

6 Online Learning Tips For Children With Speech-Language Disorders

By Ernest Roebuck, CCC-SLP

If you're the parent of a child with speech and language disorders, you may have found some especially unique challenges while adjusting to distance learning. Here's how to help your child get the very most out of the experience.

Get Focused

Children with speech and language disorders may be more easily distracted—by other children on the screen, by noises or activities occurring in their own home, or by the technology itself. Consider the child's work area, and factors such as comfortable seating, screen glare, and lighting. Find a quiet spot, away from noisy appliances and other people from inside or outside the house. Eliminate technology-based distractions by closing other applications, turning off alerts, and covering distract-



ing parts of the screen (e.g., their own image or those of classmates) with sticky notes.

Get Understood

A child who stutters, or has trouble pronouncing certain sounds, may be harder to understand online. If this is a concern, make sure the teacher knows what supports your child needs, such as: Asking the child to repeat themselves, use different words, type it in the chat, draw it on a white-

board, or use gestures.

Get Clarity

A child with a language disorder or social communication disorder may miss some cues that normally occur in person, and aid in comprehension (such as pointing to a page when reading.) Ask if the teacher can incorporate supports such as captioning, additional “wait time” to allow the child to process information, or rephrasing of messages if the child doesn't seem to understand.

You can also encourage your child to speak up if they didn't understand—and even help develop a script for doing so (such as “I didn't understand—could you please say it again?”)

Get Social

Children with language disorders and social communication disorders generally require lots of interaction with peers to improve social skills. Ask the teacher if it's possible to use breakout rooms with smaller groups for some lessons, or to set up after-school virtual activities. You can also organize phone calls and virtual play dates.

Get Moving

Screen fatigue is an issue for *all* children. But for those with speech and language disorders – who must put

effort into communication under typical circumstances – the extra energy it takes to communicate virtually can make them especially susceptible to screen fatigue. Be sure to provide lots of opportunities for movement: alternate screen time with physical time when possible, or add a review of the day's lessons with physical activity (such as practicing spelling during a walk around the block.)

Also, make room for “ramp-up time” if your child needs additional time to get ready to learn, or “cool-down time” to transition out of learning. Using a visual schedule to show the times for various tasks—and to highlight up-

coming fun activities or breaks—can help.

Get Help

Parents of children with speech and language disorders have many challenges as they try to help their child with school. Be sure to talk to your teachers and to your speech-language pathologist about those challenges. Using video of some the challenging behaviors can aid professionals in offering feedback. You might also consider sharing your child's communication needs with other parents, helpers or cooperative groups that share responsibilities with other families if you feel it's safe.

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References
[Http://www.asha.org/public](http://www.asha.org/public)

