

Online Havruta Learning Tips

Havruta learning affords us a particular opportunity to cultivate meaningful connections between people at a time when physical distancing is necessary. Online platforms such as Zoom enable us to pair students easily in [breakout rooms](#) to talk and learn with one another. Teachers can “pop” in, listen, and help while also giving students necessary time to direct and enjoy their own learning relationship.

Tips for teachers to support students’ havruta learning online:

- 1 **Long term pairs.** Pair students ahead of time and consider keeping these pairs for several class sessions so the pairs can develop a connection and a rhythm. Longer term havrutot can also provide much needed routine and logistically save time. We recommend 3-6 sessions (could be longer, for the duration of a curricular unit, for example), depending on age and havruta activities.
- 2 **Setting the time interval for havruta.** Depending on the age of your students and their level of experience and skill working interdependently in havruta, the time interval for havruta will vary. You could experiment with intervals anywhere from 8-25 minutes. (Intervals could be longer particularly for high school students who are used to learning in havruta over longer periods, but we find that for online learning, shorter intervals are more easily sustained. Teachers should explore what works for their own students.) Students will need good scaffolding in the form of a protocol to sustain longer learning conversations. See number 6 on this list.
- 3 **Model new routines or directions.** If students will be doing something new in havruta, don’t just explain the directions but model them with another student or even record a short video clip of what you want them to do.
- 4 **Send your students into havruta with a kavvanah (intention).** Before you send your students into breakout rooms, spend a couple of minutes having students consider how they can be most present for one another. You can offer them a PoP Stance Statement to discuss as a group or to reflect on individually. (You do not need to do this if you are having students do a full Havruta Warm-Up exercise. See number 5 below.) For example, students can consider the following:
 - a. *I have something to learn; I have something to teach.* How can we each enter into learning with this attitude? What do I have to offer? What do I have to learn from my partner?
 - b. *I need to share space and time with my partners—my peer partner and the text.* What is one thing I can do to balance my partnership today?
- 5 **Use a Havruta Warm-Up.** When students are starting out in new pairs, have them spend their first session or first piece of this session doing a warm-up exercise. This exercise helps students learn best practices, connect with one another, and think about what they each have to bring to the partnership.

For upper elementary and middle school students:

<https://bit.ly/HavrutaWarmUpfor5th-8th>

For high school and adult learners: <https://bit.ly/HavrutaWarmUpforAdults>

Copy and paste the link directly into the chat or broadcast function for students to open in their breakout rooms.

- 6 **Use or create a havruta study protocol.** Give students a step-by-step guide of what to do in havruta. Consider including a step for students to make note of not just what they think but also what their havruta partner thinks/says. In this way, learners come to understand that they are responsible for listening and holding their partner's ideas. You may also consider putting a time frame on each step. The protocol should be shared with students ahead of time along with the text or content so that students have what they need available to them.
- 7 **Build in social time into the havruta study protocol.** Whatever protocol you give your students for learning in havruta, build in a first step for them to catch up personally or to respond to a question about themselves to share. This will strengthen their connection and send a message that you as a teacher care about and value their needs for socially connecting.
- 8 **Build in reflection and appreciation into the havruta study protocol.** Just as you can build in social time at the beginning, build in a step in the protocol for reflection and/or appreciation for one's partner at the end of the protocol, such as:
 - a. *One thing I learned about the text/content from my partner is...*
 - b. *One thing I appreciated about learning with you is...*
- 9 **Visit students in their breakout rooms.** Let students know ahead of time that you will be visiting them in their breakout rooms to hear what they are thinking. As you visit different havrutot in their breakout rooms, observe and listen closely, noting different moves students are making that strengthen their connection with one another and the text/content they are learning. (See the Havruta Warm-Up (links above) for a list of good havruta practices.)
- 10 **Give students a time warning before you end the breakout rooms.** On Zoom you can set a countdown time that commences once you close the breakout rooms, giving students a notification that their time is about to end. (Find the countdown setting under "options" in the breakout room window.) We recommend setting this for 2 minutes so that students have time to wrap up productively. "Broadcast" a message to the breakout rooms at this time or even a couple of minutes before this with a clear instruction for where students should be in the protocol and what they should do to come to a close.
- 11 **Full group gleanings.** When you bring your students back to the main group, reinforce their learning relationships by asking some students to share a reflection or appreciation they shared with their havruta. Students can share verbally, write in the chat or on the white board feature. Students could also "annotate" on Zoom on a document or image you provide.
- 12 **Be a Havruta Commentator.** When you gather your class back together, enthusiastically offer the class a "highlights reel" of what you observed that different havrutot were able to do. In this way you can reinforce best practices while sending the message that you really see your students. Seeing your students and making your students feel seen is an essential part of teaching that is even more important in an online medium where we can't actually see one another fully.

