Setting up a Home learning space

This guide provides you with information and considerations for setting up your home learning spaces.

School expectations

Ask your child what they understand of their school’s expectations for home learning. Your home set up will be influenced by school expectations as well as each unique home situation. ‘Just good enough’ is perfect as you can only do what you can to provide a positive learning space for your child/children.

Discuss school expectations with your child’s teacher if you are finding that they are not working in your home.

See the Learning from Home - getting ready video on the Ministry’s Learning from Home website for more information.

Wellbeing

Take care of your whānau’s well-being first and foremost.

You may have one child or several. They may be at the same school or different schools. Each will have different plans, expectations etc. You may also be trying to work from home.

Focus on what works best for the whole family. If the school’s expectations present challenges for you and your whanau, contact them and discuss how you can make things work.

Routine

Work with your child and the school to create a routine that works in your home.

We all need some sort of routine; it helps us manage ourselves, each other and our mahi (work). However, family commitments, such as childcare, spaces and technology use may also affect daily routines. Each situation is unique.

Some schools may be trying to maintain their school timetable to keep a familiar structure for students as they study. Other schools may have a more open approach and be providing resources and ideas for activities that ākonga (students) can do at their own pace.

Focus on what works best for the whole family. If the school’s expectations present challenges for you and your whanau, contact them and discuss how you can make things work.
Breaks

Build physical, emotional and food breaks into the day.

At school children have natural breaks and downtime as they move around the school to different subjects. There are natural brain breaks during lessons too.

Build both mini breaks and longer breaks into your child’s day. It is not necessary to maintain a strict structure that follows their school timetable in an online context. It is exhausting to be online 5 hours a day, moving from one virtual lesson to the next.

Privacy and space

Create a specific learning spot that we go to when we need to work and can leave at the end of the learning day.

Make sure your child knows where supplies such as stationery and materials are stored. However, we don’t all have the space to create separate learning areas in our homes so we can do the best we can with what we’ve got.

Ideally, learners have;
• A quiet space that is separate from their bedroom in which to complete school work.
• A space that has a chair and a table at which to work
• A space where siblings, dogs, cats etc don’t interrupt
• Good, natural light

As a rule, it is not advisable for rangatahi (young people) to be shut away in their own rooms when on the internet but given that these are unprecedented times, it may be necessary. If this is needed we recommend regular check-ins and limiting time periods.

It may be that you create a space that all members of the family take turns in using during the day, for example, if rangatahi need to be engaged in a virtual meeting. Other areas may work better for different activities at other times of the day.

If students are attending online meetings, a set of headphones would be useful (but not essential). They should be able to use simple earbuds in most devices.
Furniture

Have discussions with your child about the appropriate spaces for different types of activities to support healthy habits.

If rangatahi are expected to spend time at their computers we recommend that they sit on a chair with the laptop on a table and a space to write at the side.

There may be times when lying on a bed, relaxing on a beanbag or sitting on the sofa is appropriate – e.g. reading, watching learning videos, listening to podcasts.

For virtual meetings, they need good light preferably coming from the front rather than behind them. For more information about online meetings see this infographic and these Video Conferencing tips.

Internet connection

Identify things you can do to make the most of your home internet connection.

When the whole family is using the internet at the same time, you may run into problems with connectivity and internet speed. Most schools will be delivering resources via the internet and expecting students to present their learning digitally for most subjects. Students may also be attending live classes via video conferencing.

Devices

Contact your child’s school directly if you have concerns about access to devices (phones, tablets, laptops etc.).

Each school will have a unique solution. Some may be working mostly offline and using hard copy materials (either provided by the school directly or by the Ministry of Education). Other schools are enabling students to borrow school-owned devices for the rāhui (period).

Software, programmes, online tools for learning

Most students, teachers and whānau are learning to use new tools for online learning. Be aware of any frustration or anxiety when your child is accessing schoolwork and contact their teacher for support.