeschooling requires of you will largely depend on your child's school. In some districts, teachers are emailing daily assignments, while others are hosting online classes. Some are doing very little. If your child's school is continuing to provide support, ask the teachers to estimate how long assignments should take to complete. If classes are being held online, find out what platform is being used and if there is a user guide to assist parents.

**Communicate with your employer.** With so many people losing their jobs due to shutdowns, those who are able to work from home are grateful. Many, but not all, employers and supervisors understand that this situation is challenging for working parents.

Still, just because you're able to work from home, you can't assume that means there will be flexibility in your day. Therefore, it is important to know what your employer expects from you as you work remotely. For example, are you supposed to be at your laptop or available by phone during set hours, or can you make your own schedule? Have project deadlines been extended given the circumstances, or is it business as

usual? You may also consider checking with human resources to see if your company has a remote-work policy.

**Set up workstations.** Designate a place where you plan to work and where your child can study. If your child is an independent learner, then it makes sense to set up their workspace in one area and yours in another. However, if your child needs monitoring, you may consider setting up both workspaces in the same room.

**Create a schedule.** Your game plan is not written in stone. In fact, it shouldn't be, as you will probably need to make adjustments as you learn what works and doesn't work for your family. Starting off with even a general plan can be helpful because it provides a sense of structure. Following a plan can help your family develop a routine, which can be very comforting and calming when everything else in the world seems to be turned upside down.

The age of your children, the expectations of the school, and the type of work you do will all factor into your family's unique game plan, which means not everyone's plan is going to look the same. Some parents may rise early to work for a few hours before their children wake up. Others may spend the entire morning on homeschool assignments and devote the afternoon and evenings to their own work. There is no one way to do this. You just have to develop a way that works for you.

**Call in reinforcement if needed.** Some parents have partnered with neighbors to share homeschooling responsibilities. Others have hired a tutor or babysitter to help with the children, while the parents work. Some have family members in the area that are helping share the load. At the end of the day, you are just one person and can only do so much.

**Give yourself a break.** It is impossible to give 100 percent of yourself to work projects and 100 percent to homeschooling. As a working parent, you're used to the delicate give and take between your work responsibilities and parenting duties. COVID-19 is taking that complicated balance to a whole new level. Be generous with yourself when you make a mistake or something falls through the cracks. Remember, this is an unprecedented situation, and it will not last forever.