

Parent Guide: How to Juggle Work, Teaching and Parenting

The following are ideas to support families who now find themselves managing home schooling and/or flexible working arrangements. The ideas come from a range of sources and are based on largely on anecdotal evidence. Therefore, please use your personal judgement and research, when deciding what may work for you.

- Have clear boundaries and expectations, which are communicated to your family members. For example, during a conference call you expect your children to not interrupt, work/play quietly and to leave questions until after the call is finished.
- Where there is more than one adult at home, negotiate and share tasks (i.e. give each other time to do work/home duties as required).
- Get up earlier or stay up later, if your workplace allows for flexible hours. When your children are asleep, is often the only quiet, uninterrupted time you get in a day. If you have a toddler who still naps, this is another opportunity to get some work done and/or spend time providing more intensive support to your other children.
- Spend some time with older children setting up their online learning at the start of the day, so that they may be able to work independently for chunks of time (however always be aware of cyber safety).
- For children needing more of your time and support (e.g. younger), have independent, quiet, engaging activities pre-planned for times when you have calls, to minimise potential interruptions.
- Have realistic expectations of what you and your children can achieve, while working and learning at home. Remember to be kind to yourself and don't judge yourself on what you hear others are doing. Every child and family are different and remember that

how people present themselves on social media, often glosses over the messy reality of their lives.

- Focus on one thing at a time. Trying to work at the same time as helping or caring for your children can contribute to higher stress levels. If you regularly satisfy your child's desire for undivided attention and human connection, you may also find that you can get in more periods of uninterrupted work.
- Focus on task completion, rather than expecting you and your children to work for the length of a work or school or day. Working with one-on-one support is generally more efficient than classroom learning, so what your child might learn in one day at school, he/she might complete in 2-3 hours of focused work at home.
- Parents with toddlers need to be particularly creative in encouraging independent play, to get some work done. Some ideas that I find helpful are:
 - to rotate toys regularly
 - have a hidden stash of new toys/activities that you gradually introduce, as needed
 - have a variety of "busy bags" with a range of objects and activities to explore
 - temporarily take your office into the yard, while your child plays in the sandpit or engages in other outside play.
 - Put on some music that your child likes to dance to.
 - Let them "help" with your work. For example, your toddler may sort your office supplies by colour or type.
 - Schedule virtual visits from relatives, where they have something planned to do with your toddler e.g. read stories.
- Make sure your house is safe, so you know that your children won't get injured while you focus on your work. This is especially relevant if you have little ones that are constantly exploring their environment. Examples include stove knob covers, TV and furniture anchors, removing access to any sharp objects and/or choking

hazards (including snack foods) and use your child monitor for extra supervision. Knowing first aid and CPR is also a must and will help you avoid visits to the doctor/hospital. There are online courses available, if you need a refresher.

- If you need to work in the same room as your children and find it difficult to deal with the background noise, you may consider investing in a set of noise cancelling headphones. Please however consider the safety implications of hearing less noise. Another tip is to use the mute button on your phone, when you are not speaking during a work call. This will stop the noise of your children from intruding in the conversation.