



SAIGON STAR
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

10 Distance Learning Guidelines for Parents

The transition to distance learning is a challenging one for all families. Parents need to think differently about how to support their children: how to create structures and routines that support learning, and how to monitor and support their children's learning. Some students thrive with distance learning, whilst others may struggle. These ten guidelines are intended to help parents think about what they can do to help their children be successful in a distance learning environment.

1—Establish routines and expectations - Parents need to establish routines and expectations. Saigon Star encourages parents to set regular hours for their children's school work. Keep normal bedtime routines for younger children and expect the same from your Middle Years students, too (don't let them stay up late and sleep in!) Your children should move regularly and take periodic breaks as they study. Pupils should come online having eaten breakfast, dressed and started the day in a fairly routine way. They need to sit at a table, if possible, and should not lounge in bed or lie down to take part in online video sessions. Siblings should not encroach on each other's webcam sessions.

2—Define the physical space for your child's study - Your child may have a regular place for doing home-learning under normal circumstances, but this space may or may not be suitable for an extended period of time. We encourage families to establish a space/location where their children will learn most of the time. This should be somewhere that is quiet most of the time and has a strong wireless internet signal, if possible. Preferably, it would be in a space that is not a child's bedroom but most important is that it is a space where parents can easily and regularly monitor their child's engagement.

3—Monitor communications from your children's teachers - Teachers will communicate with parents through email or seesaw (depending on the age of the class), when and as necessary. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your children's ages, maturity, and their degree of independence. Saigon Star wants parents to contact their children's teachers. However, we ask parents to remember that teachers will be communicating with dozens of other families, and that communications should be essential and succinct.

4—Begin and end each day with a check-in - Parents are encouraged to start and finish each day with a simple check-in. Following the introduction of each task, parents are encouraged to ask: What are you learning? Is that knowledge, skill or understanding? What resources do you require? How will you know if you've been successful? This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they've received from their teachers. It also helps them organise themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins with parents (that's normal!) but they should, nevertheless. Parents should establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day. Not all students thrive in a distance learning environment; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines need to ensure students do not

fall behind or begin to struggle.

5—Take an active role in helping your children process and own their learning - In the course of a regular school day at Saigon Star, your son or daughter engages with other students or adults dozens if not hundreds of times. These social interactions and opportunities for mediation include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification, collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. While some of these social interactions will be re-created on virtual platforms, others will not. Human beings learn best when they have opportunities to process their learning with others. Beyond the check-ins recommended at the start and end of each day, parents should regularly circle back and engage with their children about what they're learning. However, it's important that your child takes responsibility and ownership over their work; don't complete assignments for them, even when they are struggling.

6—Establish times for quiet and reflection - A huge challenge for families with multiple children will be how to manage all of their children's needs, especially when those children are different ages and have different needs. There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction. Parents may even experiment with noise-cancelling headphones (no music necessary!) to block out distractions.

7—Encourage physical activity and/or exercise - Make sure your children remember to move and exercise. This is vitally important to their health, wellbeing, and to their learning. Where possible, Saigon Star teachers will recommend activities or exercises, but it is important for parents to model and encourage exercise themselves. Think also about how your children can pitch-in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Don't let your children off the hook!

8—Remain mindful of your child's stress or worry - It is imperative for parents to help their children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of other emotions they may experience. Difficult though it may be, be mindful of transferring your stress or worry to your children. Children notice. They will feel off balance, whether they admit it or not, and need as much normal routine as parents can provide.

9—Monitor how much time your child is spending online - Saigon Star does not want its students staring at computer screens for 7-8 hours a day. At the same time, we ask that parents remember most teachers are not experts in distance learning and that it will require some trial-and-error to find the right balance between online and offline learning experiences. As such, phase leaders or teachers will periodically check in with you to assess what you're seeing at home and what we need to adjust. We thank you for your patience and feedback on this.

10—Keep your children social, but set rules around their social media interactions - When students start missing their friends, classmates and teachers, help your children to maintain contact with friends and see them in person when circumstances permit. Please, also monitor your children's social media use, especially older students who will rely more on social media to communicate with friends. Social media apps such as SnapChat, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Facebook are not official, school-sanctioned channels of communication, therefore, Saigon Star asks parents to monitor their children's use of social media. Remind your children to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values in their interactions with others.

Content adapted from The American School, Japan.