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The validity of the saying “necessity is the mother of invention” was on full display during the COVID-19 outbreak. People quickly had to learn to adapt to a new way of life, including an educational system that was transformed dramatically by social distancing guidelines.

More than 76 million students are enrolled in United States schools, per the latest Census Bureau information. In a matter of days, millions of students who once attended classes in-person were forced to transition to virtual learning instruction. The process showed just how flexible learning systems can be, and how virtual instruction may become more than an emergency protocol in the future.

Schools utilized systems like Google Classroom, Canvas and virtual meeting apps to connect and learn. While in-class lessons provide the socialization and one-on-one interaction that can be vital for students’ academic success, there are many different reasons why virtual instruction can be a key component of learning models as well. When virtual learning is used in conjunction with traditional teaching, students may have a more well-rounded experience.

Here are some potential benefits that may unfold as more data is collected.

- **Pace:** Virtual learning affords students the opportunity to work on lessons at a pace that fits their individual needs. Students can go back and re-read or re-work problems until they’re satisfied they have learned their lesson. Lessons can be slowed down or sped up depending on proficiency, creating a customized educational experience.

- **No more snow days.** Many school districts include snow or extreme weather days into their calendars, adding on extra days at the end of school year to meet the specified number of educational days. Remote learning can take over in these times and keep school districts from having to pad calendars.

- **Convenience:** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later to provide students the best opportunity to get the amount of sleep they need. Still, most adolescents currently start school before 8:30 a.m. Remote learning enables students to complete their assignments when it works best for them. This may help them get more sleep, too.

- **Apps:** Learning apps are a new wave of educational tools that have helped buoy virtual instruction. Primary school students or those with individual education plans may benefit the most from reinforced app skills that match their learning pace in fun ways.

Virtual home instruction may become a large part of the educational landscape even after it’s no longer a social distancing necessity.

Source: Metro Media
CYBER SAFETY
important for every grade

• Online safety remains a priority as students spend more time on digital education

Compiled by Sharon Stone

People rely on the internet every day. In recent months, reliance on digital technology was pushed even further as social distancing measures had the world going online for school and work and to maintain relationships with friends and family.

A 2018 report from Pew Research Center indicated that nearly 25 percent of young adults in America reported being online almost constantly. Common Sense Media reports that teens spend an average of nine hours a day online, compared with roughly six hours for those between the ages 8 and 12 and 50 minutes for kids younger than 8.

Students must exercise caution when spending time online. Connectivity can be empowering, but it also puts students at risk from others and even their own, sometimes irresponsible behaviors. Staying safe online should remain a priority for students who must spend more time on the internet and using digital education tools.

These are some tips for maintaining cyber safety.

• Exercise caution when sharing information like your name, address, phone number, and other personal data online. Check with a trusted parent or teacher before sharing private data.

• Report any online activity that makes you feel uncomfortable, scared or confused, whether it is directed at you or a classmate.

• Think carefully before you post comments online. Data remains online indefinitely, and your words and actions today can greatly affect your future.

Staying safe online should remain a priority for students who must spend more time on the internet and using digital education tools.

• Respect others online by refraining from demeaning or bullying comments.

• Do not try to get around firewalls and blocked websites set up by school administrators. These limitations are there for your protection.

• Stick to school-sanctioned assignments and internet browsing when using school-issued devices.

Administrators may have the right to monitor student activity without students’ knowledge and you can easily get yourself in trouble.

• It is easy to hide or fake one’s identity on the internet, so never take someone you meet or speak with online at face value. Never meet with someone you do not know or only met online.

• Talk to your parents or educators about extortion and ransomware that tries to trick you into providing payment in some shape or form to prevent a perpetrator from releasing private information about you, advises the Readiness and Emergency for Schools Technical Assistance Center.

Various steps can be taken to promote cyber safety among students, parents and administrators.

Source: Metro Media

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Advantages of learning a NEW LANGUAGE

A second language can benefit students now and in the future

Compiled by Sharon Stone

Students face many challenges during their academic careers. Overcoming those challenges not only sets a strong foundation for success in the classroom, but also outside of the classroom.

Foreign language courses pose a significant challenge to many students. But learning a second language can benefit students in both the short- and long-term.

• Early language learning can improve cognitive abilities. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages notes that various studies dating back several decades have connected language learning with improved cognitive abilities. Such studies have linked early language learning with higher IQs and superior problem-solving skills compared to non-bilingual students.

• Bilingualism can improve memory. A 2003 study published in the Scandinavian Journal of Psychology found that bilingualism had positive effects on both episodic memory and semantic memory.

  Episodic memory is a type of long-term memory that involves conscious recollection of previous experiences together with their context.

  Semantic memory also is a type of long-term memory that involves the capacity to recall words, concepts or numbers. Strengthening these types of memory can benefit children in the classroom and outside the classroom when they reach adulthood.

• Bilingualism can benefit working professionals. The benefits of bilingualism don’t end once students enter the workforce as professionals. In fact, a 2017 study of data from the market analytics firm Burning Glass Technologies found that, between 2010 and 2015, the number of job postings aimed at bilingual workers nearly tripled, rising from 240,000 in 2010 to 630,000 by 2015. Students who put in the effort to learn a foreign language during their academic careers can benefit greatly from that hard work when the time comes to begin their professional careers.

• Bilingualism can make foreign travel easier. In addition to improving students’ academic and professional prospects, bilingualism can make it easier for students to fully engage in other cultures when they travel overseas.

  Understanding a native tongue in a foreign country can simplify travel within that country and potentially pave the way for lifelong friendships.

  Developing fluency in a foreign language is no small task, but it’s one that’s well worth the effort.

Source: Metro Media
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in top shape

Following these tips can keep your electronic gadgets running well

Compiled by Sharon Stone

The need for reliable technology has never been more apparent. When the world hit the proverbial pause button in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, technology was crucial to keeping people connected to the world around them, helping people maintain some semblance of normalcy as it pertained to work and education.

Students and families who have invested in various electronics to help keep their household running should understand that maintenance is required to keep these devices running effectively.

These tips can help keep gadgets in tip-top shape.

1. **Protect devices from** extreme temperatures. Electronic devices are designed to operate under an array of conditions, but pushing those conditions can result in damage. Most devices are fine between temperatures of 32 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. But don’t leave electronics in the car, in a sunny window or outdoors.

2. **Clean devices regularly.** Refer to the user’s manual for the proper ways to

See **DEVICES** on 11
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STRAIGHT FROM THE HEADLINES

*a number* months ago, there was a *noun* that spread around the world very *adverb*. As a result of this *noun*, people were asked to do their part to help reduce the number of *plural noun* getting sick. The entire country had to work together. Plus, *adjective* doctors and nurses *verb, past tense* longer hours than ever before.

One of the *adjective* steps to assist with slowing down the spread of the *noun* was to stay at *noun* as much as possible. This meant only *verb* to the store when *adverb* necessary. Many *plural noun* were asked to *verb*, and only *adjective* workers were allowed to go to their places of employment.

*adjective* children found out that their *plural noun* were no longer open. All educational classes took place over the *noun*. Opportunities to hang out with *plural noun* also had to be put on hold. Only individuals who lived together were allowed to be *adverb* to one another. Everyone else had to stay *adverb* distant ... in other words, at least *a number* feet apart.

Going out to *verb* was no longer possible. All restaurants that still remained open had to switch to *adjective* service. Many people also found themselves making more *plural noun* at home. Supermarkets became very *adjective*, and many *plural noun* on the shelves were sold *adverb* due to the higher demand for *plural noun*.

*adjective* life became so *adjective* that it almost seemed like it was the plot of a *noun*. *verb* Schedules, *past tense*, sacrifices had to be made and everyone was asked to work *adverb*. In the end the country became *adjective*, and *plural noun* learned just how much they could *verb* effectively when everyone acted *adverb*.

*Fill in the words to complete the story.*
For students to find success in and out of the classroom, the right tech can make all the difference.

Compiled by Sharon Stone

Shopping for school supplies once entailed stocking up on backpacks, pens, pads and notebooks. Students today still buy many of the same items, though they also now stock up on electronics.

Technology and education now go hand-in-hand. For students to find success both in and out of the classroom, the right tech can make all the difference.

• High-speed internet: Connectivity is key in a digitally driven world. Students need access to the internet for homework, lectures, email, entertainment, and much more. The faster your internet speed the better.

According to the resource High-SpeedInternet.com, streaming videos on a single device or web browsing requires between five and 40 Mbps (megabit per second). Downloading large files or using multiple devices simultaneously requires high speeds. When accessing the internet via smartphones, make sure your plan has unlimited data or provides enough data to ensure interruptions do not occur.

• Laptop or notebook computer: Laptops and notebook devices are similar in that both offer many types of software preloaded that a student will need. The devices seem interchangeable, but there are some differences.

Laptops are generally larger than sleek, light notebooks. Notebooks are sized to fit easily into backpacks. Notebooks tend to have minimal features, including less RAM (random access memory) capacity and slower speeds, helping to keep their costs down. Some notebooks may have very small amounts of hard drive storage space, requiring users to purchase external storage devices.

• Headphones: Most schools now require students to have their own dedicated pair of earbuds or over-the-ear headphones so that work conducted on a computer does not disturb others also working on their own devices. Headphones also can make it easier to hear and comprehend videos and other digital lessons while doing homework.

• Chargers/battery packs: Devices must maintain power to help kids learn. Students can benefit from having a backup charger or battery pack to maintain functionality on their devices.

• Storage and charging base: Keeping electronics neat and accessible for the family may mean rethinking countertop or other storage spaces. Charging stations hold multiple devices and allow them to charge simultaneously.

• Touchscreen pen: Many notebook and laptop computers have touchscreens that respond to pens/styluses and make drawing or writing on the screen more detailed.

• Printer/scanner: While many schools have adopted paperless formats, there may come a time when printing an assignment or report is necessary. A quality ink-jet printer can fit the bill. A scanner to scan photos or documents also makes it easier to complete assignments.

The above are just some of the many gadgets that can assist students with their studies.

Source: Metro Media
A refresher course in school
BUS SAFETY

• Reminders ensure school year begins on safe footing

Compiled by Sharon Stone

The dawn of a new school year is a time marked by change and fresh opportunities. For many children, school marks the first time they are away from their parents for an extended period of time. It also may be the first time they ride in a vehicle other than their parents' cars.

Each school day, 25 million children ride a bus to school in the United States. A school bus is among the safest modes of transport and one of the most regulated vehicles on the road, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Riding a school bus can be a novel experience no matter a student's age or grade. Kindergarteners may be introduced to the school bus on their first day of school, while older students are no doubt familiar with life inside a school bus. But all students and families can benefit from a refresher course on school bus procedures to ensure this school year begins on safe footing.

• Be a smart pedestrian. Riding the school bus is very safe, but injuries can occur walking to and from the bus stop. Watch for cars backing out of driveways and always look both ways multiple times before crossing streets.

• Remember school bus laws. Most areas of the country have specific school bus laws that include stopping when red lights are flashing on the school bus. Cars must stop whether they're behind the school bus, next to it or on the opposite side of the street facing the bus. Stopping allows passengers to enter or exit the bus safely.

• Stand away from the curb. The National Safety Council advises keeping 6 feet, or three giant steps, away from the curb while waiting for the bus. Young children should be carefully supervised.

• Be visible. Always cross in front of the bus, making eye contact with the driver so that he or she knows your intentions before crossing. If you drop something, do not bend down to pick it up. Tell the driver instead.

• Remain seated. Find a seat promptly and remain seated for the duration of the ride. Do not stand up and proceed down the center aisle until the bus has stopped.

• Minimize distractions. Always speak softly and behave so that you do not distract the driver.

School buses are very safe vehicles, but passengers need to do their part to avoid injury.

Source: Metro Media
DEVICES
Continued from Page 6
clean the devices you rely on each day. Some may require a specific cleaner or a particular fabric to help ensure the device isn’t scratched or damaged. Spray cleaner on a cloth and then wipe off devices, rather than spraying cleaner directly on electronics. Try a can of compressed air to remove dust from crevices or vents.
• **Invest in a surge protector.** While surge protector power strips multiply the number of available outlets, they also serve a more important purpose. These devices will cut off power to plugged-in electronics if there is a power surge, helping to prevent damage.
• **Don’t overcharge.** It’s essential to have gadgets charged and ready to go, but overcharging can reduce battery life. Do not leave devices charging overnight. Battery University, a free educational website offering battery information, reports that that nickel- and lithium-based batteries should be stored with a 40 percent state-of-charge. This level minimizes age-related capacity loss and keeps the battery in good condition.
• **Use protective cases.** Cases can prevent damage if devices are dropped and also may safeguard against scratched screens. Cases and covers also minimize dust and dirt on devices.
• **Keep software up-to-date.** Security issues may arise when software is not updated, and programs may not run effectively or be compatible with others. Along the same vein, routinely clean out unused files to free up space, and clear cookies and browser histories to maintain speed and efficiency.
Routine maintenance can keep electronics working properly when they’re needed the most.

Source: Metro Media

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CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to trimming the tree. Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 11 = S)

**A.** 21 15 23 11 19 5
**Clue:** Strips of foil

**B.** 5 15 26 18 21 11
**Clue:** Strands of bulbs

**C.** 14 19 2 10 12 6 21 15 10 23 11
**Clue:** Items that serve as ornaments

**D.** 26 6 12 5 6 23 14
**Clue:** Leaves or flowers hung as decoration
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