

The ABCs of Online School Etiquette

When switching to online school, children have many adjustments to make—including learning how to navigate a virtual classroom. As a parent, you can help your kids adapt smoothly to distance learning and avoid embarrassment or misunderstandings by preparing them in advance. Using the alphabetical guide below should assist you in coaching your kids to become successful online school students when finishing the school year from home.

A is for Avoid Acronyms

Make your children aware that while they may be comfortable with using and reading common acronyms such as LOL (laugh out loud) and TTYL (talk to you later), not all users are as familiar with these abbreviations. Help kids understand that being clear by spelling things out will help them avoid confusion and misunderstandings with their teacher and classmates.

B is for Brevity

Explain to students that while participating in virtual classroom discussions, they should keep their answers short and on topic. Students can also note their opinions and answers by using the status indicators found in most virtual classroom platforms. Clicking the “I agree” button can get a point across just as well as typing a message in the chat box.

C is for Courtesy

Courtesy goes a long way in any setting, including online school classrooms. Help your children understand that their good manners should carry over to online meetings too.

- Students should use their real names.
- Make sure your kids know how to raise their “virtual hands” and wait to be recognized when responding to a question or comment.
- Teach your children that even online you expect them to say “please” and “thank you.”
- Remind them to address the teacher and other virtual school students in a respectful manner, even when disagreeing.
- Advise students to avoid using all uppercase letters; this is often considered the equivalent of shouting.

D is for Ditching Distractions

Before an online school session begins, have your children eliminate environmental distractions that may divert their attention away from distance learning. (This is good advice for parents who are working from home too!)

- Clear the room of playful pets or noisy siblings.
- Minimize background noise by turning off the TV and radio.
- Turn off cell phones. (No multitasking during class!)
- Remind them not to let the microphone broadcast unless they are asked to speak.

E is for Early

It’s important that virtual school students [be prepared before class!](#) They should download any necessary software and connect and test devices like microphones or video cameras before the lesson begins.

Students should also exit other applications on their computers prior to launching the classroom software.

F is for Focus and Friendships

Remind your kids that although the online school teacher may not be able to see them, you expect them to pay close attention. Make sure they do the following:

- Focus on the classroom conversation and activities.
- Take notes on the information presented.
- Ask relevant questions to clarify the material covered or assignments given.
- Not join sideline chats with classmates when the teacher is speaking.

At the same time, parents or Learning Coaches should recognize that virtual school isn't all work and no play! By joining in class discussions, bantering with classmates, and working on group projects in the virtual classroom, kids can form new friendships and become part of a close community of online learners. If your family has time, be sure to encourage your children to join online [extracurricular activities](#) that interest them.

G is for Good Intentions

Encourage kids to read and interpret virtual classroom messages with the assumption that teachers and classmates have good intentions. You can also assist them in developing good online communication skills by discussing the misunderstandings and problems that can arise.

- Explain how, without seeing their facial expressions, other people may not know when they are kidding or being sarcastic.
- Suggest that kids reread their own messages for friendliness and respect before sending.
- Advise them that what seems like a short or abrupt answer from a classmate (or teacher) probably doesn't mean anger—the other person might just be busy.
- Caution them against feeling “anonymous” online and slipping into a mean or mocking tone—or revealing much –too personal information.

Keep in mind that you may need to review this information (as well as the when they'll be working online) more than once, particularly if your children are young, energetic, or boisterous. Although this may seem like a lot to remember, many of these rules are simply the electronic versions of traditional classroom expectations. Within a few weeks, these pointers will be second nature to your children as they become familiar with this new way of communicating with teachers and classmates!!!

BY [DAN REINER](#) - APRIL 16, 2020 - ARTICLES, COMMUNITY & SOCIALIZATION, LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, ONLINE LEARNING & CURRICULUM