

# Supporting Learning at Home

What you can do to help your child February 2021

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# Education during lockdown

- Home Learning is perhaps the biggest challenge faced by children and families during the pandemic
- For students, the home environment, access to hardware, broadband capacity and a new way of learning can present barriers to learning
- Students may also be affected by the social isolation they experience by not seeing and interacting with their peers face-to-face
- There are challenges for teachers: planning online lessons, presenting information in new ways, ensuring participation and monitoring students' progress virtually was not covered in their training
- Home learning is also a huge challenge for parents/carers who may be unfamiliar with the technology, the curriculum itself and changes in how the curriculum is taught (and possibly working from home)
- This guide will give you some ideas, tips and strategies to support your child's learning at home





# Practical Tips

## 1. A regular schedule

- Establish a daily routine that makes school work a priority
- Set clear expectations regarding attending online lessons and completing independent learning tasks or homework
- Ensure movement breaks and lunch / snack breaks are scheduled
- A timetable on the wall will help your child see what's happening on each day and enable you to keep track of what they need to be doing
- Agree that leisure activities, e.g. gaming, online chats etc. take place only after school work is completed
- Incorporate exercise time, e.g. a walk or following an online routine
- Keep to regular times for getting up, being ready to learn, lunch, end of the school day, exercise, bedtime





# Practical Tips

## 3. Support independent learning skills

- Your child may currently need:
  - ❖ Reminders to start or finish assignments
  - ❖ Support to plan assignments
  - ❖ Help to prioritise work
  - ❖ More complex information and tasks broken down into simpler steps
  - ❖ Support to understand new words and concepts
  - ❖ Help to revise for tests / assessments

Agree what support you will provide and when. Explain that time management and planning skills are important life / work skills and prompt your child to take more responsibility for these as the weeks pass.



# Practical Tips

## 3. Support independent learning skills

### DO:

- Offer guidance
- Offer clarification
- Answer your child's questions to help their understanding
- Prompt them with questions that trigger key words or ideas and to make connections
- Explain information or questions in simpler terms
- Provide examples or models and link to real-life experiences if possible
- Set time limits
- Review your child's work (i.e. proofreading)
- Encourage your child to problem solve and to think for his/herself
- Praise their efforts and recognise their achievements
- Reduce support gradually



# Practical Tips

## 3. Support independent learning skills

### DON'T

- Provide the correct answers
- Complete your child's work for them
- Expect your child to spend unreasonable amounts of time on assignments, particularly if they are finding it very hard – make a note saying how much time they spent on the assignment and what they found difficult and inform the relevant teacher
- Edit their work to the extent that it is changed significantly – if it needs more work, encourage them to revise it or make changes first
- Critique or attempt to mark their work – teachers will do this



# Communication

## Keep it open, be approachable

- Your teenager will be more likely to engage with you if you take a co-operative approach
- Ensure your child understands their responsibilities, then be open to negotiation and allow your child to make decisions within reason
- Make expectations clear – if your child doesn't keep to their word, the arrangement will change or default to the parent's decision
- Allowing your child to make decisions for themselves promotes independence, recognises their growing need for autonomy and shows you respect their point of view
- Let your child know you're always there to talk things through or to help them solve a problem



# Communication

## What is open communication?

- Give your child 1:1 time to have proper conversations without distractions
- Show your child you're listening by facing them and not interrupting
- Car journeys and shared activities (e.g. prepping dinner) can also be good opportunities for talks
- Allow them to express their opinions – they're valid even if you don't agree
- Accept their emotions and acknowledge you can see how they are feeling
- Don't take it personally – your child is probably struggling with something
- Wait until you're both calm to discuss issues further
- Encourage your child to share their ideas and take them on board
- Acknowledge your child's strengths and let them know you have faith in their abilities – they're still learning and may make mistakes or poor decisions
- Ask questions that promote co-operation and not loaded questions – this will help avoid arguments



# Communication

## How to maintain open communication

- Make sure not every conversation involves a telling off or complaint – talk about the fun stuff and engage in chit chat
- Use “I ...” messages, e.g. “I was upset your clothes were on your bedroom floor and not in the laundry basket. I had to pick them up to put in the wash” *rather than ‘You’re so messy ...’*
- Try not to ask too many questions that require ‘Yes/No’ answers; instead, ask open questions, e.g. “Tell me ... What do you think about ...? Why ...?”
- Be open about making mistakes or problem solving (without offloading): teenagers need to know adults don’t always have all the answers and need to work through things, too
- A parent’s ability to manage their emotions is related to how well teenagers deal with stressful situations (Bariola, Gullone & Hughes, 2011) and emotions (Silva, Freire, & Faria, 2018)



# Communication

## How to maintain open communication

- Hear your child out: don't jump to conclusions or make quick judgements, criticise, label or blame – this can quickly lead to conflict
- Maintain a calm / neutral tone of voice; try not to shout
- Be careful as to when you use sarcasm, which can be misinterpreted
- Be aware of your body language: rolling your eyes, crossing your arms or shaking your head tells your child you're not prepared to listen
- Be mindful that teenagers can find it hard to regulate their emotional responses – it's part of their development as adolescents
- They also naturally tend to sleep later - this is typical adolescent behaviour
- Allow them time to socialise online – friendship groups are important
- Don't miss opportunities to thank, praise and appreciate your child when appropriate
- Let them know you're there for them when they need help



# Communication

## Loaded vs. co-operative questions

- “Why can’t you ever get up on time?” 😞
- “What’s wrong with you?” 😞
- “Any ideas on what you can do to make sure you’re up on time?” 😊
  
- “How come you don’t know this?” 😞
- “What do you mean you can’t remember?” 😞
- “Do you think it would be a good idea to go over it again?” 😊
  
- “Why haven’t you finished it yet?” 😞
- “When are you going to start acting your age?” 😞
- “Is there something here you need help with?” 😊



# Supporting Understanding

## Learning and remembering new words

- Typically developing children need to hear a new word up to 12 times in context to understand its meaning
- Children with additional needs may require many more opportunities to hear the word in context before understanding is in place
- Encourage your child to write new words in a vocab book, with its definition and a sentence using the word in context
- A word map provides more in-depth opportunities to develop word knowledge (see next slide) - word maps can be useful for revision, too
- Play word games (e.g. name as many fruits/elements/kings & queens as you can, rhyming games, hangman), quizzes or simple crosswords so your child can become familiar with the word, recall it and use it accurately
- Write new words on paper and stick to the fridge door or the wall – challenge each other to use the words on a daily basis
- Put new words on pieces of paper and into a jar: select at random and challenge each other to define, explain, make links and use



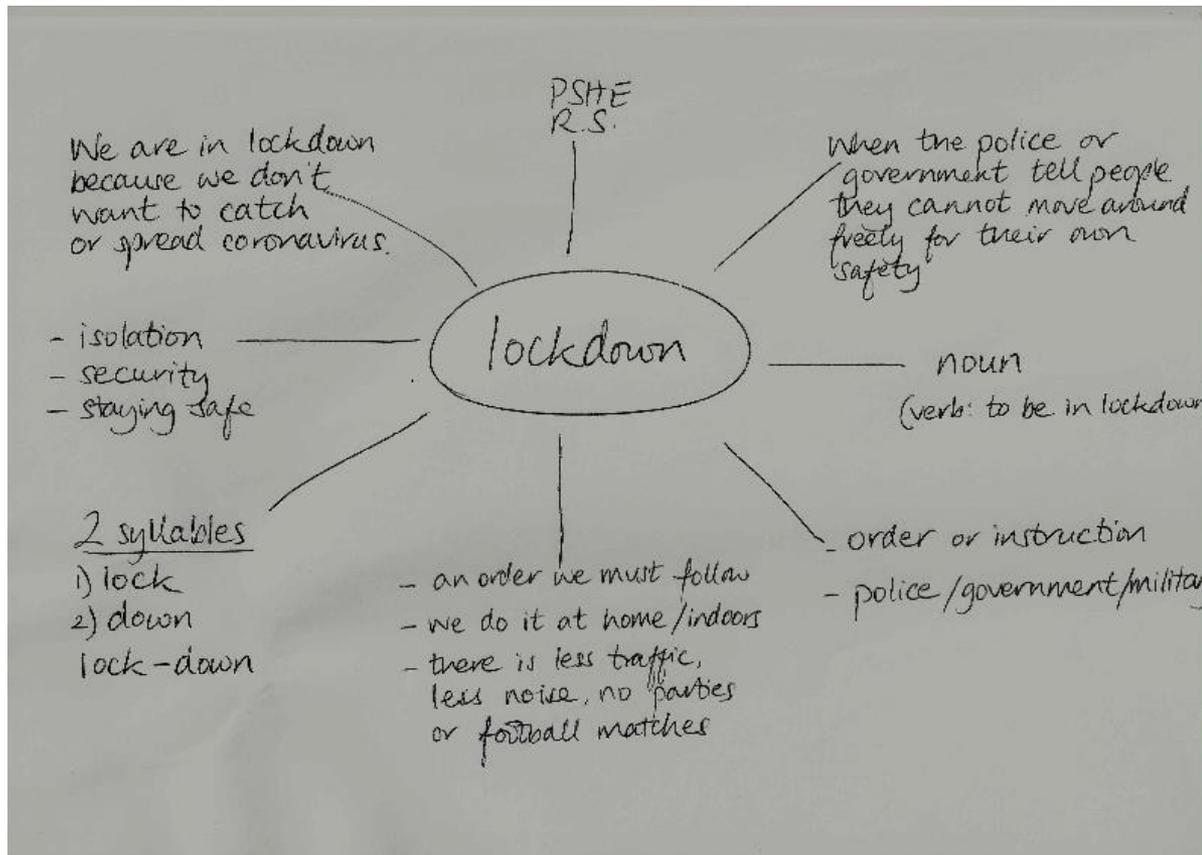
# Supporting understanding

## Word Map



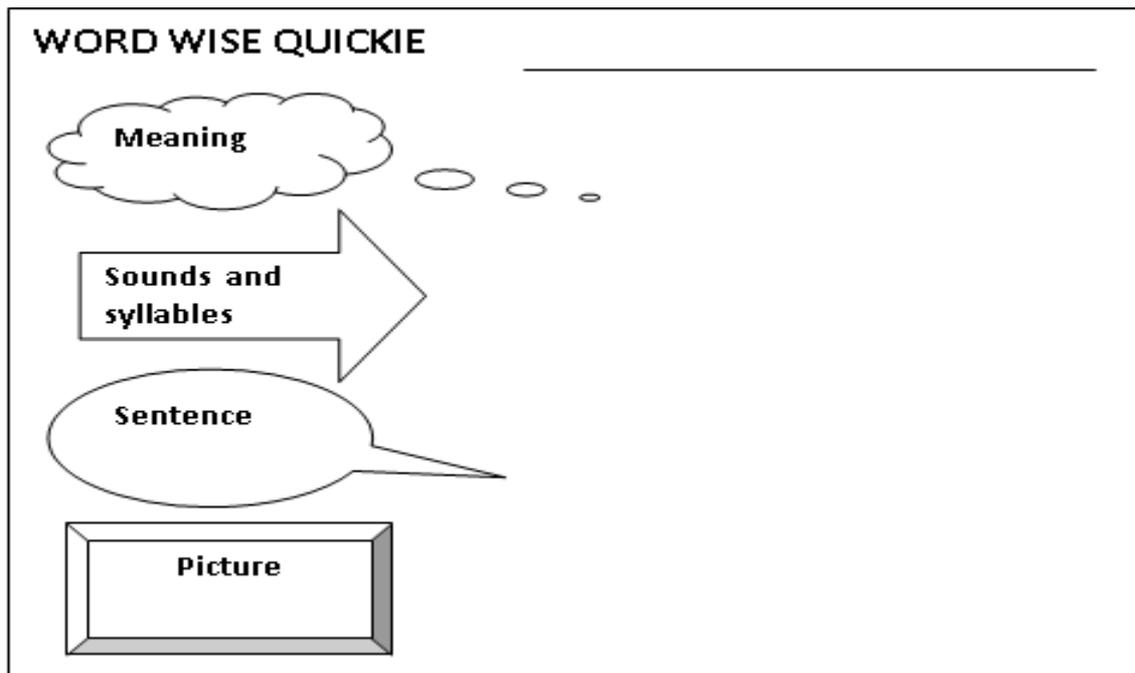
# Supporting understanding

## Word Map example



# Supporting understanding

## Word Wise quickie





# Supporting understanding

## If you don't know or can't remember ...

- It's ok to say you don't know – your school days are a long way behind you!
- It's an opportunity to learn together (if you have time)
- It's an opportunity for your child to find out and report back to you or show you (if you don't have time)
- It reinforces the concept that learning is life long and that it's never too late to add to your knowledge
- *“I'm not sure – let's find out”; “I can't remember how to work that out – let me practise it a few times”; “That rings a bell but I need to refresh my memory”; “I didn't learn that at school in my day, you're learning more than I did!”* – these are all acceptable responses and communicate a positive attitude to learning



# Supporting talking about learning

## Tips for checking learning

- An easy and straightforward way to check your child's learning is to get them to talk about what they have learned (i.e. talking about key ideas using key vocabulary and making connections and references to other learning) - start a conversation
- Provide key word prompts or suggest what they can talk about if they're unsure; ask them to paraphrase what you've said and add more information
- Ask open questions (e.g. "Tell me about X ... What do you know about Y?")
- Encourage your child to write key words or phrases on cue cards to use as a prompt
- Don't correct your child if they make a mistake using a word or with sentence structure - model the correct sentence / word for them to hear
- Allow them time and don't rush them







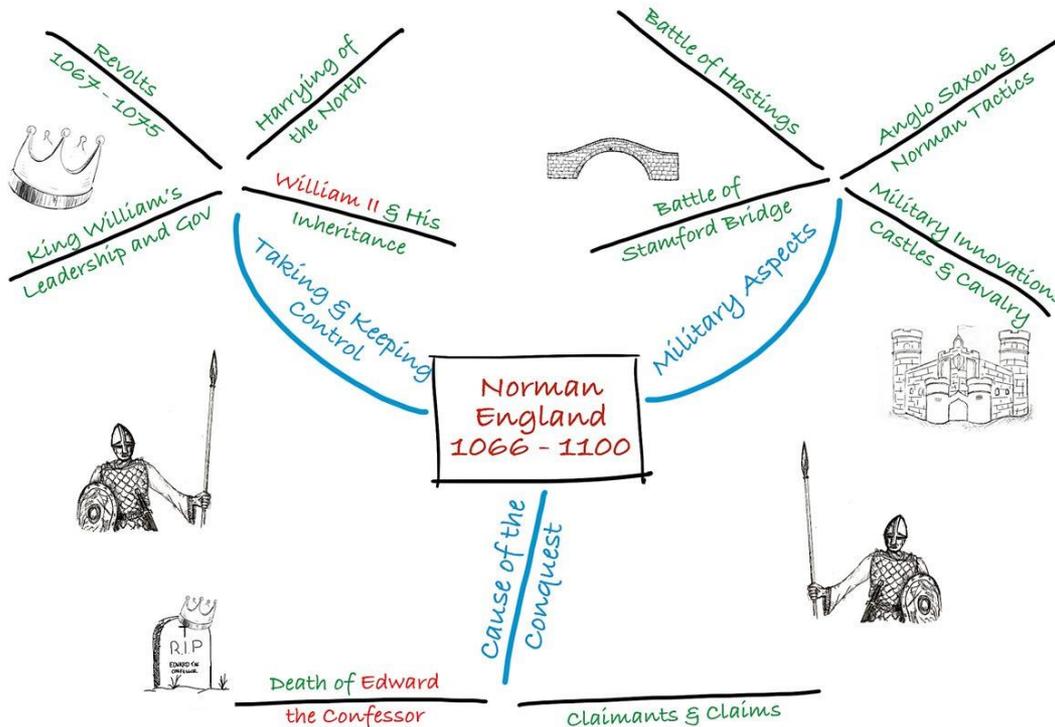
# Developing memory skills

## Mind Map example #1



# Developing memory skills

## Mind Map example #2



# Supporting learning at home

## Other tips

- Colour coding subjects across timetable, books and files can be useful for locating materials quickly
- Encourage your child to spend 10 minutes at the end of the school day preparing for tomorrow's learning by checking their schedule and getting anything they may need ready
- Encourage your child to keep notes and to file them according to subject
- A vocab book or word bank will help word learning and recall and is a good revision tool
- Good nutrition, good sleep and exercise all contribute to making learning easier – remember that some people are night owls and work better then
- Allow your child to experiment with what works for them, e.g. low level background music, a certain space, weekend catch up sessions





# Signposting

## Useful websites, articles and resources

- Warwick University Family Friendly Science lectures & other resources across the curriculum: <https://warwick.ac.uk/about/community/projects/educationresources/>
- BBC Bitesize: online and via your TV red button
- <https://www.annafreud.org/parents-and-carers/> for mental health and wellbeing
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/teen-aggression-and-arguments/> tips for diffusing conflict and arguments
- The Guardian article: Secrets of the teenage brain:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/dec/09/teenage-brain-psychologist-guide-teachers-classroom>



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