Homeschool 2.0: Irish Times guide to the best distance learning tools

12/01/2021

It’s a stressful time for parents – but the good news is there are many resources to help meet the needs of children of all ages

about 12 hours ago

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Here we go again. Three weeks? Three months? The truth is nobody – including the Department of Education – really knows how long the schools will be closed.

It’s a stressful time for parents, particularly for those who have to work from home while trying to keep children engaged and educated.

The good news is there are numerous resources out there to meet the needs of children of all ages and stages.

With the assistance of teachers, schools and parents, we’ve compiled a guide to the best homeschool resources.

**– Primary school –**

**Literacy/numeracy:**

[*Twinkl.ie*](http://twinkl.ie/)Created by teachers, ideal for home education, it has lots of appealing games, stories, worksheets, etc. The Twinkle Go! section is free to access online during January and has lots of engaging interactive educational resources.

*Home School Hub*

RTÉ’s Home School Hub proved a big hit with pupils and parents during the previous school closures; its subsequent Afterschool Hub has lots of great content. Programmes and activities can be played back on the RTÉ Player. There’s a wide archive of ideas, worksheets and activities at [rte.ie/learn](http://rte.ie/learn)

*BBC Bitesize (*[*bbc.co.uk/bitesize*](http://bbc.co.uk/bitesize)*)*

While tailored for the UK education system, there’s a big crossover with our own and broken down by age range

*Khan Academy (*[*khanacademy.org*](http://khanacademy.org/)*)*

Non-profit site that provides free video tutorials in maths and reading

[*IXL.com*](http://ixl.com/)Subscription-based learning experience that provides curriculum-aligned maths and English content from junior infants up to sixth year

[*Storyberries.com*](http://storyberries.com/)A free, online collection of easy-to-read and beautifully illustrated stories, comics and poems for kids. You can select stories by theme

[*handwritingpractice.net*](http://handwritingpractice.net/)Whatever happened to the art of handwriting? This site lets you create custom handwriting practice worksheets.

*Sarah Webb’s writing games*

Award-winning children’s writer [Sarah Webb](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Sarah+Webb) is posting fun writing games and story prompts over on Twitter ([@sarahwebbisher](http://sarahwebbisher/)e).

Learn more

**Gaeilge**

*Cúla4 (*[*cula4.com*](http://cula4.com/)*)*

This free Irish app from TG4 is aimed at two groups: Cúla4 na nÓg is aimed at under-sixes, while Cúla4 is aimed at older children. As well as TV shows, there are games and creativity sections.

**Physical education**

*Go Noodle (*[*gonoodle.com*](http://gonoodle.com/)*)*

Movement and mindfulness videos created by child development experts and used widely by teachers who say it is a great opportunity for kids to wake up their bodies, engage their minds and be their best.

*Super Troopers (*[*supertroopers.ie*](http://supertroopers.ie/)*)*

Super Troopers offers a health homework programme that encourages children and their families to live happier and more active lifestyles.

**Coding**

*Scratch (*[*scratch.mit.edu*](http://scratch.mit.edu/)*)*

Learn to program interactive games, stories and animations

**Geography**

*National Geographic Kids*

Learn about science, geography and history at [kids.nationalgeographic.com](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/)

* [Back to homeschooling: Are you pleasantly surprised or feeling left in the lurch?](https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/parenting/back-to-homeschooling-are-you-pleasantly-surprised-or-feeling-left-in-the-lurch-1.4455140)
* [Homeschooling: How not to mess it up this time around](https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/parenting/homeschooling-how-not-to-mess-it-up-this-time-around-1.4453452)
* [Homeschool hub: Our guide to the best teaching and learning resources online](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/homeschool-hub-our-guide-to-the-best-teaching-and-learning-resources-online-1.4206766)

*Nasa Kids’ Club*

Child-friendly resource where kids can learn about science and space at [nasa.gov/kidsclub/](http://nasa.gov/kidsclub/)

*History, Geography and Science*

Órlaith Ní Fhoghlú is a third class teacher and she has put together activities and resources relating to the history, geography and science curriculum on [padlet.com/orlaithnifhoghlu/wqeiqvodvbl4](http://padlet.com/orlaithnifhoghlu/wqeiqvodvbl4)

**Games/tests**

[*Kahoot.com*](http://kahoot.com/)Search from millions of existing games on any topic such as brain teasers, trivia of all sorts, news quizzes and science.

**Special needs:**

*SEN Teacher (*[*senteacher.org*](http://senteacher.org/)*/)*

This site has free special-needs teaching resources and learning materials. Its print tools allow you to create, adapt and share resources.

**– Secondary school –**

**Spanish:**

Susan Leahy

Spanish teacher [Susan Leahy](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Susan+Leahy) has a free website ([pancomido.wordpress.com/](http://pancomido.wordpress.com/)) for Spanish teachers and students, with lots of resources for the orals and the higher-level essay questions.

**Gaeilge**

Stephen Heffernan

Leaving Cert students can keep themselves fresh by using the Vifax resources from NUI Maynooth where they take a story or two from Nuacht TG4 each week and prepare worksheets on them. ([vifax.maynoothuniversity.ie](http://vifax.maynoothuniversity.ie/))

[LeavingCertIrish.com](http://leavingcertirish.com/)

Teacher [John Gavin](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=John+Gavin) has hosted this website since 2001; it provides a host of updated learning resources relating to Leaving Cert Irish orals and the written exam. There are free daily webinars that anyone can watch live or look back on.

**History**

Century series

The Irish Times century series captures events of 100 years ago which shaped the world around us, such as the War of Independence and World War I, in vivid first-person accounts and expert analysis by today’s historians.

[irishtimes.com/century](http://irishtimes.com/century)

[WaterfordMemories.com](http://waterfordmemories.com/)The lives and experiences of women in Waterford’s [Magdalene Laundry](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Magdalene+Laundry) can be a great case study for history and CSPE students.

**Politics and Society**

[PolSocPodcast.com](http://polsocpodcast.com/)PolSocPodcast.com covers all things and is presented by Dr [Jerome Devitt](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Jerome+Devitt), a teacher of Politics & Society, History, and English.

**Maths**

Joyce Mahon’s teaching resources

Maths teacher Joyce Mahon has compiled Leaving Cert suggestions online ([jmmaths.weebly.com](http://jmmaths.weebly.com/)) with links to other great sites as well.

Fiachra Sheridan’s Youtube channel

This array of videos from secondary maths teacher [Fiachra Sheridan](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Fiachra+Sheridan) explains lots of Junior and Leaving Cert maths topics – including Leaving Cert applied maths ([youtube.com/user/fio74](http://youtube.com/user/fio74) )

[TheMathsTutor.ie](http://themathstutor.ie/)Provides online support and exam preparation for [Junior Cert](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Junior+Cert) & Leaving Cert maths. Subscription-based, but a free trial is available.

**French**

Students of French should check out [EssentialFrench.ie](http://essentialfrench.ie/) which is run by teacher [Natasha Lynch](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Natasha+Lynch). Her Snapchat account is particularly popular.

**Physics**

[SophiaPhysics.ie](http://sophiaphysics.ie/)SophiaPhysics.ie has a resources section and is covering topics for Junior and Leaving Cert physics while telling the story of related physicists.

**English**

[SCCEnglish.ie](http://sccenglish.ie/)

Run by [Julian Girdham](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Julian+Girdham) at St Columba’s College in [Rathfarnham](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_location=Rathfarnham), SCCEnglish.ie has lots of resources for post-primary English, and more resources and ideas on JulianGirdham.com

[AoifesNotes.com](http://aoifesnotes.com/)

English teacher Aoife O’Driscoll has a free website and has been uploading notes for [Junior Cycle](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Junior+Cycle) and Leaving Cert English on it for over ten years now.

**Graphics**

Irish Graphic Teacher

[Will Nolan](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Will+Nolan) is sharing graphics videos on the IrishGraphicsTeacher channel.[youtube.com/channel/UCanBKZVzCbgzO-LomL-gp4w](http://youtube.com/channel/UCanBKZVzCbgzO-LomL-gp4w)

**Art**

Sheila Flaherty’s art tutorials

Teacher [Sheila Flaherty](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Sheila+Flaherty) has posted online art tutorials for children at [youtu.be/3hSWT86uyxk.](http://youtu.be/3hSWT86uyxk.)

**Revision**

*Grind schools*

The Dublin Academy ([dublinacademy.ie](http://dublinacademy.ie/)) provides some free tasters of its online grinds on Youtube, but you’ll need to pay to access the full set of classes (€695 for one subject, or €395 for a second).

The Institute of Education ([instituteofeducation.ie](http://instituteofeducation.i/)) has live online classes and grinds, at a cost of €440 for one full subject, with discounts for additional subjects. [Jumpagrade.com](http://jumpagrade.com/) allows students work with a personal tutor from €125 a month.

*Study websites*

Studyclix is one of the most popular of Ireland’s study websites and offers notes, videos and a forum for students preparing for the Junior and Leaving Cert. iRevise is another which offers notes, sample answers and more, while [Examlearn.ie](http://examlearn.ie/) was recently established by three former school leavers. All charge for premium access to their content.

[*Studynotes.ie*](http://studynotes.ie/)Students and teachers use this free platform to share their notes and resources which can be useful.

**-- Supports for teachers --**

*PDST (*[*pdst.ie/DistanceLearning*](http://pdst.ie/DistanceLearning)*)*The Professional Development Service for Teachers – linked to the Department of Education – has an updated section on “supporting online learning during school closures” with links to resources like Scoilnet and Webwise. It also features video to help guide teachers around online teaching.

*Cogg.ie (*[*cogg.ie/bunchar-aiseanna/*](http://cogg.ie/bunchar-aiseanna/)*)*

Is féidir cuardach a dhéanamh ar líne do na háiseanna atá ar fáil do theagasc na Gaeilge nó don teagasc trí Ghaeilge.

[*TeacherCPD.ie*](http://teachercpd.ie/)There are short online courses in the area of digital technologies that teachers can access to upskill and gain ideas for distance learning. It is the learning platform for PDST Technology in Education.

*Primary distance teaching*

[Ciara Reilly](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Ciara+Reilly), a former primary teacher and now lecturer in education with expertise in ICT and digital education at Marino Institute of Education, has compiled an outstanding bank of resources.

[padlet.com/ciarareillymarino/primarydistancelearning](http://padlet.com/ciarareillymarino/primarydistancelearning)

*Maths remote learning*[Sorcha Browne Byrne](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Sorcha+Browne+Byrne) (@iamsorchab on Twitter), a teacher and lecturer in maths at Marino Institute, has compiled an excellent selection of useful online maths tools to assist students with distance learning on her Twitter account.