



Istation



# At Home Learning Parent Playbook

## Preparing Students for Success with At Home Learning

Welcome to the **At Home Learning Parent Playbook**. Supporting educators and empowering students has always been at the heart of Istation's mission. Now, with an unprecedented number of challenges facing education, we recognize that the connection between school and home is more important than ever. Istation has created this resource for you to share with parents and guardians to empower them in their at-home learning efforts.

Istation has rallied our team of professional development experts — all former educators themselves — to give you the best research-based, easy-to-use teaching tips. These strategies are universal and applicable whether students use Istation's blending learning program for reading, math, or Spanish literacy.

This playbook features high-level teaching tips from Istation's **Red Cape Classroom** video series, now available at [YouTube.com/IstationED](https://www.youtube.com/IstationED). We've curated the best of the episodes right here in the playbook. We hope you find this playbook helpful, and please feel free to share this free resource!

— Your friends at Istation

#RedCapeNation

## Why Children Need Routine

Routines can give children a sense of organization, stability, and comfort. But they also have a major impact on learning. Here are some tips on establishing and maintaining a routine at home.

**“Keeping a routine to help organize life at home is very important. We don’t want things to become chaotic.”**

— Joyce Cullop, Istation professional development specialist and former elementary teacher.

- **Children thrive on routine.** Children follow a lot of routines during their day. They wake up at the same time each day, eat breakfast, and go to sleep at roughly the same time each day. They thrive when they know what’s going to happen next.
- **It’s good to keep learning.** Parents don’t want children to lag behind in academic performance. Talk with your children about important things they need to cover each day.

Work together to develop a schedule that works for them so learning can continue.

- **Routine reduces anxiety.** Parents might be working from home in addition to teaching their children. Routines help maintain consistency for activities throughout the day. Include time in your routine where children have activities that they can do on their own while parents work.



## How to Set Up a Home Classroom

Research shows that the home learning environment plays a big role in supporting child development and academic success. Follow these tips to set up a successful home classroom.

- **Build a space.** Dedicate a space in your house separate from the spaces that kids occupy the rest of the day. Have children participate in setting it up.
- **Prepare supplies.** Have the supplies on hand that your kids will need: chargers, devices, books, binders, and pencils.
- **Write out a schedule.** Write out daily schedules on a piece of paper, a large whiteboard, or even consider using dry erase markers on windows so that everyone is on the same page about what they’re doing.
- **Take breaks.** Take scheduled breaks throughout the day. Get up and move around every 45 minutes when they have completed

a couple of subjects. For middle school-aged kids, try taking a few 15-minute breaks throughout the day. Go outside and get some fresh air.

**“Have a separate space. That can be as simple as your dining room table, but just make sure it’s a dedicated space.”**

— Sarah Cude, Istation professional development specialist and mother of two.

- **Sum up the day.** Creating closure at the end of the day is another important tip to remember. Ask them reflective questions like: What went well today? What worked? How did it go? How did you feel about it? Is there anything we need to change? How can I help you be more successful during the day?

## Integrate Blended Learning

Blended learning is more than just technology integration. Consider these strategies:

- **Start blending instruction.** What different types of materials or resources are you currently using to work with your child? Your children's teachers may be using video conferencing or print off worksheets to lead lessons. Feel empowered to use a variety of resources like games, worksheets, or videos

## 5 Tips for Finding Balance at Home

Parents, give yourself some grace. Working from home and maintaining your child's distance learning schedule is hard! Here are simple tips for finding balance.

1. **Give yourself grace.** It's okay if things aren't going the way you think they're supposed to. Take a deep breath and be kind to yourself.
2. **Change your expectations.** Teaching is about being adaptable. While teachers are sending over lists of things for you to do with your child, remember that they are just plans. Understand that things are not going to always go as planned, and that's when you go back to tip #1.
3. **Get creative with resources.** There are a lot of museums, zoos and more offering free online tours and activities. Be creative in meeting some of your child's educational standards.
4. **Keep a schedule.** Children may have a hard time with changes in their schedules. They're used to routine. They're used to knowing that they get up at 7 a.m. They pack their lunch. They go to school. They eat lunch at a certain time. Make a schedule, and don't forget to schedule some time for yourself as well!
5. **Laugh, hug, and build memories.** Amid the hustle and bustle we sometimes forget to focus on the most important people in our lives: the ones we live with in our home. Laugh with them and hug them.

when working with your child.

- **Practice and learn with others.** Don't be afraid to ask for help. Search for simple, direct online tutorials that will help you get started with new tools at home. For instance, Istation's Youtube channel is full of helpful resources.
- **Keep communication open with your child's online community.** Remember you're not alone. Make an effort to communicate daily with your child's teachers and encourage them to talk with classmates. Older students can check in with one another through text or email. Teachers may be offering one-on-one or group video chats each day to keep in touch. Set up personal online meetings with your child's teacher to ask any questions or go over assignments.

## Instill a Love of Reading

Instilling a love of reading at an early age unlocks the door to lifelong learning. Research shows that developing early literacy skills impacts future academic success. Learn the basics of reading instruction and discover helpful resources to foster children's passion for reading.

- **There are many great reasons to read.** Reading provides an escape and reduces stress. It increases vocabulary, builds focus longevity, and is a great chance to bond with your children.
- **Make reading accessible.** Have a place in your house for children's books. Make sure the books are at your child's height and reading level, but include some books a bit above their reading level as well so they can push and grow their skills. Finally, include all types of books for your children to read, such as animal books, science books, puzzle books, etc.
- **Find books everywhere.** **Many books are available on Istation**, but you can also check out books from a public library, pick them up at low cost from thrift shops, trade with friends and more.





## Keep Your Child Focused

How can we ensure our children stay focused on learning a new skill or subject? Follow these 11 steps to help your child concentrate and keep frustration at bay.

- 1. Prepare for the day.** Remember that advanced planning produces excellent learning. Develop a routine and maintain a level of consistency in schedules. Adults and children alike enjoy routines. They give us a sense of security and comfort. We know what the expectations are.
- 2. Set up your environment.** Choose a quiet, peaceful location that is well lit and free of distractions.
- 3. Display a daily schedule.** Find a schedule template that works best for you and meets the needs of your child. Edit one that you find on the internet to include activities your child will be accomplishing during their day.
- 4. Limit distractions.** If there are posters, pictures, or other things on the walls that might distract the child, try removing them. Additionally, turn off televisions or radios and silence cell phones. Kids need to understand that the academic process is important, and learning still continues even at home.
- 5. Pace the day.** There's no need to rush through the lessons. When necessary, it's okay to use a timer to stay on track, but make sure your child isn't rushing their work.
- 6. Incorporate mini breaks.** Strategically place 10-to-15 minute breaks in your schedule. Allow your child to use the restroom, get a drink, and exercise. A quick break can help keep children focused.
- 7. Change up the learning experience.** If you've been using workbooks or printed worksheets, consider adding some hands-on learning. You can use experiential learning and teach the academic skills you need to cover that day. For example, there are a lot of math skills that can be learned through playing the board game Monopoly. Consider a simpler math game for younger children like the card game Go Fish.
- 8. Eat a balanced diet.** Be mindful of the amount of sugar your child consumes and consider adding more "brain foods." Things like blueberries and the omega-3 fatty acids found in walnuts are good for the brain.
- 9. Include your child in the planning.** If you create a visual chart showing the objectives that need to be accomplished, include your child in making decisions regarding activities to meet those objectives. This is where that hands-on, experiential learning could come into play.
- 10. Provide incentives when necessary.** Some incentives might include giving your child extra screen time after school-at-home is complete.
- 11. Keep it fun!** Enjoy learning with your child and keep it fun!

## Work Vocabulary Into the Day

Expanding your child's vocabulary helps boost language development and reading comprehension. Learn how to turn everyday fun like playing games and singing silly songs into exciting vocabulary lessons!

- **Spend time reading.** Reading is the most important way to practice vocabulary. Read to your child and have them read to you. Even reading separate books together in the same room can be a great way to spend time with your child. While they are reading, have your child write down any unfamiliar or unique words and do the same yourself. Then share the list with your child. Have conversations with your child about these words and what they mean.

**“Any time that you can take those words that they’re learning from their vocabulary and write them down in a coherent way to make a story, that’s going to help reinforce their understanding.”**

— Julie Robinson, Istation professional development specialist.

- **Listen to music.** Listening to music and singing can expose your child to more words. Sing some of your favorite songs with your child and talk about any words that may be unfamiliar to them.
- **Play games that strengthen vocabulary.** The games 21 Questions, I Spy, Charades, Pictionary, and Scrabble are all fun ways to practice vocabulary. You can also play Word of the Day with your child by picking a new word from your child's vocabulary lists each day and trying to work it into conversation as often as possible.
- **Improvise story-telling can get the whole family involved.** Try telling an improvised story while sitting around the dinner table. Start with an easy prompt and go around the table, having each person add to the narrative. Writing the story instead of

telling it is a great way to work on writing skills as well.

- **Label your home.** Spend time with your child going through the house and labeling objects with sticky notes. It's another way to put an image with the vocabulary word and gives you a chance to talk about different words throughout the day.

## Teaching an English Learner? Start Here.

Teaching English learners requires more than just a firm grasp on language. One of the biggest things that we can do to help English learners is build vocabulary.

- **Start building vocabulary with instructions.** Start with the instructions provided from your child's teacher. Instructions are academic vocabulary and a great start for your English learner. Ask your child if they understand the assignment instructions and have them explain the instructions in their own words. This helps with summarizing and retelling skills as well.
- **Keep a vocabulary list.** When your child is reading, have them keep a notebook to create a vocabulary list. Have your child list any words they don't know or may not fully understand. Later, have them look up the meaning and write it down next to the word; it can be a definition or a picture or a synonym. When your child knows the word, mark it off.
- **Use the vocabulary list.** Once your child has learned the words, it is important to reinforce them through use. Make vocabulary cards from the word lists your children built and play games with them. When your child is writing, have them use these words.

## Teach Your Child to Journal

Journaling is a great way for children to work through their emotions while practicing skills like handwriting, reading, critical thinking, and more! Check out these practical examples of how to journal with your children.

- **Lead by example.** By starting your own journal, you send the message to your children that writing is important. Talk about the importance of reading and writing with your child, and remember to set aside time for writing. This can be a great opportunity to connect with your child.
- **Lean into creativity with journaling.** Consider incorporating a journal box. Filling a journal box with ideas allows you and your child to come up with neat ideas together. These could include prompts that say for

example, I like..., I love..., or I know... Others could include things like writing a letter to a friend or even drawing or doodling experiences or emotions.



## The Nuts and Bolts of a Learning Station

Empower children to stay engaged while learning outside of the classroom! Here is an easy-to-follow blueprint for creating effective learning stations.

- **What is a learning station?** A learning station is an area in the classroom where students work alone or with one another and use instructional materials to explore and expand their learning. It's a place with a variety of activities to reinforce or extend learning — often without the assistance of the classroom teacher.
- **Reasons to use learning stations.** Learning stations can help children focus on specific types of instruction while reinforcing routines and schedules.
- **Types of learning stations.** Teachers use all sorts of learning stations in classrooms, including reading stations, writing stations, math stations, science stations, computer stations, and listening stations. You can get ideas from your child's teacher!
- **Build learning stations at home.** Consider the space you have available. Set up multiple stations in one area or designate areas throughout the house. Next, gather and organize the station materials. Your child should have all the resources necessary for the activity readily available and then be able to easily clean up and put things away when finished. Finally, create a short list of choices for how to use the learning stations, such as writing prompts for a writing station or different books for a reading station. This gives your child controlled choices.
- **Implement the learning stations in your child's day.** Start small with just one learning station per day before adding more, but begin rotating between learning stations once you're running several. Make sure to set expectations for how your child should use and clean up the workstation. Making a chart of expectations for what should be seen and heard at each station can help your child understand what is expected of them. You can have multiple children work on the same station or at separate stations.



# Istation

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**Changing Lives.**

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