UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute Autism Team

Supporting Online Learning for Students with Autism

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Many schools across the country have moved to partial or full-time online instruction due to the coronavirus (COVID-19), creating uncertainty and stress for many families and students with autism. It may feel challenging or overwhelming adjusting to remote learning, navigating new learning platforms, and making sure that learning is occurring.

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Autism Focused Intervention
Resources & Modules

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5 Strategies to Support Online Learning for Individuals with ASD

Create a learning space & limit distractions

Create a schedule

Access learning platforms

Support active participation & social connection

Maintain healthy habits & take breaks

The purpose of this guide is to prepare families and their children for online learning. This guide was created in response to teacher and parent feedback about challenges faced by students with autism when transitioning to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The logistical and social nuances of online learning may be particularly challenging for students with autism. This guide is intended to provide support to families and their children and offer tools that can increase the likelihood of success.

We want to acknowledge what a difficult time this is for families who are balancing work, virtual learning for their child with autism (and often other children in the home), and the many other demands/stressors of this time. Choose just 1-2 strategies to address the issue that is creating the most immediate concern for your family/child.

For more resources for students with autism and their families, including those for understanding and coping with these uncertain times, please see *Supporting Individuals with Autism through Uncertain Times* and *Supporting Adults with Autism through Uncertain Times: Companion Guide*.

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Create a Learning Space and Limit Distractions

Many children and young adults with autism are now learning in their home setting due to building closures or physical distancing requirements. To build new routines and support online learning, it will be helpful to create a designated learning space and reduce distractions. Several helpful tips are described below:
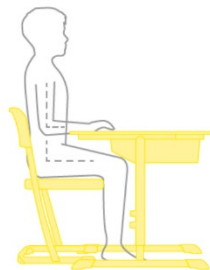
Designate a space: Find a quiet area in your home that can be used for online learning. Try to avoid areas that are commonly used by your child for other activities like eating, playing, using screens, or sleeping as it can be difficult to transition back to learning from those other activities. If possible, declutter that area of your home and set it aside to primarily be used for online learning. The fewer distractions, the better!

Consider the basics: At a minimum, your child will need a surface to work on and a device to use for online 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 at a distance that gives a good camera angle for your child and allows them to see images and text for online 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.

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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 IEP team about adapting any individual accommodations to your home. Here are some general ideas to consider:

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 to 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's cubes, fidget spinners, and marbles. Some students find chewing gum or doodling with pen and paper helpful as well. Check in with your child's teacher to see when/if fidgets are appropriate during online learning lessons.

Headphones: Consider using headphones to reduce auditory distractions, especially if your child will be working with other people in the room (siblings, parents, neighborhood learning group) or in a busy area of the home. Headphones will make the instructor'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.

Resources include:
Structuring an Area for Online Learning
Learning Space Checklist
Social Narrative: School is at Home

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Structuring an Area for Online Learning

1. **Organize the table/desk area from left to right** where the left side of the space is for tasks that need to be completed, the middle is cleared for working, and the right side is designated for materials that are finished. You may want to provide bins/baskets that are clearly labeled as work "to do" and work that is "finished."
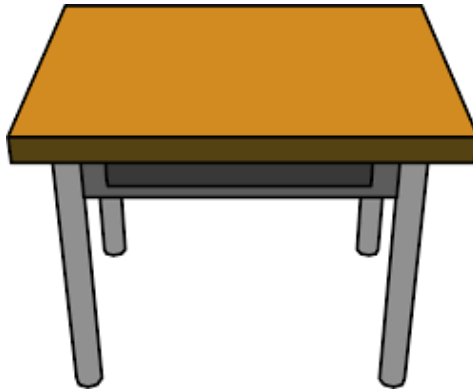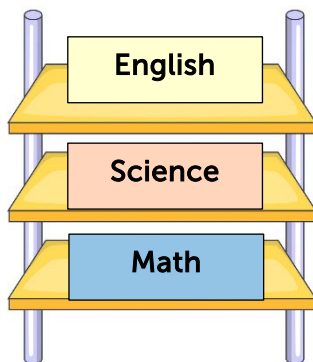
2. **Color code** materials by subject to stay organized or use favorite characters to personalize materials for organization. For example, a Marvel comic character could identify each subject.
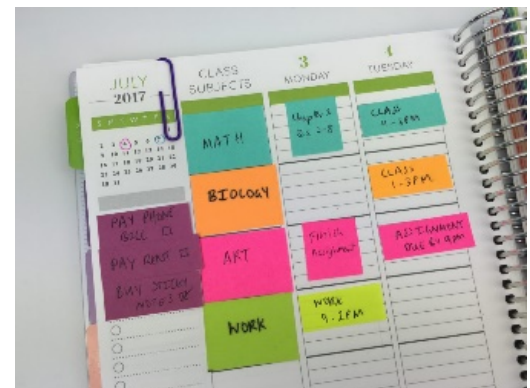
3. **Create physical barriers** between your child's work area and other parts of the room. This may be especially important if multiple students are working in a room of the house or the room serves multiple purposes. Use rugs, shelving, a tri-fold presentation board, curtains, etc. to distinguish one area from the other.

Based on principles of structured teaching which originated from the University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program.

Learning Space Checklist

❑ Pick a dedicated learning space with good lighting

❑ Set a learning schedule (see the next section for tips on creating a learning schedule)

❑ Clear any clutter or items that may be distracting

❑ BUT leave some personal preferred items – check in with your child for ideas

❑ Ensure equipment and/or devices are charged, plugged in, and are working correctly

❑ Organize needed materials – this may include a notebook and pencil to take notes

❑ Clean up the space at the end of the school day
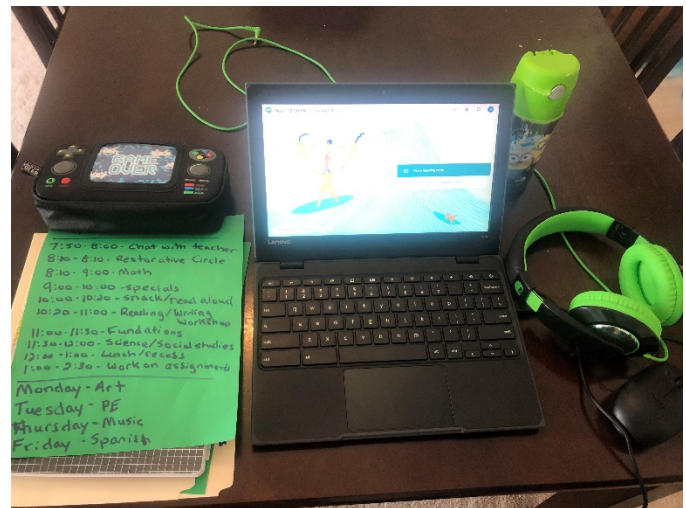
School is at Home

There is a virus that is making people sick. My school is closed so

that students and teachers do not get sick. Even though I am at

home, I can still learn. My class meets on the computer instead

of at school. I pay attention to the teacher and participate in

class. It is important that I stay on topic and use kind words just

like I would at school. I will go back to school when it is safe to

learn there. Learning at home keeps me, my family, and my

friends safe and healthy. If I get worried about the virus, I can

talk to my family or teachers.

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Create a Schedule

Visual supports can help students understand a basic schedule and create routines during this unusual school year. Often students with autism have trouble understanding the abstract concept of time which can lead to confusion and/or stress about when they will see familiar people, complete preferred activities, and finish tasks. Expectations may be confusing during this time of online learning during which your child may complete all of their learning at home, go to school on an irregular schedule, or go to a new or different location for online learning support. Having a monthly, weekly, and/or daily schedule can help manage some of the uncertainty.

Countdowns, checklists for tasks, and timers can be used as visual supports for within a task or activity. These help your child to understand what is expected for certain learning times and when learning times will be finished. Making time a more concrete concept throughout the day may decrease uncertainty during online learning.

Resources include:
Countdown Example
Visual Timer
Timer Apps
Daily Schedule Template
Daily Schedule Example
Daily Schedule Example Using Stickie Notes
Morning Meeting Checklist Example
Guided Reading Time Checklist Example
Math Time Checklist Example
Monthly Schedule Template
Monthly Schedule Example
College Weekly Schedule Template
College Weekly Schedule Example

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Countdown Example

5

4

3

2

1

⏻ Power Off

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Visual Timer Using Stickie Notes

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Timer Apps

Childrens Countdown Timer Free (in-app $)	**Visual Timer** Free (in-app $)	**Stopwatch Timer** Free (in-app $)
Kids Timer+ $0.99	**Stopwatch & Timer+** $4.49	**Tabata Timer** $2.00
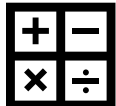
Daily Schedule Template

Task	Done

Daily Schedule Example
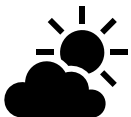
Task	Done
Morning meeting	
Work alone – math	
Small group	
Eat Lunch	
Work alone – ELA	
Exercise (30 minutes)	

Pictures from Microsoft Word Icons

Daily Schedule Example Using Stickies

Task	To Be Done	Done
Class meeting on computer		✔
Work independently		✔
Eat lunch	✔	
Break & Free choice	✔	
Small group meeting on computer	✔	
Work independently	✔	

Morning Meeting Checklist Example

Task	Done
Login	
Wave 'Hello'	
Sing 'Good Morning' song	
Weather check	
Answer daily question(s)	
Wave 'Goodbye'	
Snack time	

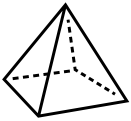*Pictures from Microsoft Word Icons*

Guided Reading Checklist Example

Task	Done?
Login	
Watch lesson	
Read independently	
Complete reading assignment	
Reflect/Practice writing	
Free choice	

Pictures from Microsoft Word Icons

Math Time Checklist Example

Task	Done?
Login	
Watch lesson	
Complete computer activity	
Complete math assignment	
Practice	
Free choice	

Monthly Schedule Template

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Monthly Schedule Example

September

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Learn from Home	**2** School	**3** Learn from Home	**4** Learn from Home	**5** Home
6 Home	**7** No School	**8** Learn from Home	**9** School	**10** Learn from Home	**11** School	**12** Home
13 Home	**14** School	**15** Learn from Home	**16** School	**17** Learn from Home	**18** Learn from Home	**19** Home
20 Home	**21** School	**22** Learn from Home	**23** School	**24** Learn from Home	**25** School	**26** Home
27 Home	**28** School	**29** Learn from Home	**30** School			

Weekly Planner Template for College Students

WEEK OF:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00 AM							
7:30 AM							
8:00 AM							
8:30 AM							
9:00 AM							
9:30 AM							
10:00 AM							
10:30 AM							
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11:30 AM							
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11:00 PM							

NOTES:

Weekly Planner Example for College Students

WEEK OF: August 31, 2020

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00 AM							
7:30 AM							
8:00 AM	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST		
8:30 AM							
9:00 AM	English 101 Zoom	English 101 Assignment	English 101 Zoom	Walk	English 101 Zoom		
9:30 AM						BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST
10:00 AM					English 101 Assignment	Laundry	Walk
10:30 AM							
11:00 AM	Psychology 103 Watch Recording	Statistics 150 Assignment	Statistics 150 Watch Recording	Statistics 150 Assignment			
11:30 AM					Catch Up Assignment Study		
12:00 PM							
12:30 PM							
1:00 PM	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
1:30 PM						Work	
2:00 PM	Music 210 Zoom		Music 210 Zoom	Music 210 Assignment	Psychology 103 Study		
2:30 PM							
3:00 PM		Statistics 150 Zoom-Office Hours					Statistics Zoom Study Group
3:30 PM				Grocery Store			
4:00 PM	Psychology 103 Study		Psychology 103 Study		Psychology 103 Weekly Quiz		
4:30 PM							
5:00 PM							
5:30 PM							
6:00 PM	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER
6:30 PM							
7:00 PM		Virtual Game Night		Work	Movie Night		
7:30 PM							
8:00 PM							
8:30 PM							
9:00 PM							
9:30 PM							
10:00 PM							
10:30 PM							
11:00 PM							

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Access Learning Platforms

Schools offering remote learning options are using a variety of online learning platforms and tools. Each has their own set of procedures, specific to both the platform and the individual schools/sites. Several of the most used are highlighted below, along with some tips about how to ask for help if you or your child is having difficulty using any of them.

How to login to the site: Most online platforms require your child's school email address and/or a login or code set up by your child's teacher. If you do not know that information, contact your child's teacher so your child does not miss any material. Emails for teachers can often be found on the school's website.

Forgot login or password: On most sites there is a cue that will ask "Forgot your Password?" Click that link and it will allow you to reset the password. It is a good idea to keep track of passwords somewhere safe, like your Notes page on your phone, on a private Google doc, or in a notebook.

Device is not working: If the device is not working for some reason, then you need to let your teacher know if your child will miss a class session or an assignment. You can call or email if you have a phone available. Make sure the device is charged and plug it in if necessary (and remember to charge it each night). You may need to ask your child's teacher to connect you with the technology support staff at your school. Save that person's email address/phone number also. If it will take several days for your device to be fixed, let your child's teacher know so they can arrange another way to get materials to/from your child.

Resources include:
Tips for Online Learning
Creating a Safe Online Learning Environment
Joining Zoom
Joining Google Classroom
Joining Canvas
Educational Resources for Kids
Additional Resources for College Students

Tips for Online Learning

Students with autism may have varied levels of knowledge about accessing online learning, such as how to use equipment, and/or how to participate. Below are several basic tips to provide guidance in what is a new learning environment for many.

1. Use a desktop or laptop with a webcam.

2. Using a computer headset or earbuds will help to greatly reduce the chance for feedback and improve your voice quality.

3. Try to find a room by yourself with a strong internet connection. Do not work outside since wind blowing and other background noises could be distracting.

4. Close all other programs. They can interfere with the quality of the Zoom or other virtual platform sessions.

5. Remember that others will be able to see whatever is behind you.

6. A bright light source behind you, such as a window, will cause you to appear as a dark shadow. It is most helpful to have a light source in front of you—behind the camera.

7. Follow the teacher's directions for when it is time to be muted or unmuted.

8. Do not hesitate to check in with your teacher during their remote office hours if you have questions accessing learning platforms and assignments.
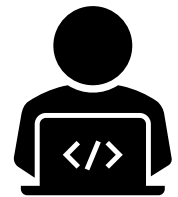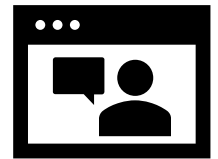
Creating a Safe Online Learning Environment

Even if students are aware of their screen time limits and appropriate online behavior, internet access is very hard to manage. Simple web searches can accidentally result in mature content. It is unreasonable to expect that parents will provide 100% supervision of their child's online use, especially if they are also trying to work from home. This is why we recommend using the following tips to put parental controls on the devices children use for online learning, gaming, and socializing.

❑ Enable Google Safe Search in whichever browser(s) you use. Make sure that Google is the default search engine on that device and then turn on Safe Search to ensure your child does not see inappropriate content while doing Google searches for school. For younger kids, you may want to delete the default web browser and download a child safe app such Mobicip instead: https://apps.apple.com/us/app/mobicip-safe-browser-parental/id299153586

❑ All computer operating systems (Mac OS, Windows, Amazon Fire) have parental control settings. Make sure your operating system is updated to the most recent version. Set individual profiles for users on that device so that your child's profile is most secure. The settings apply to anything the computer accesses.

❑ If your child is particularly distracted by certain online content (e.g., games, searching topic of interest on Google, YouTube channels), you may need to block access to that content entirely during online learning. That may mean taking access to that content off the device used for online learning or blocking it during times that online learning takes place.

❑ Restrict screen time on devices. In iOS, use the Screen Time feature. On Windows 10 devices, use account.microsoft.com/family to set controls. This can also be done through router settings.

❑ Remember to set parental restrictions on app purchases, Amazon accounts, music/movie/game downloads, and other accounts before allowing your child to use a device.

Joining Zoom

1. Click the Zoom meeting link from your email or online learning platform. Zoom should automatically open to download.
    i. If the download does not automatically open, you can right click the file and click *Open* to start the download process. Follow the prompts to download.
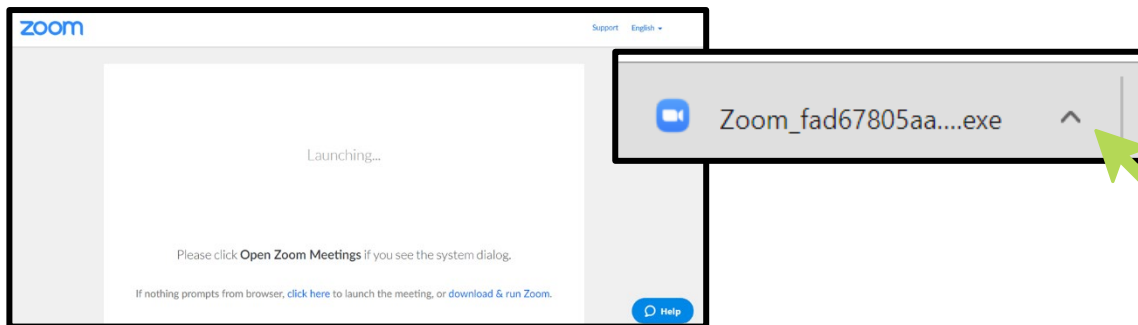
2. Test your audio and video settings
    i. Click *Join with Video* or *Join without Video*
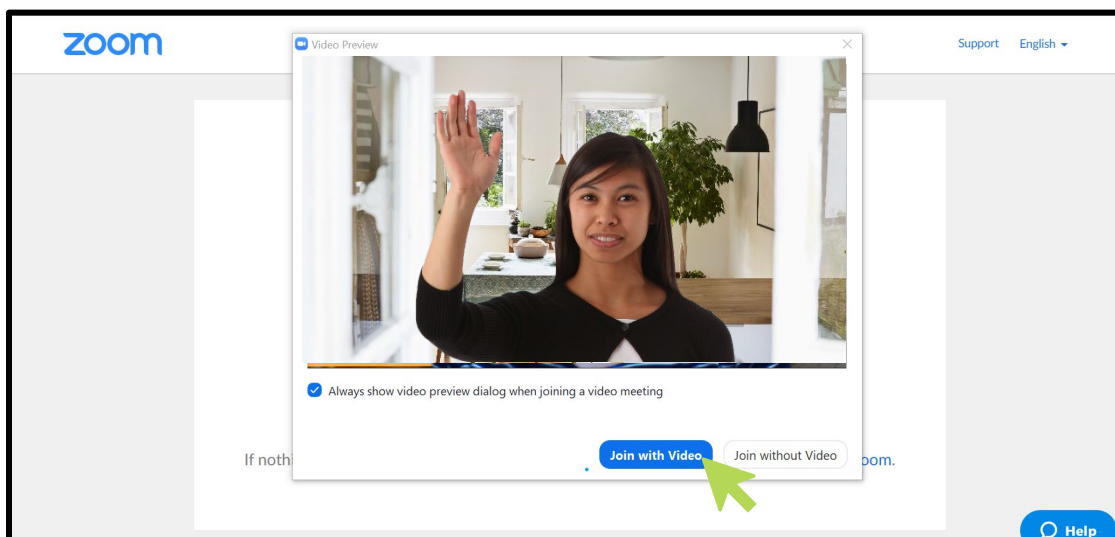
3. Your video screen will open. You can see the volume and video settings in the lower left screen.

   i. Click the *arrow next to the mute button* to select your microphone and speaker, test your speaker and microphone, and click for additional audio settings.
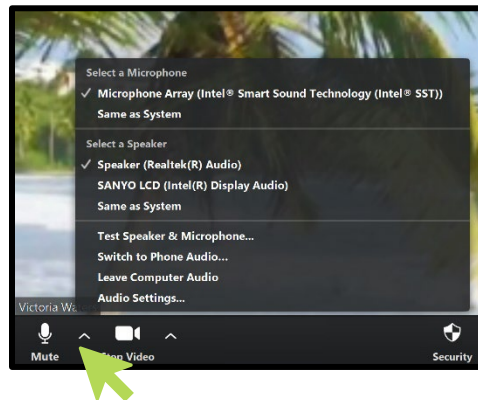
Resource	Description	Access
Zoom Support	Video instructions and additional information for various platforms (Windows, Apple, Android)	https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-How-Do-I-Join-A-Meeting-
How to Create a Zoom Account and Host a Meeting	Step-by-step screenshots with instructions for how to create a Zoom account and host a meeting	https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/adult-resources

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Joining Google Classroom

1. Use **Google Chrome** as your browser and you may want to download the Google classroom mobile app.

2. Login at classroom.google.com
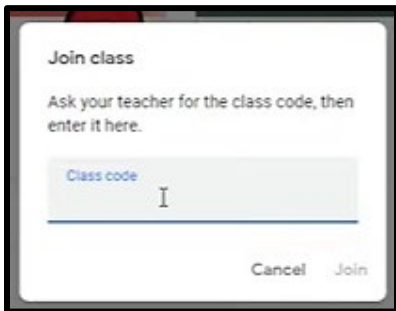
3. Click *Join class* and then enter the class code if needed. Or click on your class name and click *Join*.
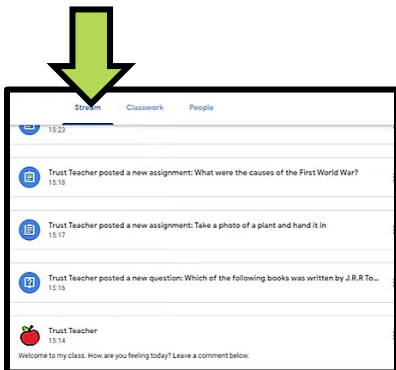
4. The **Stream** is your main source of information and will include announcements and assignment updates. There may be a question there for you to answer. Things you write in the Stream will show up for other students to read.

5. The left side has your due dates for assignments.

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6. The **Classwork** tab has your assignments and questions from the teacher.

7. Some assignments will require you to attach a document or photo. Look for the *Add* button.
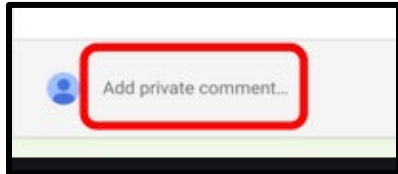
8. If you have a question or comment you ONLY want the TEACHER to see, make sure you choose *Private Comments*. Otherwise all comments will be seen by the whole class.
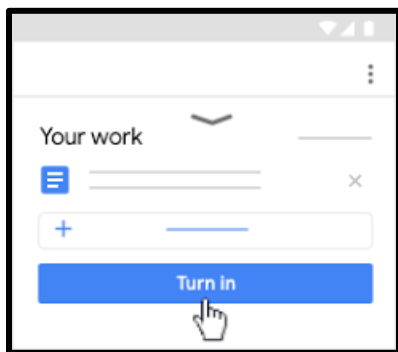
9. You must *Mark as Done* or choose *Hand it In* or *Turn In* when you are finished with assignments or questions. That is the only way your teacher will know the work is done.
   Note: Do not hit those buttons until you are ready to turn it in. You will not be able to keep working on it.

10. The **People** tab will show you who is in your class.

Helpful Resources:

Student Guide to Google Classroom: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSxNLaWm74g	Submitting assignments to Google Classroom: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4JeCTfhvnI
Student Quick Guide to Google Classroom: http://www.santeesd.net/cms/lib/CA01000468/Centricity/Domain/289/Student%20Quick%20Guide%20to%20Google%20Classroom.pdf	Google Classroom Cheat Sheet for Students: https://www.scusd.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/google_classroom_cheat_sheet_for_students_by_shake_up_learning.pdf?1585921875

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Joining Canvas

1. **Do NOT** use Canvas with the Internet Explorer browser.
2. Your school should send you the link to login to your Canvas site.
3. Your first screen is called the **Dashboard**. It has a colored card for each of your courses.
   a. This view is called **Card View**.
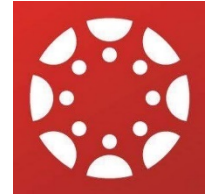
4. Icons on the bottom of each class tile will take you to:
   a. Announcements
   b. Assignments
   c. Discussion
   d. Files
5. Choose **List View** to see all your assignments organized by due date. You can check these off when you are finished.
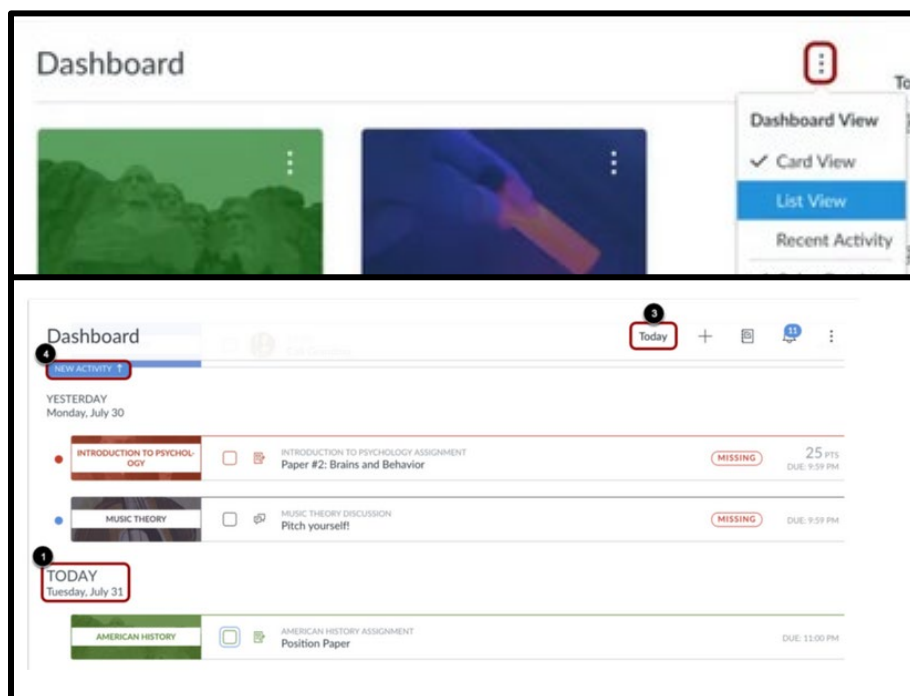
6. Use the **Inbox** feature to message your teachers with any questions.
7. Click on any course from the **Card View** to see the information for each class. Each course has tabs to help you find class content, syllabus, assignments, and discussion information.

8. Assignments are listed on the right side of the page also. Make sure you click *Submit Assignment* to turn your work in.
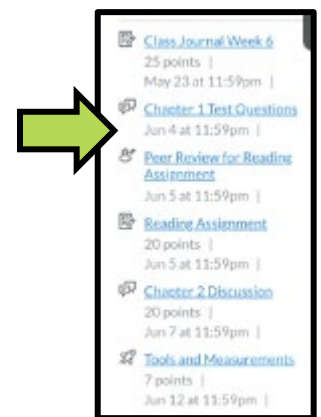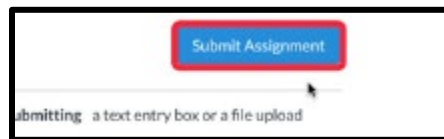
9. The grades tab will have your course grade information.

Helpful Resources:	
Student Guide to Canvas Dashboard: https://vimeo.com/channels/1325715/74677642	**Canvas Tips for Students:** https://gcccd.instructure.com/courses/19248/pages/7-dot-1-canvas-tips-for-students

Educational Resources for Kids

[Starfall](#)

[MathGames](#)

[Scholastic](#)

[NASA's Kid Club](#)

[PBS Kids Games](#)

[The Weather Channel: America's Science Classroom](#)

[National Geographic Kids](#)

[Google Arts & Culture](#)

[PBS Curriculum](#)	[Khan Academy](#)
[Sumdog](#)	[epic!](#)
[Virtual School Activities](#)	[FUN LEARNING for kids](#)
[Teach Your Monster to Read](#)	[Originator](#)

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Resources for College Students

General Resources:

Stairway to Step
https://www.stairwaytostem.org/students/
Stairway to STEM is an online resource for autistic students, their parents, and post-secondary STEM instructors. Our mission is to help autistic students realize their capacity for success as they transition to college environments and beyond. We support student confidence, resiliency, and self-advocacy.

College Internship Program (CIP) Comprehensive Transition Support for Autism and Learning Differences
https://cipworldwide.org/
CIPs internship and transition programs offer support to autistic students in college and connect them with job training and independent living opportunities and resources. Offering virtual programming.

College Autism Spectrum (CAS)
https://collegeautismspectrum.com/
CAS provides college counseling and work readiness services to autistic college students.

College Autism Network (CAN)
https://collegeautismnetwork.org/advocacy/typesofsupport/

Navigating College: A Project of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network
http://navigatingcollege.org/download.php

Time Management Tips for Busy College Students
https://www.purdueglobal.edu/blog/student-life/time-management-busy-college-students/

COVID-19 Resources:

NTACT Tech and No-Tech Resources for Transition/Pre-ETS
https://transitionta.org/system/files/covid19/No-tech%20to%20High%20Tech%20Resources.pdf

Coping During COVID-19: Strategies to Reinforce Executive Functioning Skills During Times of Change
https://autismspectrumnews.org/coping-during-covid-19-strategies-to-reinforce-executive-functioning-skills-during-times-of-change/

Autism Society Organization Coronavirus Information Series
https://www.autism-society.org/facebook-live-coronavirus-information-series/

Mount Sanai Resources
https://icahn.mssm.edu/files/ISMMS/Assets/Research/Seaver/AdultTeen-COVID-19-Resources.pdf

NTACT Peer2Peer Engagement Webinar and Resources and Tips for Supporting Teenagers and Young Adults in Virtual Peer to Peer Engagement
https://transitioncoalition.org/blog/webinar/social-media-youth-disabilities-covid/
https://transitionta.org/system/files/covid19/Social%20Mediums%20for%20Peer%20to%20Peer%20Engagement%20-%20May%205%2C%202020%20DRAFT.pdf

NTACT Employment Resources
https://transitionta.org/system/files/covid19/NTACT_at%20home_Employment_resources_4.10.2020.pdf

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Support Active Participation and Social Connection

Students with autism may need support understanding what is expected during online learning sessions. Social communication challenges are characteristic of students on the autism spectrum and noticing social cues is even harder to do on an online learning platform than it is in a classroom. Without some explicit instruction and reminders of what is expected, students with autism may be disengaged with online learning and have limited interaction with their teacher and peers.

Even though students may not be interacting with classmates and friends in person as much, or at all, it is important that they stay connected socially. Positive social support is important for everyone during this period, and individuals with autism may need more explicit facilitation to ensure that social connections continue. Families may need to check in with their child and/or teachers to ensure social interaction is happening as part of online learning. This can occur through paired or group virtual projects, social Zoom lunches facilitated by a teacher, online social skills groups, or after school clubs held virtually (e.g. movie maker club, martial arts via video chat).

Outside of school, social interaction can occur via text or direct messaging, and/or building in opportunities for daily social contact with family, friends, neighbors, or others via FaceTime, What's App, Google Hangout, Marco Polo, or other apps. Scheduling time to connect with others via online platforms to attend religious services, play chess, participate in socially engaged gaming, or virtually volunteer are ways to safely promote social interaction and limit feelings of isolation.

Resources include:
Digital Etiquette
Social Narrative: Online Learning Expectations
Self-Management
Reinforcement
Social Games via Zoom

Digital Etiquette

Although learning is taking place on a computer or device outside of the school building, it is important to remind our children that remote learning is still school time. Using the computer for school is different than using it to communicate with friends. Below are some general reminders about digital etiquette (or netiquette) for children participating in online

Image credit: August de Richelieu, Pexels

remote learning. Please check with your child's teacher to see what specific rules they have established for the class.

1. **Join your classroom every day and be on time:** Even in an online classroom, attendance is important. Remember to log on to your computer/device at the time set by your school, teacher, or parent.

2. **Consider what you are wearing:** If you are using video/webcam to participate in online learning. Choose clothing that you would be comfortable wearing to a school building.

3. **Mute your computer's microphone:** Once you logon to your remote classroom, mute your microphone and keep it muted while your teacher and classmates are speaking.

4. **Focus on the speaker:** Focus on the information provided by your teacher and listen to whomever is "speaking" in the class. To show you are listening, turn your body toward the screen, nod or give a thumbs up when you agree with something, and keep your eyes on the camera/screen (if comfortable).

5. **Participate:** Remember to ask and answer questions during class. Learn how to use the "raise your hand" function and wait to be called on. Some classes may use the "chat" feature to communicate.

6. **Stay on topic:** Remember that when you are typing questions/comments, people must read them so keep them short and on-topic.

7. **It is tricky to read emotion over the screen:** In an online environment it sometimes can be hard for people to understand your feelings when you communicate. During chats or conversations, emoticons can help others understand if you are using humor or how you are feeling. Avoid using all caps which is equal to yelling. It may also help to reread your messages/posts for friendliness before you send them.

8. **Limit distractions:** Food and drink can be distracting to you and others in the classroom, so try eating and drinking before or after class time. If you need to eat or drink something, remember to turn your camera and/or sound off for a short time. Do not talk or text on the phone during class. Turn off the TV and radio and close other computer windows on your screen.

Image credit: Julie M. Cameron, Pexels

9. **Limit sharing personal comments and interests during class time:** Sharing personal comments and interests that are unrelated to the topic are best left to times outside of the online classroom unless your teacher has set a time for the class to share. Try not to have side conversations with your classmates while the teacher is speaking.

10. **Be respectful:** Use respectful language and words when communicating with teachers and classmates. Avoid sarcasm because it can be misunderstood in an online environment. Remember – if you would not say it face-to-face in a classroom, then do not say or type it in an online classroom because it can be misunderstood in an online environment.

Video Resources to Help Explain Digital Etiquette to Your Child:	
Digital Etiquette – BrainPop	https://www.brainpop.com/technology/freemovies/digitaletiquette/
Rules of Digital Classroom: Proper Etiquette for Online Learning	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6B4_oUeZhw
Netiquette: A Student's Guide to Digital Etiquette	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWw3aEw1SFo

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Online Learning Expectations

My school is online because of COVID-19. Since I am learning at home, it is

important that I know what to do and expect. I wake up, eat breakfast, and

put on clothes I would wear if I were going to the school building. I sign into

my online class on time so that I do not miss anything. I mute my microphone

so that noises in my home do not distract people. I pay attention to the

teacher and participate in class by nodding my head and raising my hand to

ask questions. It is important that I stay on topic just like I would at school. If I

have something off-topic that I want to say, I wait until the end of class to

share. These expectations help me and my classmates learn online while the

school building is closed.

Self-Management

Directions:
> At the end of each of 5-minute interval, circle whether you actively participated in online learning. After the fifth or last time interval, determine if you get a reward.

Target Behavior/Skill:
1. Ask a question relevant to the lesson AND/OR
2. Made a comment relevant to the lesson

1	2	3	4	5
☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹

How many smiles do I have?

Do I have 5 smiles?

✔ Yes

✘ No

★ Get a reward!

↻ Try again.

Do I get a reward?

Adapted from AFIRM Module: Self-Management

Reinforcement: Token Economy

I am working for
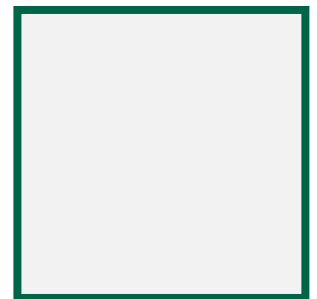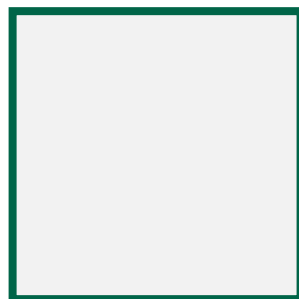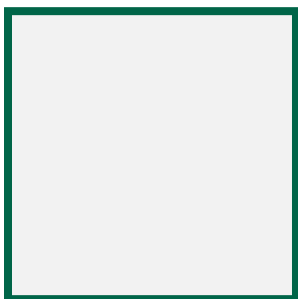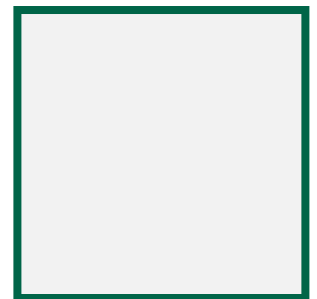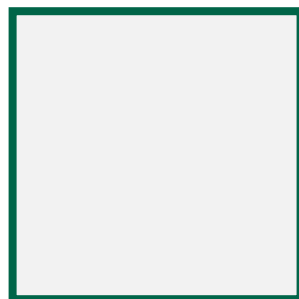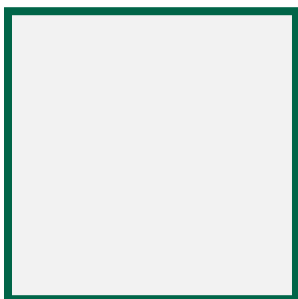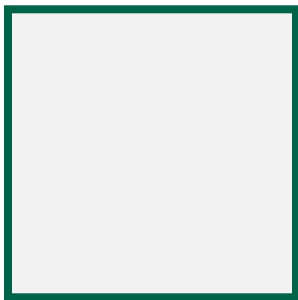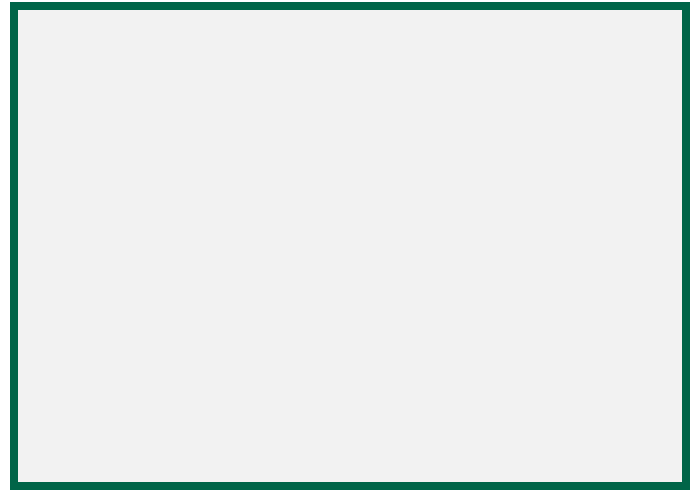
Adapted from AFIRM Module: Reinforcement: Introduction & Practice

Social Games via Zoom

Positive social connections are important for students with autism and may need more support to make sure that social connections continue. Below are just a few ideas for maintaining and building new social connections with classmates.

- ☐ Bob Ross-style paint-along
- ☐ Pictionary with Zoom whiteboard
- ☐ A virtual book club
- ☐ A virtual chess club
- ☐ A movie maker club
- ☐ A virtual lunch
- ☐ Charades
- ☐ Karaoke
- ☐ Board games
- ☐ Card games – try playingcards.io
- ☐ Simon Says
- ☐ Show and tell
- ☐ Would you rather...?
- ☐ Scavenger hunt

Maintain Healthy Habits and Take Breaks

Without daily physical education (PE), recess, school athletics, and structured movement breaks, many students will miss healthy routines while in school at home, mostly sitting in front of screens. It is important to add breaks to the home learning schedule to include time for healthy eating, hydration, exercise, and time outside. Students with autism are already at higher risk for sedentary hobbies, restricted diets, and anxiety/depression, so supporting physical and mental health is an important part of the daily routine. Being at home may allow for greater participation in healthy routines, like making snacks and meals, going on walk with a family pet, or doing outdoor chores. The resources in this section are designed to encourage healthy habits during the online learning period and beyond.

Resources include:
Meals and Snacks during Online Learning
Snack Choice Board Example
Staying Active
Exercise Activities
Movement Resources

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Meals & Snacks during Online Learning

With virtual learning, your child is eating at home more than ever. Your child may have had different routines for meals and snacks at school, which could impact how you plan for those times during a virtual school day at home. For example, your routines and expectations for a family dinner may be different than for a school day lunch. Below are some ideas for how to make meals and snacks work for your child(ren) and your family.

Make meals and snack a regular part of a daily routine. Meals and snacks can add predictability in virtual learning routines that may vary from day to day. Hopefully there is a schedule that allows for consistent times for snacks and meals, but if not, you can still build a routine by having a regular location or a consistent transition routine (for example turn off computer, wash hands, and eat).

Consider your child's needs. For some children, meals or snacks are a needed and deserved social break from being engaged in online schoolwork for the rest of the day. School is hard and virtual school may take a different level of focus. If your child needs these times to recharge, consider setting up a mealtime or snack time routine that allows for downtime. Not all meals need to be family meals just because you are at home. For other children, meals or snacks might be a time to process or share about their day. They may want or need to talk to someone during these snacks or meals.

Balance healthy eating and independence. Healthy eating is certainly important, but snacks and meals at school are often a time when children can exercise their independence. Provide healthy options, but also offer children an opportunity to make choices, just as they might when they are eating in the cafeteria at school. See the sample snack choice board on the following page.

Think about building in social opportunities. Snacks and meals are often used as a time for building social skills in the school day (like lunch groups). As noted above, these times may also be a welcome break, but consider building in social experiences on occasion. This could be a physically distanced lunch with other children in the neighborhood, a virtual meet-up with a classmate or friend, or a special "kids only" lunch with their siblings.

Always consult your child's doctor if there are concerns about nutrition, growth, or food allergies.

For more information see: https://www.marcus.org/autism-resources/autism-tips-and-resources/tips-for-structuring-meals

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Snack Choice Board Example

Hummus & vegetables

Peanut butter & apples

Yogurt & fruit

Cheese & crackers

Staying Active

Regular physical movement and activity is important for physical and mental health and can have a positive impact on learning. Regular activity helps the body stay healthy. It can reduce blood pressure, manage weight, and reduce the risk of various diseases. It can also improve strength, balance, flexibility, and overall fitness. Physical activity helps improve mental health by reducing the risk of depression and improving overall feelings of well-being. By scheduling regular activity, you can help bring routine to your child's day.

Stay Active at Home:

✓ If your child sits for long periods of time, try to have your child take a 3-5-minute break every 20-30 minutes. If the school schedule does not have time for these breaks, consider having your child stand and/or stretch as a break from sitting.

✓ Make time in your child's daily schedule to be physically active. Setting a routine will help your child stay active every day.

✓ If your child is not used to physical activity, start small and gradually increase your child's activity level over time.

Stay Safe:

✓ If your child has a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, **DO NOT** let them exercise. Call your child's doctor.

✓ When walking, running, or biking, make sure your child stays at least 6 feet from others, and wash or sanitize their hands before and after.

✓ If your child does not exercise regularly, start slowly with low intensity activities. Short walks are a good way to start.

✓ Choose the best activity for your child! Pick an activity that your child enjoys and that fits their current fitness level.

Adapted from the World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/be-active-during-covid-19

Exercise Activities

Inside	Outside
Lift weights	Play ball
Dance	Yard work
Climb stairs	Take a walk
Yoga	Go on a nature hike

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Inside	Outside
Use food items (e.g., cans) or cleaning supplies as weights	Take a walk or ride a bike
Learn a dance from an app (YouTube, Tik Tok) or dance to your favorite song	Gardening or yard work
Do heavy work like carrying heavy items up and down stairs	Go on a nature scavenger hunt
Try yoga or animal poses/walks like crab walks, bear walks, frog jumps...	Play catch or jump rope

Movement Resources for Kids

GoNoodle

Stop, Breathe & Think Kids

Cosmic Kids Yoga

Get Kids Moving

The Learning Station

Active for Life

Born to Move

Yoga with Adriene

References

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