

BEST PRACTICES for Remote Work

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WHERE TO WORK



Your Home Office

It's important to have a dedicated work space.

Whether it's a corner of the living room, the now popular converted closet, known as a cloffice, or if you've decided to take over the guest room, you need a dedicated space just for work. You will be able to better shift mentally between work mode and personal life if you have to physically move between "office" and home as well.



Tools of the trade

Successfully working from home means that you'll need the right tools. Carefully think about what is necessary, what is optional, and what will make your work space safe and pleasant to be in. Here are some things to consider:

- High-speed internet connection, capable computer, keyboard, mouse, extra monitor.
- Noise-cancelling headphones, earbuds, or a headset with a microphone.
- A comfortable, supportive desk chair.
- Lighting, both for your eyes and for those on a video call with you.
- Other supplies like a water bottle, tissues, favorite pen, photos, candy dish, etc.

Safety

Make sure that your designated workspace is a safe working environment. Ensure that your floor is free from clutter and trip or fall hazards. Keep all cables and cords secure and free from walkways. Use ergonomic tools to reduce strain when possible and prevent electrical hazards by not overloading circuits.



Pay special attention to your posture

“Tech neck” is the slumped posture and strain you can get from hunching in front of a screen all day. If you’ve noticed your posture slipping while working from home, here are a few ideas:

- Avoid working in bed or on the couch.
- Adjust your seat and monitors so your arms and legs are at 90-degree angles, monitors are at eye level, your back is straight, and your feet are flat on the floor.
- Do some simple exercises like tilting your head from side to side, rolling your shoulders back and forth, and stretching.
- Visit a chiropractor or massage therapist if you can.
- Get an ergonomic keyboard or padded wrist rest for your keyboard and mouse.

Set the tone

One benefit of working from home is no coworkers talking loudly on the phone. Decide whether you enjoy the silence or need some white noise or background music to help you focus. If noisy kids and pets are at home, get a white noise machine or consider investing in some sound-proofing materials.



“Sorry everyone, that’s not a spaceship taking off, it’s just my washing machine.” If you’re working in close quarters, prevent meeting embarrassment by waiting to start the dishwasher or laundry until the end of the day. Even if you’re on mute during meetings, the extra noise can be distracting while you’re trying to pay attention. (If you have thick walls or soundproofing, this won’t be an issue.)

BOUNDARIES AND BALANCE



A schedule you can stick to

Deciding on your work schedule and sticking to those hours will not only set expectations and boundaries for your family and friends, but will also help your brain understand when it's time to work and when it's time to relax.

For some, it may be tempting to let hygiene and grooming slide, but just like sticking to a schedule, getting showered and dressed can help you mentally move into work mode. A morning shower can wake you up before you wake your laptop, and you can be confident putting your best foot forward even when there's an unplanned video call.

Plan breaks

It's easy to start browsing the internet during work and lose track of time. Help yourself stay focused by setting a timer—for example, 10 minutes to move or read the news. Use software or browser extensions that block social media sites during work hours.

No one can focus all day, every day. One of the keys of how to make working from home better is planning time to disconnect occasionally. Put breaks on your calendar so you can clear your head and have something to look forward to, like:

- A walk around the block.
- Lunch with your family.
- A trip to your favorite coffee shop.
- 10 minutes watching cute animal videos.
- Having an afternoon snack.



Setting guidelines

For kids, seeing you work from home means you can play with them anytime...right? Set expectations by telling family your work hours and break times. Decide on a system to encourage respect for your working space, especially during important meetings, whether it's reminding them a few minutes before or putting a sign on your office door

Help protect sensitive information

Working from home can feel casual, since you don't need a company badge to get in, but confidential work info still needs to stay that way. Don't let family members use your work computer, or ensure work items (websites, documents, etc.) are logged off or closed and follow best practices like changing passwords regularly and taking sensitive calls out of earshot.



Don't leave your work devices unattended, whether they're at home or in public. Install software updates as soon as they're available so your devices aren't vulnerable to hackers.

Make time to MOVE

Working from home means that you don't have to walk to a meeting room, printer, or coworker's office, so there are fewer reasons to get up and stretch. Prevent sore muscles and fatigue by walking around at home, going outside to check the mail, and stretching throughout the day. Your body will thank you.



Convert that commute time

Now that you're not stuck commuting to and from work, maybe use that time to start your day by walking the dogs or finishing your day unwinding with some yoga.



MANAGING YOUR CONNECTIONS

Be proactive about connecting

It's normal to get lonely and feel disconnected while working from home. Don't wait for others to reach out—schedule regular check-ins with your manager and team. Ask for what you need and let people know if you're struggling so they can help. If you miss someone, put 15 minutes on their calendar to catch up. If you're tired of video calls, call someone on the phone while you go for a walk.



Check-2-3

Look and sound your best for video calls by making sure there's nothing distracting in your background. You don't need a perfectly curated bookshelf, and both Teams and Zoom allow you to set or blur your background. Turn on your camera before meetings to make sure you're well-lit, and adjust as necessary.



Plan lunch in advance

Make the most of your lunchbreak by preparing beforehand. The night before, make enough extra dinner so you can eat the leftovers for lunch, or pack yourself a lunch just as if you were going to an office. Another option is to schedule your takeout or delivery order in advance, or step out of the office for a weekly lunch date.

Calendar and away messages

With email, chat, and video, it's easy to expect instant replies from coworkers, but when you do step away for lunch or an appointment, update your status on your calendar or group chat app before you leave your desk for more than a few minutes, ideally with the time you'll get back and your time zone ("back by 2:30 PM Pacific" is better than "back in an hour").

REMOTE WORK EXPECTATIONS VS REALITY



Get cleaning supplies

One thing nobody tells you about how to work from home effectively and efficiently is that your desk will get dusty. Keep a microfiber cloth or rag on hand to clean monitors. Set a reminder at least monthly to move everything off of your desk, dust or wipe it down, and put things back. If you want to get fancy, you can even buy compressed air for getting crumbs and dust out of your keyboard.

Check in with yourself

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Be kind to yourself

Give yourself some grace. You can't be highly productive all day, every day—we're humans, not robots and working from home is an adjustment. Don't be hard on yourself if you're struggling to focus or function at your full productivity. Even with these work from home best practices, everyone has off days. Reach out to your mentor, manager, co-workers or friends. Just do your best, with compassion for yourself and your team.