

Parent and pupil “practical hints and tips” on the safe use of ICT equipment at home.

This guide offers some simple and practical measures you could introduce within the home to make the learning environment safe, comfortable and an ergonomically sound environment that will help pupils concentrate, be productive and avoid aches and pains. To support you through the process, this guide offers some simple but effective “dos and don’ts” for you to consider.

Online learning ergonomic ‘dos’

1. **Create a designated area for learning.** It’s important to have distinct locations for different activities like eating, sleeping and learning. If possible, also create a “quiet corner” where your child can go to relax away from a live-learning area. This will support their wellbeing and a break away from the learning environment should they need it.
2. **Encourage the 90-90-90 rule** when setting up the learning area/desk for older children. There should be 90-degree angles at your child’s ankles, knees and hips when they’re sitting at their desk. If the desk is too high, your child’s elbows will be up and out to the sides. If it’s too low, your child will slump in their chair or rest their head on their hands. Cushions or other items around the house can be used to help achieve the correct angles. For example, if their feet don’t reach the floor, use a footstool to support their feet, if they can’t rest their back in the chair while bending their knees at a 90-degree angle, add a cushion behind them. Young children will naturally move around within their seated position or fidget and this should not be discouraged as it helps with concentration and comfort.



3. **Position your child’s laptop so the screen is at eye level.** Laptops can be opened and tilted to help adjust the screen to make it more comfortable for your child to use it. Set up the seating position and the laptop and check the ergonomic layout against the 90-90-90 rule. Make sure there is enough room for writing books, pens and other resources that may be used for the lesson.

4. **The 20-20-20 Rule.** For every 20 minutes spent looking at a computer screen, you should spend 20 seconds looking at something else 20 feet away. This gives your eye muscles a break and helps reduce eye strain.



5. **Allow your child to work in a variety of positions.** When live lessons are being undertaken, it is important that your child is seated in a position where that can fully engage in the lesson. Where tasks have been set by the teacher, then some level of flexibility in their position could be considered and may include children standing at a countertop/standing desk or sitting on the floor or a beanbag. To help with positive and active movement around the learning area, consider securing paper to the wall for handwriting practice.
6. **Schedule frequent breaks throughout the day.** The opportunity to move will help your child remain focused on their learning and self-regulate if needed. Place a copy of the timetable on the wall and plan the breaks to include toilet breaks, snacks and short periods outside or relaxing away from their learning space. Pupils must actively “leave” a lesson to take comfort breaks and pupils should not take a device with them when taking comfort breaks. Regular exercise is essential through the day as your child will not be walking around the school or outside during break/ lunchtimes.



7. **Break time reminders.** The teacher would have carefully planned the lessons for the day. It is important that reminders are given on break times and it may be useful to set timers to remind you. During break times, reduce any additional screen time.
8. **Snacks, Hydration and ventilation.** To keep children healthy and stimulated, fruit and vegetables are good snacks between lessons. It is also important that your child keeps hydrated throughout the day, therefore a bottle of water should be kept close to their learning space. To maintain alertness and reduce fatigue, it is important that natural

air is allowed in the learning area but also maintains thermal temperature. Keep windows slightly ajar to allow air in.

9. **Some children benefit from a sensory toolbox;** keep it near your child's laptop/ learning space. You can utilise an old shoebox and let your child decorate it. Then fill it with different types of fidgets, mints, paperclips, playdough, and other sensory items they can use when they need to. This also helps them to focus on a different activity if they become anxious.

10. **Create a morning routine and stick to it.** Keeping the same morning schedule of getting dressed, brushing teeth, having breakfast and going to their work area will help home students feel more organised and prepared to take on the day. Keeping the same routine as if children were attending school, helps keeps pupils focused and prepared for the work to come.

Online learning ergonomics don'ts

- ✓ Do not put your child's workspace in a room where there are lots of people or distractions.
- ✓ Do not let your child keep snacks in their learning area. It is important to encourage breaks away from the learning space.
- ✓ Avoid or limit use of the TV, phone, tablet or any other device during break times. Encourage breaks that are outdoors or away from ICT equipment.