unrwa education department

supporting your child’s learning at home using the unrwa self-learning programme

a guide for parents/caregivers and community members
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1. Welcome note

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

Welcome to the UNRWA Self-Learning Programme Guidelines. This guide is to help you support your child/children's learning at home using the UNRWA Self-Learning Programme.

The UNRWA Self-Learning Programme is:

- A set of learning resources developed by UNRWA to enhance children's learning at home.
- These resources include the UNRWA TV educational episodes, an online Interactive Learning Programme (website) with educational lessons and games, and Self-Learning Materials, which are work sheets that can be downloaded and printed.

The Self-Learning Programme was designed to be used in emergencies when children cannot go to school. If this happens, your child can use the Self-Learning Programme to continue their education at home. The Self-Learning Programme can also be used when your child is in school to strengthen and consolidate their learning.

The Self-Learning Programme was designed for children to learn on their own with little or no support from adults, but children will learn more effectively if they have some support at home. As you know, as a parent/caregiver, you can play an important role in supporting your child to learn. We know that children whose parents/caregivers are involved in their education do better in school.

This guide is mostly for parents/caregivers to support their child at home, but it can also be used by other members of the community who want to support children’s learning in community settings – this could be other family members, family friends, or any other person in the community.

We hope that you will find the Guidelines useful in supporting you to use the UNRWA Self-Learning Programme!
2. What is the Self-Learning Programme and how can your child use it?

The UNRWA Self-Learning Programme includes UNRWA TV educational episodes, an online Interactive Learning Programme (website) with educational lessons and games, and Self-Learning Materials, which are work sheets in text form.

UNRWA TV

- UNRWA TV educational episodes are short TV episodes for students in Grades 4-9 for Arabic, English, Mathematics and Science.

- The episodes are suitable for children in Gaza and West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria and support the curriculum taught in the UNRWA schools there. (Older UNRWA TV episodes developed before 2016 specifically targetted children in Gaza and West Bank.)

- To watch the episodes, go to the UNRWA TV Youtube channel on a phone, tablet, laptop or computer: https://www.youtube.com/user/unrwatv

- Episodes are between 10-20 minutes long and are designed to teach children key skills in Arabic, English, Mathematics and Science in a fun way.

Interactive Learning Programme (ILP)

- The Interactive Learning Programme comprises a number of online interactive lessons and games for students in Grades 1-9 for Arabic and Maths.

- The Interactive Learning Programme is suitable for children in Gaza and West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, and supports the curriculum taught in UNRWA schools.

- To use the Interactive Learning Programme you need a laptop or computer, with Adobe Flash Player installed. In the future, the Programme will also be available on mobile application.

- To open the Interactive Learning Programme website go to ilp.unrwa.org in your internet browser. Then click on التعلم التفاعلي to open the games.
• When you open the games, the screen will look like this:

• The Interactive Learning Programme games are divided into three levels: Grades 1-3, Grades 4-6 and Grades 7-9. Scroll left and right to find the games for your child’s level and click on the houses to open them.

Self-Learning Materials
• Self-Learning Materials are in text form and are developed to support children's learning at home, specifically during emergencies. Most recently, Self-Learning Materials were developed based on the Syrian curriculum, but the topics covered are still applicable to children in Gaza/West Bank, Jordan and Lebanon¹.

• The Self-Learning Materials were developed for students in Grades 1-9 for Arabic, English, Mathematics and Science. The books are available to read online or to print.

• To access the Self-Learning Materials, go to the website: http://wos-education.org/slm-without-logo-. If you scroll down the page you will find the materials for each subject and grade. Sometimes there are two books per grade: one for the first semester of the school year and one for the second.

¹ In Gaza and West Bank, self-learning materials based on the Palestinian curriculum were developed in the past, but are not in use anymore. These were worksheets developed to support continuation of education in times when children could not access schools due to school closures, curfews, etc.
• All materials are organized into units and sub-units. Each unit is designed for children to work through fairly independently, giving them information to read and instructions on how to complete the activities.

• There are regular short questions for children to answer throughout and opportunities for them to produce longer pieces of writing. At the end of each sub-unit there is also an assessment.

• Each set of materials has an answer code at the end, which your child can use to check their work. You can compare your child’s answers to those given in the answer code and help them improve by asking them to think about what they might have done wrong in answering a question incorrectly.

3. How do you know which Self-Learning Programme resources will help your child?

UNRWA TV and the online Interactive Learning Programme can be used by children anywhere in Gaza and West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The Syria Self-Learning Materials were developed according to the Syria curriculum, but the concepts are useful for students everywhere. Where possible, it is helpful to use a combination of resources together to support your child’s learning at home. For example, they can watch an UNRWA TV episode one day and play some Interactive Learning Programme games the next day.

If your child is in school: Try to pick resources for their age/grade that relate to what they are learning in school. For example, if your child is in Grade 4 or 5 and is learning about telling time in school, they could watch the UNRWA TV episode for Grades 4-5 on time, titled ‘Time Units’. Ask your child or their teacher what they are studying in school if you are not sure, or look at where they are in their textbooks. You can refer to the Self-Learning Programme Resources table for a full list of available resources by grade level (see Annex 1).

If your child cannot go to school: Encourage your child to use the Self-Learning Programme regularly during the time when they would normally be in school. They can work through all the resources for their age/grade. You can check Annex 1 in this document for a list of appropriate resources for each grade level and subject. If children have missed a lot of school, they may need to begin with the resources for an earlier grade to catch up.

Let your child be your guide – if they find something too difficult, see if they want to go back to an earlier lesson. If they find a subject really interesting, encourage them to find more Self-Learning Programme (and other) resources related to that topic.
4. Who can you go to for support in using the Self-Learning Programme?

If your child is able to regularly attend an UNRWA school, ask your child’s teacher for advice on using the Self-Learning Programme at home. Your child’s teacher may also be using the resources in the classroom.

If your child is not going to school, you could try contacting a teacher in the community for support in using the Self-Learning Programme at home. If you need help using the technology, try to find a member of your family or a friend who is good at using technology to support. If other families you know are using the Self-Learning Programme, you could support each other and take turns working with the children on the Self-Learning Programme. Older siblings could also support younger ones.

5. How can you support your child’s learning?

Below are some ideas for supporting your child’s learning before, during and after a learning session using the Self-Learning Programme.

Before a learning session:

- **Set up a regular time and place for learning.** It can be helpful to assign a specific space for learning, and try to make it as quiet as possible. This can be a corner of the room where your child stores any books and materials. Ideally, when they go to this corner the family understands that it is important to try not to interrupt their learning. For larger groups of children, it can be useful to have the same routine for starting each Self-Learning Programme session, even if it is just a song that the children sing together before breaking off into groups to work.

- **Make sure the necessary materials (notebooks, rulers, pencils, art supplies, etc.) are ready for children to use.**

- **Discuss the material with your child before starting and make sure they know where to find the lesson/s.** The first time, you might want to look up the website together, or sit with your child to watch the first UNRWA TV episode. Once they are comfortable with the material and know how to find more episodes or lessons this will not be necessary. You can ask them questions to check if they know how to find the lessons:
  - Can you explain to me where to access the lessons/episodes?
Which lesson/episode are you working on?

- Help children focus on the lesson, and ask them what they already know about the topic before they begin. This does not need to take more than a few minutes. It is important to make sure that the child comes up with an answer themselves, rather than you providing one. When you first ask your children one of these questions, they might not answer, or be unsure about how to answer. This is normal and natural, and this process will help them to reflect and think. Here are some examples of questions to ask:
  - What do you think this lesson/episode is about?
  - Have you learned something about this before? What do you remember?

- Ask children to help each other. Supporting several children at once can seem tricky, but when children work together they can help each other to succeed.
  - Ask children of similar levels to work together.
  - Ask older students to help younger students. This will also enable older students to better understand material they have learned before, and provides the younger child with support for their learning. Make sure to tell the older students that they also should not provide the answers but help the younger child discover the answers themselves.

- Encourage and motivate the child. Even just quickly telling the child that you are looking forward to seeing their finished lessons, or hearing about their opinions on the UNRWA TV episodes, can help them to feel more engaged in their studies and proud of their accomplishments. Compliment the child for their dedication to learning.

During a learning session:

- Allow each child to study at their own pace. There is no need for children to progress quickly, and each child will progress at a different pace. Allow children to repeat all or parts of lessons as many times as they need to.

- Focus on making learning fun and stress-free. Ask children to draw pictures, sing songs, or make up dances related to what they are learning. Especially in emergencies it is important not to make learning stressful and instead to focus on making learning enjoyable.

- Encourage children to reflect on their learning and make connections to their own lives.
  - Do you think this topic is useful/interesting? Why/why not?
  - Do you think you could use this information/skill in day-to-day life? How?
  - What else would you like to learn about this subject?
  - Does this connect to something else you have learned or know about?
  - Has this changed your opinion about the subject?

- Give suggestions on how to do things differently, rather than giving the answers. If the child is having problems with the material, instead of showing them what to do, try to give them suggestions for a different way of approaching the material.
  - Do you think you need to reread the instructions?
  - Do you need to find out more information on this topic to understand it better?
  - Do you need to review a previous lesson?

- Support children when they find the lessons challenging. Allow your child to make mistakes, and support them to continue studying until they are able to understand.
Tell the child that it is normal and natural not to understand sometimes, and that practice will help them to understand.

Share an example of your own experience of learning something difficult and remind the child of when they have successfully learned something difficult before.

**Make sure that each child takes regular breaks.** Although it seems like more study time will mean better results, frequent short breaks are necessary to learn effectively. Younger children may need breaks every 20-30 minutes, and older children may need breaks every 45-60 minutes. Some children may need more or less regular breaks, and usually the time when they start to look sleepy, or seem very distracted or unsettled, is when they need a break the most. During the break, encourage the children to get up and move around.

**Some children may need special assistance or equipment to be able to see, hear and interact with the lessons.** If you are supporting a group of children in a community space ask for other adults to support, and if at home ask for siblings to support.

**After a learning session:**

**Take a few minutes to check up on the child’s learning.** This can be as simple as asking how they think the lesson went, or you can sit down with the children and have a conversation about the lesson. Questions you can ask are:

- Did you find the lesson easy or difficult? Why?
- Did you enjoy it? Why/why not?
- What do you think you learned?
- Could you explain this topic?
- Can you read out what you have written here, and tell me about it?

If your child has been watching an UNRWA TV episode, just talking to them for a few minutes about the episode will help them to reflect on what they have learned. You can also encourage them to do one of the activities suggested at the end of each UNRWA TV episode. If they have been using the Interactive Learning Programme, take a moment to look at their progress on the screen and ask them how they think they did and how they could do even better next time. If they have been using the Self-Learning Materials (books), you can look through the answer key together, help them with the answers they missed, and discuss those they got wrong and right.

**Discuss how they can use this new knowledge in the real world.** The Self-Learning Programme covers the key skills to learn and succeed at school, but these skills will of course also be useful for the rest of their lives. For example, if children are learning arithmetic, you could ask them if what they have learned will be useful for counting money and let them help you count next time you go to shop. If they are learning Arabic, you could ask them why they think this text is important, or what their opinion is. Allow them the space to form their own opinions.

**Celebrate their achievements.**

- Congratulate your child if they have worked hard.
- Hang your child’s writing, drawings and other educational materials on the walls to make the space into a ‘place for learning’. Seeing their work displayed is a good way to encourage your children and let them know you are proud of them.
6. How can you support yourself and your child during emergencies?

Sometimes it can feel overwhelming trying to support your child’s learning during a crisis or conflict. If this is the case, the following ideas on how to manage stress for yourself as a parent/caregiver and your children in emergencies can be followed.²

Supporting yourself

Everybody reacts differently to emergencies or crises. If you feel overwhelmed, out-of-control or not your usual self, remember that these can be normal responses to serious events. There is nothing wrong with you, and it is important to be gentle and patient with yourself in this difficult time.

There are some things you can do to help yourself:

- Recognise that the situation is challenging.
- Allow yourself to acknowledge what has happened and mourn any loss.
- Reach out to your friends, family, community and religious/spiritual leaders for support.
- Look after yourself, allow yourself to rest and be patient with yourself.
- Try to establish and maintain daily routines, such as regular bedtimes, and try to get enough sleep.
- As much as possible, eat healthy foods and try to do physical exercise regularly.
- Try to keep yourself occupied, whether with chores, work, socialising or other activities.

Supporting your child

Every child is different, but there are some common ways that children react in emergency situations. They might complain about headaches, stomach aches or a lack of appetite. They may have sleeping problems, or start sucking their thumb or wetting the bed again, even if they have not done so in years. They may become unusually aggressive and active, or withdrawn and shy. They may have trouble concentrating, and this may be especially noticeable as they study with the Self-Learning Programme.

Remember that all of these reactions are completely normal.

Some suggestions for helping your child:

Before an emergency:

- Discuss what to do in case of an emergency with your child. For example, you might discuss possible changes in their school routine, using the Self-Learning Programme at home if schools are closed, and where your family might go for safety.
- Help your child to learn positive ways to manage difficult situations, for example play, expressing their feelings through creative activities like art, and building strong relationships with friends and family.

During an emergency:

- Try to tell your child that you love them more often than you usually do, and show affection through holding hands or regular hugs.

² The University of Manchester. Information for adults looking after a child or children through conflict and displacement. http://sites.psych-sci.manchester.ac.uk/pfrg/resources/ParentingleafletOriginal.pdf
• Reassure your child that you will do everything you can to protect them.
• Try to provide your child with accurate information about what is happening.
• Try not to be separated from your child for long periods of time and make sure young children know your given name and what to do if they are separated from you.
• Try to praise your child when they have done something good, even if it is something small.
• Try to be patient and avoid criticising them for changes in their behaviour as these may be out of their control.
• Give children opportunities to participate in helpful activities with the family (cooking, putting a sibling to bed, etc.).
• Spend time talking to your child and trying to understand what they have experienced.
• Try to maintain normal routines, such as bedtimes, as much as possible.
• Provide safe and child-friendly spaces for your child to learn and play.
• Encourage your child to continue to play and be creative.
• Encourage your child to continue learning through the Self-Learning Programme.

After an emergency:
• Try to acknowledge and openly discuss what has happened without any pressure to do so.
• Talk to your child about their ongoing fears about the future.
• Remember that not all children need help in the same way. Some children will not be able to cope by themselves and may need special support.
• Try to make the transition back to school as smooth as possible, and avoid putting pressure on children to ‘catch up’ on learning.
• When children are able to return to school, encourage them to participate in play, and creative and expressive activities, to process and understand what they have experienced.
• Encourage your child to reconnect with friends, family and community members and support each other in recovery.
• It is not easy to be a parent/caregiver and support the mental wellbeing of your child if you are also feeling anxious, detached or overwhelmed yourself. The Counsellors at the school are trained to help you support your children and it is normal, and recommended, to reach out to Counsellors for support after a crisis.

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We hope that this Guide is useful in helping you to support your child’s learning. Remember that UNRWA teachers and education staff are available to help should you have any questions. Good luck!