



ABSTRACT

School Education – COVID - 19 Pandemic – Guidelines for Digital/ Online Education for schools in Tamil Nadu – Orders – Issued.

SCHOOL EDUCATION (ERT) DEPARTMENT

G.O.(Ms) No.65

Dated 29.07.2020

திருவள்ளூர்வராண்டு, 2051

சார்வரி வருடம் - ஆடி 14

Read:-

1. From the Joint Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi, letter F.No.1-39/2020-KT, dated 14.07.2020.
2. Interim order of High Court of Madras in W.P.Nos.8446, 8639, 8477, 6645, 8804, 7976 & 7982 of 2020, dated 20.07.2020.

ORDER:-

In the letter first read above, the Government of India has shared the guidelines for Digital/Online Education prepared by National Council of Educational Research and Training wherein it has been stated that these guidelines are advisory in nature. Further, it has been stated that States/ Union Territories are required to come out with their own detailed guidelines by adapting/ adopting/ modifying these guidelines in accordance with their requirements and assessment of the local situation.

2. The Commissioner of School Education and the Director, State Council of Educational Research and Training in consultation with Director of School Education and Director of Matriculation Schools have sent their remarks in order to issue State-specific guidelines for Digital/Online Education.

3. In the Writ Petitions viz., W.P.Nos.8446, 8639, 8477, 6645, 8804, 7976 & 7982 of 2020 filed before the High Court of Madras praying to prohibit online classes for School students through video conferencing or any other online mode, the Hon'ble High Court of Madras in its order dated 20.07.2020 has given the following interim direction:-

“4.the guidelines issued by the Central Government are advisory in nature. The State Government is yet to take a call. The decision of State shall include imparting of education to all government school students as well as the private schools, both aided and otherwise. After all, we are interested in the well being of the children. The idea is to see to it that the children are not exposed to the gadgets at the cost of their health.

Thus, we expect the State Government to come out with clear guideline, while taking into consideration the concerns expressed above, particularly, to the point of view of health of the children, apart from the convenience that is involved."

4. As per the above directions of the Hon'ble High Court of Madras, the Government have examined the issue in detail based on the guidelines of Government of India and the remarks sent by the Commissioner of School Education and the Director, State Council of Educational Research and Training and issue State-specific guidelines for Digital/Online Education as Annexed in this order in the interests of all the students studying in schools in the State.

(By order of the Governor)

Dheeraj Kumar
Principal Secretary to Government

To

The Commissioner of School Education, Chennai-6.

The Director, State Council of Educational Research and Training,
Chennai-6.

The Director of School Education, Chennai-6.

The Director of Elementary Education, Chennai-6.

The Director of Matriculation Schools, Chennai-6.

The Joint Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy,
Ministry of Human Resource Development,
Government of India, New Delhi.

Copy to

The Personal Assistant to Hon'ble Minister for School Education,
Youth Welfare & Sports Development, Chennai-9.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister's Office, Chennai-9.

SC & SF

//Forwarded by order//

S. I. Kamalini
Section Officer 29/7/20

GUIDELINES FOR DIGITAL/ ONLINE EDUCATION

1. Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic has paralyzed the normal life, including closure of schools. Extended school closures may cause loss of learning. To prevent this, the way teaching and learning have happened so far needs to be redesigned. Digital/ Online education allows the students to continue their learning till the schools reopen. The suitable method of delivering quality education through a healthy mix of schooling at home and schooling at school needs to be introduced to ensure continuity in education.

The main advantage of the digital or online education is quality education could be imparted to all the children in schools without any interruption during extraordinary situation like this COVID 19 Pandemic.

2. Modes of Digital Education

There are three modes of digital education

2.1. Online Mode

When computer / Smart Phone/ Smart TV with internet connectivity is available.

2.2. Partially Online Mode

Computer / Smart Phone is available but regular internet connectivity is not available.

2.3. Offline Mode

- Where internet connectivity is available with very less bandwidth on a smart device like phone/tablet/computer

- When downloading of digital material is possible only in specific spaces like hi-tech labs, etc and otherwise there is no internet connectivity for a device
- Television
- Radio

3. Initiatives of the State Government with regard to remote learning

The Government of Tamil Nadu has taken a policy decision to encourage e-governance in all spheres. The School Education Department, Government of Tamil Nadu is very vibrant in using technology by developing digital content and hosting the same in DIKSHA, a National digital platform for knowledge sharing. Some of the initiatives of the State Government are described below:

3.1 Veettupalli (School at Home) The Department of School Education has made arrangements for shooting of video lessons with the help of the teachers in Government schools for Standards 1 to 12 in such a way as to cover all the learning outcomes in the textbooks of the Tamil Nadu State Board. This programme has been titled as "veettupalli (school at home)" and has been arranged sub-topic wise, proceeding from the first chapter to the last chapter in the textbook just like classes are held in a regular school. For the standards 1 to 10, these video lessons are being telecast from July 14th, 2020 according to a standardized time table, like the time table followed in regular schools, through Kalvi TV (Education TV) run by the School Education Department. The classes for 11th standard will start on Kalvi TV soon after 10th Standard results are declared in Tamil Nadu.

- 3.2** The 12th standard students in Government schools have been given laptops by the State Government in 2019-20. The video lessons prepared for 12th standard students by SCERT are being transferred to their laptops through the Hi-tech labs established by the Government in the schools from 14.07.2020 to facilitate learning at home.
- 3.3** The video lessons will be made available for re-telecast through other private TV channels starting from August 3rd, 2020 to increase the reach of the video lessons to the students at the comfort of their homes. Tamil Nadu is the only state in India, which has come forward with the "veettupalli (school at home)" concept through a standardized telecast schedule like the way it happens in regular schools. **Further, the telecast time for one particular child has been limited at one sitting to a maximum of one hour, keeping in view the health of the students.**
- 3.4** The textbooks of standards 1 to 12 are energized in Tamil Nadu. i.e., they have 3 or more QR codes embedded in each chapter. The QR codes have all the relevant audio-video lessons in the form of electronic content including the current video lessons linked to them. If a student scans the relevant QR code with a QR code reader in a mobile phone/tablet, (s)he can electronically access/view all the electronic content. The QR codes have been embedded in the current video lessons too.
- 3.5** The electronic content is downloadable from multiple sources for facilitating offline studies at the pace of the individual learner. The official websites for the purpose are <https://e-learn.tnschools.gov.in/>, <https://diksha.gov.in/tn> or <https://diksha.gov.in/explore>, <https://www.kalvitholaikaatchi.com/>

3.6 The above are repositioned initiatives, over and above the following e-learning initiatives of the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India already existing/accessible in Tamil Nadu.

3.6.1. e-PATHSHALA

In this web portal NCERT has deployed around 1886 audios, 2000 videos, 696 e-Books (e-Pubs) and 504 Flip Books for standards 1 to 12 in different languages. The content is also available through a mobile application.

WEBSITE: <http://epathshala.nic.in> or <http://epathshala.gov.in>.

3.6.2 National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER)

NROER portal has a total of 14527 files including 401 collections, 2779 documents, 1345 interactive, 1664 audios, 2586 images and 6153 videos in different regional languages.

WEBSITE: <http://nroer.gov.in/welcome>

3.6.3 Swayam

Swayam is the national online education platform hosting 1900 courses covering students and teachers from classes IX to XII.

WEBSITE: <http://swayam.gov.in>

3.7. E-learning platforms of the State Government

Tamil Nadu Government has taken many measures to improve the availability of digitally-enabled content such as energized textbooks, video recordings, TV episodes, online assessments etc., and the delivery of the same to students and teachers. Tamil Nadu Government is pioneering the use of digital technology to improve governance, to empower teachers and to enhance digital resource

utilization. In the academic year 2019-20, Tamil Nadu secured the first prize nationally in the use of the DIKSHA platform set up by the Government of India because of the way it organically embraced the use of technology in learning. During the time that all schools have been closed as a precautionary measure to fight COVID -19, efforts have been redoubled to promote digital learning so that the students as well as teachers can make best use of the available digital platforms. The list of important digital or e-learning platforms provided by the School Education Department, Tamil Nadu for online and offline remote education are as follows:

3.7.1 TN SCHOOLS e-learn

Tamil Nadu e-learn Platform is a customized content repository for students to access and utilize digital resources to improve their learning outcomes. It hosts more than 10,000 e-Learning Contents, 390 Digital Textbooks and 2000+ aggregated YouTube videos in one place. The content is aligned with the updated curriculum and is made available in both Tamil and English, class-wise, term-wise, medium-wise, subject-wise and chapter-wise. The Tamil Nadu e-learn platform can be accessed through <https://e-learn.tnschools.gov.in/>

3.7.2 TN-DIKSHA

All the textbooks of the Tamil Nadu State Board are now energized with QR codes which provide access to the enriching e-Learning content on TN-DIKSHA. DIKSHA initially contained mainly material based on the national CBSE Board syllabi. But now, TNSCERT has created and made available more than 13,000 e-Learning resources for standards 1 to 12 (Tamil & English medium) for the State Board, 400 Easy Science experiments and over 1000 videos. The platform is very suitable for efficient revision. Students can navigate through the content on the website (<https://diksha.gov.in/tn> or

<https://diksha.gov.in/explore>), choose their respective board and class to access the e-Learning content, and evaluate themselves through online assessments. The content is also accessible via QR codes that are printed in the energized Textbooks. The "DIKSHA" app can be downloaded from IOS and Google Play Store.

3.7.3 Tamil Nadu Teachers Platform (TNTP)

Tamil Nadu Teachers Platform empowers teachers with training and support material to deliver high-quality engaging content in their classrooms. It is a customized content repository exclusively for teachers of Tamil Nadu to upload, access and utilize digital resources to improve their classroom effectiveness. TNTP hosts more than 10,000 e-Learning Content Items, 390 Digital Textbooks, 980+ Interactive Quizzes and 2000+ aggregated YouTube videos in one place. The content is aligned with the updated curriculum and is made available class-wise, term-wise, medium-wise, subject-wise and chapter-wise. TNTP can be accessed through <https://tntp.tnschools.gov.in/> website. For teachers' professional development, courses on Spoken English and training material on the new textbooks are accessible under the 'TPD' menu. TNTP allows any teacher to contribute quality content to the teaching community.

3.7.4 KalviTholaikaatchi (KALVI TV) –You tube channel

KalviTholaikaatchi is an exclusive education channel which streams programmes related to state curriculum for teachers and students to access seamlessly. Kalvi TV has over 2325 episodes for standards 1-12 standards including about 300 for NEET/JEE coaching, which are being telecast currently. Kalvi TV has its own youtube channel to facilitate downloading of content.

3.7.5 TNSCERT YouTube Channel

TN SCERT YouTube channel hosts around 3390+ vibrant videos covering a wide range of topics from science practical videos to teaching video lessons.

3.7.6 FACEBOOK – WORKPLACE

TN Schools Facebook Workplace provides a platform for teachers to learn through collaboration and sharing. Teachers can share best practices used in their classrooms, share resources and participate in discussion in different subject oriented groups.

WEBSITE: <https://tnschools.workplace.com/>

3.7.7. NEET Exercises through online tests

Online practice tests with detailed analysis are being made available for students studying in Government and Government Aided schools preparing for NEET exam through E-Box software.

Besides TV-based and online and offline modes of remote education stated above, the School Education Department is also planning many more initiatives to ensure that no child is left behind because of lack of opportunity/family environment or financial resources. The attempt is to ensure equity in learning outcomes despite iniquitous personal circumstances.

4. Guidelines for Online Education in Tamil Nadu

4.1 Necessity for guidelines for Online Education

As the COVID-19 lockdown has compelled many schools, mostly in the private sector in Tamil Nadu to turn to online classes, it is desirable that the Government issues guidelines for the conduct of online classes. The Central Government has already issued guidelines for digital education and online classes, which are advisory in nature.

The guidelines for the State Government with regard to digital learning and conduct of online classes are given below as an advisory. These guidelines are in line with the guidelines provided by the Government of India.

4.2 Focus on well being of students

- Teachers reaching out to students, shall help the children to be aware of the healthy practices for pandemic prevention, right nutrition, extend emotional support at the first instance.
- Teaching could be started after establishing a healthy mental connect with the students.
- Teachers should establish an individualized rapport with the students.
- Teachers should sensitize the students / parents about the online learning and how to remove obstacles in engaging with online learning by suitably instructing them on safe online learning.
- In order to ensure the physical well being of students, teachers should teach students to stretch and rotate body parts at regular intervals, blink frequently, place digital equipments/devices conveniently, keep drinking water close by during classes.

All the above are expected to make the child feel comfortable with the new teaching mode and turn the child's mind towards learning since children may be stressed about lack of face-to-face peer interaction, anxiety of being restricted to homes and watching the parents under stress, even if there is no particular anguish in the family.

4.3 Responsible adult supervision

To make the internet access safe for children, the search capabilities need to be effectively firewalled dynamically over time, or the complete search process has to be closely supervised effectively 100% of the time by a committed and concerned adult with good personal habits and certain ease of using electronics/internet. Hence, it should be ensured that there is a responsible and committed adult supervision before providing the electronic gadgets like smart phones laptops etc., with data connectivity to students.

4.4 Systemic Safety and Privacy

1. An effectively firewalled full fledged Learning management system is the ideal base to start online classes to ensure the safety of the students on the internet.
2. The use of end to end encrypted platforms is highly recommended
3. The Learning management system must protect the learning privacy of the individual student and the teaching progress of the individual teacher by masking the identities to everyone except the individual concerned.
4. It should be ensured that nobody else does the video or recording of the classes.
5. Every school shall appoint a teacher as a counselor for ensuring cyber safety and security for the students/teachers. Their mobile numbers/email ID shall be given to students/teachers before the start of online classes to enable them to inform about any cyber safety issues.

4.5 Steps for digital and online education

Step-I. Plan for online classes

The need for proper planning is as much essential for the conduct of successful face-to-face teaching learning sessions as for online ones.

Anyone who is involved with facilitating digital learning must prepare a plan at their level. For the successful implementation of a digital education, State department, School Heads and teachers must develop a coherent plan and ensure clarity about their respective roles. The scope of planning may vary from stakeholder to stakeholder. However, the core elements around which the planning is done are common to everyone. These important core elements/factors are as follows:

Context

- ❖ Number of Students in each class
- ❖ Duration and time schedule
- ❖ Availability of digital devices for teachers or for the school
- ❖ Availability and accessibility of quality resources for the teacher
- ❖ Safe and secure digital environment
- ❖ Competencies of teachers in handling digital/ online classes.

Learner

- ❖ Physiological factors like age, class, physical disabilities that require any special attention.
- ❖ Psychological factors like interest, learning style, motivation to students, intellectual disabilities that require special attention.
- ❖ Sociological factors like language of the student, availability and accessibility of digital gadgets and facilities, parental support.

Content

- ❖ Nature of subject
- ❖ Duration of the intervention
- ❖ Nature of assignment with respect to consequences/results thereof
- ❖ Nature of assessment with respect to consequences/results thereof

Step-II: Review

- ❖ The second step would be to undertake a review after deciding different modes or tools for different sets of students and after identification of all available resources for the teacher/school. This would be a review of the plan in terms of time/duration, quality of resources, scope of assignments, methods of assessment, as well as cyber security and related safety concerns. While undertaking a review, teachers may decide to join hands with other teachers and share the responsibility of talking to parents or students individually or in groups to guide them on all the subjects one by one in view of saving time and the availability of technological tools with students.

Step-III: Arrange

- ❖ After undertaking a review of all the information and resources which have been collected, their proper arrangement and organization for their daily/weekly or monthly transaction must be done. It is also to be decided, how follow-up can happen with students in the case of teachers and by School Heads in the case of teachers.

Step-IV: Guide

- ❖ Guidance on the part of teachers for students and their parents is a very important step. Teachers need to inform parents or

students about the themes/topics to be learnt by the students under the guidance or via self-study (whatever, the case may be). Using different modes like instant messaging, SMS, teachers may guide each and every student on the following lines –

- Learning outcomes decided to be taken up for the session that the teacher is planning for the students.
- Themes/topics which help achieve progress in selected learning outcomes.

Step-V: Talk

- ❖ During their guidance, teachers must clarify that talk, chat, discussion, etc. must happen among the members of the groups (created among students), parents and their wards, and with teachers, about online academic teaching so that students take an interest in studying the themes and doing the activities.

Step-VI Assign

- ❖ After completing two or three themes, teachers can give some interesting assignments to the children. These may be group activities or individual assignments, depending upon the technological tools available to the children such as healthy practices for wellness, Corona warriors in your society etc

Step-VII: Track

- ❖ Tracking or follow-up of the given session and assignment is very necessary, otherwise, children will lose their interest, if they do not get response from their teacher or parents on their work or assignment. Teachers need to track progress either on social media like WhatsApp or by calling them and asking them to show what they have done or if this is not possible, then by telling them that they must keep these assignments in a file and bring them to school when the school re-open. If work is incomplete,

teachers may again guide them by selecting another pedagogy if the earlier one has not worked.

- ❖ Teachers will have to make a tracker of habits, skills and values developed in students as they have been learning/receiving education using alternative approaches. They may have their own criteria and need to observe these while talking to students in a group or by talking to the parents.

Step-VIII: Appreciate

- ❖ On every completed academic/co-curricular/ extra-curricular task, teachers may compliment children by sending messages, calling them and appreciating them. Since the teacher is not physically with them and children do not have the opportunity to see teachers' expressions or listen to their praise, such praise may get students involved in online education which could otherwise be boring or demotivating. Through gestures of appreciation, teachers can make students feel that they love them, care for them and feel happy when they progress in their learning.

5. Guidelines for School Heads, Teachers, Parents and Students

5.1 Guidelines for School Heads and Teachers

Teachers play an important role in a child's life. Teachers convey their affection, warmth, care, comfort as well as control to the students through verbal and non verbal communication. Therefore, teachers may be more careful about the verbal and non verbal communication they make through various digital platforms. Teachers being the first level counsellors, also have the responsibility to take care of the mental and physical health of their students.

5.1.1 Need Assessment

- School Heads could consider conducting an informal survey to identify various ICT facilities available at home for each child. This data could be analyzed by teachers to group or create differentiated plans.
- Ensure that for each class, teachers and students (i) mode of communication (ii) learning plans and (iii) necessary well-being support has been identified.

5.1.2 Planning

- School headmasters may take adequate measures to facilitate ICT infrastructure for teachers (laptops/tablets, connectivity etc.) as permissible by the extant rules/schemes, encourage and lead them in using different ICT tools in teaching-learning and assessment,.
- Orientation of teachers, parents and students about using digital technology for teaching-learning and assessment may be done at the initial level and repeated, if so needed.
- Teachers may continuously explore, create and share learning resources with their students and/ or parents
- Class-wise instant messaging groups may be formed for smooth communication with teachers, parents and students. For lower classes, the parents may communicate on behalf of students.
- Do not make adoption of digital learning burdensome for students and their parents. Avoid setting unrealistic goals for students as well as yourself.
- Involve teachers and representatives of parents in chalking out modalities of digital education. A systematic timetable (with detailed online and offline activities) for each class may be planned in consultation with all the teachers.

- Do not rush for the sake of completing the syllabus, rather focus on the consolidation of learning. Plan the interventions keeping in mind students' level, age, resource availability, nature of content etc.
- Plan ICT enabled engaging activities which have scope for tapping the creative pursuit of students leading to the acquisition of important life skills.
- **Children exposed to digital technologies/gadgets for a longer time are prone to severe health issues. Hence seating with digital gadgets for longer hours or their excess use can be avoided by designing age appropriate schedules of digital education.**
- If possible, parents and guardians may also be involved in selection of appropriate resources for e-resources and ICT tools for their children.

5.1.3 Implementation of Digital Education

- Timing for online classes is dealt in Para 6.6
- Use Instant Messaging/Chat groups/emails involving parents (wherever required) for sharing important information, resources, suggestions and follow up activities
- Post a weekly announcement to provide an overview of the coming week's topic or a recap of the previous week's work, or both.
- Teachers may share academic/ co-curricular and extra-curricular e-content with students and parents and guide them how to use those contents using available gadgets at home.
- Provide time to time feedback on the responses and performance of students in the assigned tasks.
- School head may interact regularly with teachers and parents (at least once a week) to get feedback

- Where parents are not in a position to support students in digital learning, suggest alternative support like peer learning and seeking help from neighbours, identified local volunteers, etc.
- Teachers may themselves select the contents based on the following criteria and circulate among students and parents to help them choose appropriate digital media:
 - *'age-appropriate' that it matches with children's needs, abilities, and interests*
 - *clear learning goals*
 - *content meaningfully presented*
 - *contextualized and culturally responsive*
- Suggest activities that:
 - *are age appropriate, simple to do at home and have learning goals that focus on building concepts/ skills among children.*
 - *are meant for holistic development, and parents can easily assist their children in doing the activities.*
 - *encourage children to explore, observe and experiment using objects easily available in their surroundings/ localities.*

5.1.3.1 Assessment

- Assessment may be made an integral part of online learning programs in order to ensure achievement of learning outcomes at each level.
- Concept inventories (diagnostic question banks) for all subjects may be created and published widely so that teachers can make best use of them.
- The quantum of assessment given shall be in proportion to the time available for the completion of the same.
- The assessment shall be meant only for monitoring purposes and shall not be in any case linked to the performance assessment for final grading.

5.1.4 Cyber Safety Measures

- Students, Teachers, and Parents may be oriented on Do's and Don'ts of cyber safety and security.
- Make students aware about cyber bullying and how to avoid getting bullied. Also, encourage them to refrain from cyber bullying.
- Do not share personal information, textual communications, videos or images of students on social media for any purpose including advocacy and showcasing your work. Create a congenial, safe and secured online learning environment. Communicate often with students with utmost clarity on do's and don'ts of engaging with digital learning.
- Each and every one should avoid cyber bullying and follow internet etiquette as brought out by NCERT (given in Annexure - 1)

5.1.5 Specific Guidelines Related to Preschool, Standards 1 and 2

- Plan joyful learning experiences for digital/online learning as you do for face-to-face.
- Give interesting assignments to children such as listening, and reading, stories followed by activities like drawing inferences, adding/changing the climax at the end, picture reading, art and craft, puzzles, simple observation projects, learning new words etc.
- Occasionally organize brief and casual meetings with the parents and children through video conferencing and give them a chance to narrate their feelings and experiences.
- Encourage the parent to document the child's work through a photo or a short video in order to stay connected to the child's early learning experience without making it stressful or going for rote learning.
- Guide parents regarding monitoring TV programs viewing, about what cartoons/ programs are being watched by children.

5.1.6 Specific Guidelines Related to Senior Students

- Give 10-15 minutes break between two consecutive classes for students to freshen up, relax and re-energize themselves to focus on the next class
- Encourage peer discussion and interaction during online classes
- Develop and use formative assessments for immediate and continuous feedback, this would help the teacher and students improve in the learning process
- Talk regularly to students in understanding and encouraging the responsible use of the internet and netiquettes.

5.1.7 Teacher Preparation

Teacher Preparation for digital education is a twofold process. The first is the requirement of teacher preparation for adopting digital technology for teaching their students more efficiently. The second is to use digital medium to keep abreast of new development in education for their own professional growth. Teachers must be ready to harness the potential of digital technology to keep them professionally up to date. The teacher may:

- Explore digital technologies (LMS, apps, web portals, digital labs etc), repositories of Open Educational Resources (OERs) at national/ State/global level
- Attend webinars, online training programmes, online courses on ICT- Pedagogy- Content integration
- Use appropriate technology for teaching learning & assessment
- Use digital resources embedded in Alternative Academic Calendars (AAC) developed by NCERT for different stages.
- Be part of forums, interest groups and online communities to interact with peers and know how the rest of the world is doing with digital education
- Get acquainted with copyrighted as well as Free and Open Source Software(FOSS), e-content and tools for learning. Teachers can be

made aware to use open resources as everything on the Internet is not available for free download or sharing.

5.1.8 General guidelines

- To manage, despite the digital divide among students, activities and resources have to be planned keeping all the categories of students (with minimum and maximum facilities) in mind.
- Activities can be carried out using audio, video and audio-visual media so that all the students get an opportunity to learn according to their learning styles and need.
- Ensure disadvantaged, first generation learners, and Children With Special Needs find opportunities to learn through online learning processes. Encourage all children to participate and help each other in the process of online learning.
- For those children who could not access the online classes due to lack of facilities, the school should work out other alternate mode of imparting education and should give intensive coaching to them after the reopening of schools.

5.2. Guidelines for Parents

The COVID-19 has brought with it many new challenges in the learning spectrum for parents, families and especially children. Parents' role will now be amplified to keep their children engaged in learning and at the same time to look after their emotional well-being as well as physical health. As the child will feel a range of emotions during this time, the role of the parent may include providing encouragement and support. Especially young children do not have so much vocabulary to express/describe their emotions and thus parents and family members need to be very careful to watch over the digital behaviors. Keeping in mind the detrimental effects of the internet and gadgets, judicious use of the internet may be monitored by the parents. Following are some of the suggestions made in this guideline that parents can follow.

5.2.1 Physical, Mental Health and Well-Being

- Parents may interact with children on a regular basis to know their physical and mental well being.
- Watch out for signs of anxiety, depression /anger during digital learning.
- Check if your child is becoming very secretive about his or her online activities. For example, not talking to you, deleting history of the internet browser, using encryption software, or quickly flicking the screen display when he/she sees you. It's better to talk openly about your own internet use and encourage your child to do the same.
- Explain and talk about basic hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices for protection during COVID-19 using digital resources. There are plenty of digital resources (videos, animations, booklets, etc) available in the web.
- Combine online time with fun filled offline play, games and other activities, so that there is a balance between the screen time and the concrete play time
- Parents may ensure the involvement of their wards in physical activities such as yoga, exercises, etc. during breaks from digital learning.

5.2.2 Safety Measures

- Keep TV/ laptops/ computers etc in a common area and definitely out of bedrooms. This will help in restricting usage time and you can easily keep an eye on the child's overall usage of digital devices.
- Develop digital rules in consultation with children, and follow it. The plan could cover things like screen-free areas in home, internet safety rules, duration of watching TV, surfing the web, etc. Talk with children regularly to help them understand the importance of responsible use of the internet rather than scolding.

- Discuss with children about netiquettes like not to post hurtful messages about others, not to post photos, videos and other information without permission of that person online; think before posting one's photos, videos or other data in social media and other places.
- Discuss and enquire if the child is spending too much time on the Internet or mobile, predominantly in instant messengers, forums, texting messages, etc.
- If aware, may use parental controls in devices and enable safe search in browsers while children are surfing the web.

5.2.3 Teaching and Learning

- Have a regular communication channel with the school (counselor, teacher, other staff) to better monitor and help children in their progress.
- Try to create and maintain a routine for your children, particularly the younger ones with respect to all daily activities. This includes digital learning activities suggested by teachers and educational institutions as well.
- Consult with teacher, parents of other children and create simple yet effective learning plans by reflecting on following questions:
 - What would the children learn this week?
 - What digital resources, instructions and support children need to achieve the learning outcomes/lesson/unit?
 - How will children receive these digital resources, instructions and support?
 - How will I know that my children are learning?
- Ensure that your children use assistive aids (glasses, hearing aids etc.) during online sessions.
- Do not force the child to sit continuously in front of the TV, laptop, mobile and never stress or pressurize the child to continuously do online activities when the child is not ready for it.

5.3 Guidelines for Students

The most important stakeholder and primary beneficiary of school education are students. The following are guidelines for students to maintain health and mental wellbeing while ensuring continuity in learning.

5.3.1 Balanced Online/Offline Activities

- Maintain a schedule for sleep, food, noting time spent on the internet for learning and time spent on the internet for socializing etc.
- Besides online learning, every day read from textbooks and read other books as well
- As a follow up to online class, explore further through activities, experiments, creative expressions etc.
- Access the digital resources provided through the various national ICT initiatives. Take notes during the online class and review them offline
- Restrict time for surfing and regulate screen time for scrolling/reading information on every issue (not more than 2 hours for secondary level students)
 - During online activities take small breaks to stand up and move away from the screen. During this break, take a quick walk indoors, do a few stretch exercises, practice deep breathing, catch up with family members etc. Do not continue to sit and surf or chat online.
 - Avoid using mobile/internet surfing 40 minutes prior to going to bed because engaging in passive communication just before sleeping makes the brain active and makes it difficult for the brain and body to relax.

5.3.2 Safety and Ethics Related Precautions

- Seek parents' permission before sharing any personal information on the Internet
- Be careful about cyber bullying and also stop yourself from bullying others.
- Follow netiquette and behave responsibly while online.

5.4 Supporting Online Learning of Children With Special Needs (CWSN)

Children with special needs may require assistance and support from respective teachers. Following are the guidelines that may provide clarity on ways to ensure a hassle-free access to online teaching.

5.4.1 Create/Curate and Share Content

- Develop/Identify and use resources like audio books/ talking books, TTS, sign language videos, audio tactile materials, etc.
- Prepare chapter briefs in advance so that the same may be shared with the CWSN prior to actual group teaching in online mode. Care should be taken to prepare these briefs in multiple formats such as text, audio (voice recorded), audio with visual support etc
- CWSN may be encouraged to watch programs in sign language e.g., the NIOS sign language TV channel and other such programs in sign language.
- Allow flexible ways (types, recorded, audio visual with gestures, adult/ sibling supported) of responding or submitting assignments/ completed tasks, projects, homework etc.

5.4.2 Measures to be taken for CWSN

While creating learning groups of students for online teaching learning, as far as possible separate groups for students with special needs, may be avoided and they be treated at par with peers.

6. Guidelines for Physical Health and Mental Wellness during Digital Education

Adequate physical and mental health practices need to be adopted while pursuing digital education. Poor ergonomic practices, prolonged exposure to digital devices and lack of physical activities can have a negative impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of a person.

6.1 Ergonomic Aspects

The postures and practices a person adopts throughout the day while using digital devices can have a significant impact on one's health and well being. Staying in the same posture for prolonged periods is undesirable. Besides, prolonged exposure to digital devices can have negative impacts on other aspects of health and wellbeing also.

How to sit on a table for learning by laptop or mobile is very important. Figures shown in Annexure 2.

6.2 Physical Exercises

- Practicing small physical exercises on a regular basis can help in strengthening the immune system as well as strengthening muscles, bones, and joints.
- A short break from Computer/Television/Mobile phone after every 30-60 minutes will help in reducing strain on eyes, exhaustion, improve circulation of blood and reduce stiffness in joints. One can walk around for a few minutes during such breaks. Switching one's eyes off the screen for 20 seconds after every 20 minutes is soothing for the eyes.
- While sitting in front of a digital device, one can stand up periodically and do some stretching exercises

6.3 Mental Wellness

- Malpractices on the internet and other safety, security and ethical issues may be reported to adults/teachers by the students. If

teachers are also facing such issues they may report it to authorities and subsequently to the police.

- Students may be oriented to the responsible uses of the internet and how its misuse can cause harm to one's academic, personal, social and mental wellbeing.
- Teachers and adults may be vigilant enough to pick up clues for unusual behavior of any student and connect them to counselors for help. Examples of such behavior are negative emotional states such as

A. Depression manifested as dysphoria, hopelessness, devaluation of life, self-deprecation, lack of interest or involvement, and inertia,

B. Anxiety manifested as restlessness, fatigue, trouble concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, trouble sleeping (insomnia) and

C. Stress or tension manifested as difficulty relaxing, nervous arousal, and being easily upset or agitated, irritable or over-reactive, and impatient.

6.4 Learning Environment

The learning environment needs to have proper lighting, ventilation. One cannot participate in a video call when there is too much external noise. Audio-video content should not be played in the middle of an online session. An earphone may be used if available.

6.5 Attendance in Online Classes

1. Attendance may be taken on the electronic system only for flagging remediation requirement of the absentees and not for any punitive or financial purposes. Such attendance shall not be counted mandatory for performance evaluation purposes.

2. The teachers may take the responsibility and ensure that all students who were absent for online sessions are suitably coached and brought on par with the other students who attended the online classes, when the school reopens.
3. While assessments and assignments can be done online, none of the assignments or assessments conveyed remotely to the child over electronic modes and through an electronic device may be made mandatory or be counted towards final grading/marketing/performance evaluation.

6.6 Guidelines for lending and borrowing of devices/other guidelines

1. Lending/borrowing of devices within the family and proximate community could be practised for facilitating online classes. Any lending/borrowing of devices for online classes may be kept to the minimum time and be mediated by preferably the parent/responsible guardian/teacher concerned.
2. Parents/ guardians/ persons lending devices to children may be given complete agency on whether to let the children attend online classes based on their personal circumstances and safety perceptions till a fully firewalled LMS is in place and all children have requisite devices & connectivity for the school/school system.
3. Nobody/ no parent or guardian may be compelled to share any device with children for online classes when the children are unsupervised by a responsible and trustworthy adult.
4. Nobody may take any advantage of a child or its family on the ground that (s)he had lent/will lend a device to the child for attending online classes.
5. Nobody may gain access to a child's house or private space on the grounds of lending a device to the child for attending online classes.

6. Nobody and no child may be compelled to attend any online classes using terms like "shall, should, must, compulsory, will be counted in attendance, grades/marks/evaluation are based on this, etc,." These may build feelings of stress or deprivation among children with unexpected conflicts or consequences in the family or the community.
7. All communications regarding online classes may be communications of information only. All teachers/school staff and authorities may be sensitized on this matter that there should not be a hint of compulsion even in their tone of voice or in the mode of drafting/language of the letter.
8. A protocol may be informally established that the elder child gets access to the device if online classes are happening simultaneously for more than one child in the family, if there is a shortage of devices. This is to ensure that conflicts are minimized in the family on this account.

6.7 Timing for online classes

1. Each online session may have 30-45 minutes of curricular delivery. Children with special needs and differently abled children may have shorter sessions in consultation with their parent / guardian
2. **A break of at least 10-15 minutes shall be given between each session to give rest to the eyes and to enable children to relax, stretching of body or to take water.**
3. A teacher may take a maximum 6 classes per day, subject to a maximum of 28 online classes per week.
4. Classes may be scheduled between 9.00.am. to 5.00p.m normally on all working days.
5. All other electronic communication regarding online classes, assignments etc, may be restricted between 8.00am to 6.00pm.
6. No online classes may be scheduled for preprimary classes for teaching curriculum. But, online sessions may be scheduled for

interacting with parents and guiding them for not more than 30 minutes.

7. For students of Standards 1 to 8, online classes may be undertaken for not more than two sessions of 30-45 minutes for a day.

8. For students of Standards 9 to 12, online classes may be undertaken for not more than four sessions of 30-45 minutes for a day.

6.8. Other supportive Practices of Online Learning

Due care has to be taken on the following by the teacher while scheduling online classes:

- The notice for class may be given two days in advance or in the previous session of that particular subject.
- Time of 5 minutes may be kept for warm up/exercise/ creative activities within each session
- Students may be trained on following suitable polite protocols of raising hands while raising questions during a class. They may keep their mike on mute at all other times.

Dheeraj Kumar
Principal Secretary to Government

//True Copy//

S. Kamalohi
Section Officer 29/7/20

ANNEXURE 1

SAFE ONLINE LEARNING IN TIMES OF COVID-19

(Jointly developed by NCERT and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in June, 2020)

Why is it important to know about cyberbullying?

Cyber bullying involves the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature and is a punishable offence under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Indian Penal Code. It also involves posting pictures or videos aimed at harassing another person. A whole gamut of social platforms, including chat rooms, blogs and instant messaging are used in cyber bullying.

With COVID-19 closing schools across all states, Education Departments have made efforts to ensure continuity of learning through various digital platforms. Millions of learners are turning to online education and with this comes a huge increase in use of electronic devices and Information and communication Technologies (ICTs). This places children and young people at risk of online abuse, increasing their vulnerability to cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is widespread and affects a significant number of children and adolescents and infringes their rights to education and to health and well-being. There are considerable negative effects of cyber bullying, including on academic achievement, mental health, and quality of life in general. Online bullying often prevents teachers from imparting quality education through digital platforms and acts against the provision of safe, non-violent and inclusive learning environments for all.

Cyber bullying includes

- Posting hurtful, nasty rumours or comments on updates, pictures and videos shared by an individual on websites.

- Excluding individuals of different cultural, socio-economic backgrounds from online groups and forums.
- Uploading embarrassing photographs online without the person's permission.
- Stealing someone's account password and sending unwanted/inappropriate messages from that account to harass other individuals.

How to stay safe online?

Do's

- Create a strong password according to password guidelines, and frequently change passwords to prevent misuse.
- Read the privacy settings very carefully on social networking sites.
- Communicate only with known people.
- Be careful while posting photographs, videos and any sensitive information on websites as they leave digital footprints which stay online forever.
- Ensure that only authorized personnel access computer systems and labs.
- Report immediately to the support team of networking site if you suspect that your account has been hacked or stolen.
- Invest in a strong network security system.
- Use only verified open source or licensed software and operating systems.
- Set up your computer for automatic antivirus software and operating system updates.

Don'ts

- Don't reveal your password to anyone other than your parent or guardian.
- Don't reveal personal information like age, address, phone number, school name etc. as this can lead to identity theft.

- Don't post anything which hurts others feelings.
- Don't post your friends' information on networking sites, which can put them at risk.
- Don't forward anything that you read on social media without verifying it from a trusted source.
- Don't leave your account unattended after login, log out when you are not using it.
- Don't create fake profiles for yourself on any social networking site.
- Don't use personal devices such as personal USBs or hard drives on public networks or computers.
- Don't open links and attachment on social networking sites and block file extensions such as .bat, .cmd, .exe, .pif by filtering software.

The law supports you! Cyber bullying is a punishable offence under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Indian Penal Code. All children and adults MUST report cases of cyber bullying to the police (Dial: 112).

How to prevent and counter cyber bullying?

Do not respond: If someone is bullying you online, DO NOT respond or retaliate by doing the same thing. Responding or retaliating may make matters worse or even get you into trouble.

Collect as much information as possible: Take a screenshot of anything that you think could be cyber bullying and keep a record of it.

Block and report: If someone bothers you, make sure you block the offender and report on the social media platform immediately. This feature is available on most online platforms.

Talk about it: Inform trusted adults like your parents and teachers about the bullying incident.

Seek help: Do not feel that you are alone and never keep it to yourself.

Be private: Keep your social media privacy settings high and do not connect with anybody who you do not know offline.

Be aware: Remain updated with all the preventive and security measures in the cyber world.

SUPPORT AND HELPLINE NUMBERS

Police: Dial 112 (Police has Cyber Crime Cell that handles cases of cyber security)

Complaint: cp.ncpcr@nic.in (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights) Child line Number: 1098 Complaint: www.childlineindia.org

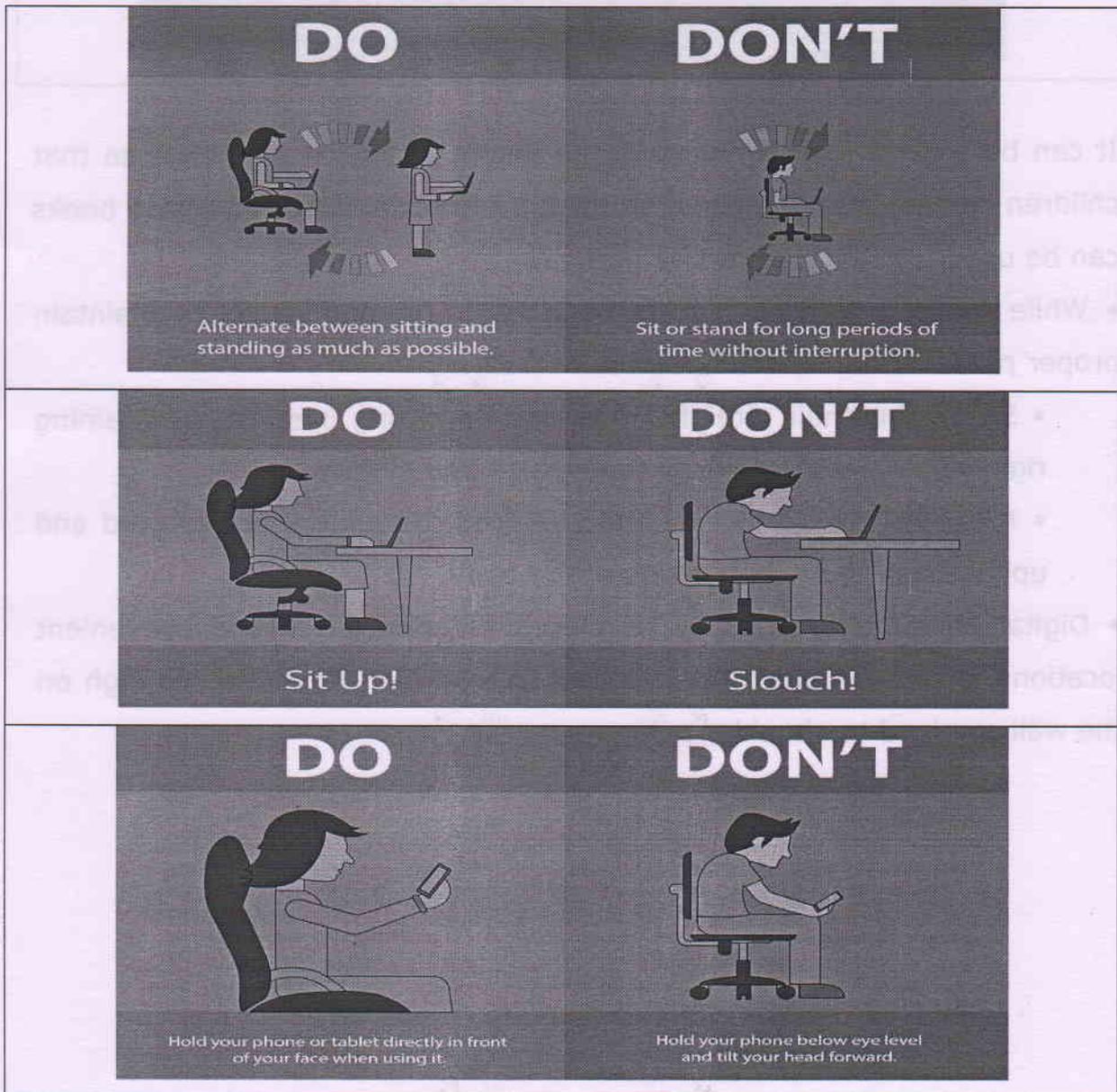
Complaint: cybercrime.gov.in (National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal)
Helpline number: 155260 **Twitter handle:** @CYBERDOST

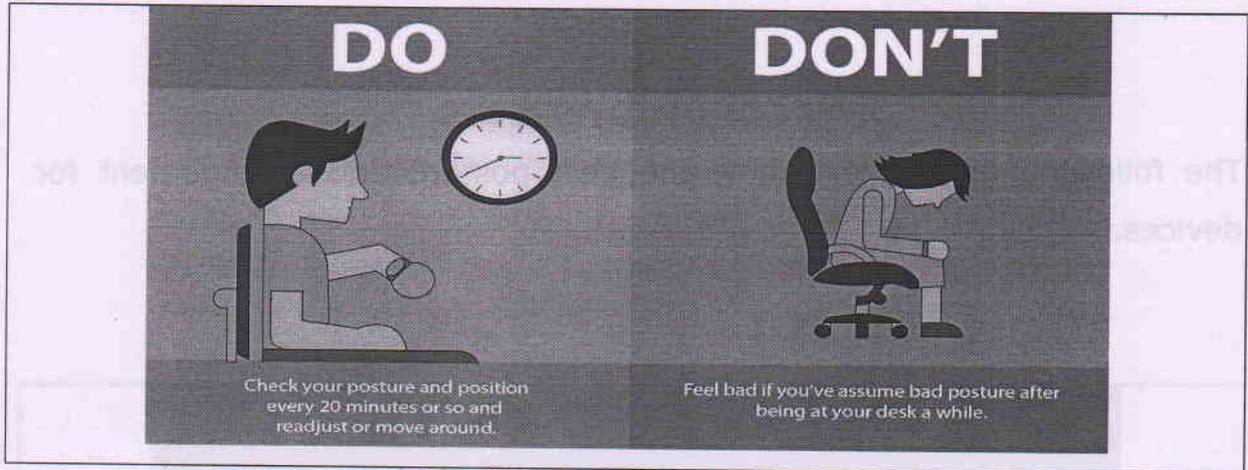
Complaint: complaint-mwcd@gov.in (The Ministry of Women and Child Development)

ANNEXURE-2

ERGONOMIC ASPECTS

The following figures will show the best posture and arrangement for devices.





It can be a good idea to increase the height of laptop or mobile so that children remain straight while studying. A mobile stand or a few books can be used to make the mobile vertical.

- While working with computers or viewing TV, one needs to maintain proper posture:
 - Sit on the chair straight in an upright sitting posture, maintaining right angles at the ankles, knees, hips and elbows.
 - Head is forward facing, and balanced. Shoulders are relaxed and upper arms touch at the side of the body.
- Digital equipment needs to be placed at appropriate and convenient locations for easy access. For example, a television mounted too high on the wall can lead to shoulder pain.