

TIPS FOR WORKING FROM HOME

The coronavirus outbreak has more people working from home. Everyone who works remotely needs to determine when to work, where to work and how to establish realistic boundaries between work and personal life. Here are tips for leading a better and more productive telecommuting experience.

1. Maintain Regular Hours

Set a schedule and stick to it...most of the time. Establish general guidelines for when to begin working and when to call it a day while taking care to foster and maintain a healthy and productive work-life balance.

2. Create a Morning Routine

Deciding you'll sit down at your desk and start work at a certain time of day is one thing. Implementing a daily routine which guides you into the chair is another. Perhaps you prefer to begin your day with a morning cup of coffee or a jog. A standard start-up routine can be more powerful than a clock at helping you get each day off on a good foot.

3. Establish Ground Rules at Home

Set ground rules with family members. Child and pet care, home repair issues, domestic chores, grocery runs, picking up the mail, etc. will draw your attention and that's fine, but if you simply take it all on by default because you're home, you may feel taken advantage of, and your productivity will suffer as a result. Moderation in all things.

4. Schedule Breaks and Take Them in Their Entirety

Know your company's policy on break times and take them. Don't short-change yourself during breaks, especially on your lunch hour. Try to get out of the house at least once a day. Your body needs to move, and the fresh air and natural light will do you good. You don't have to go to crowded public spaces to get away from your solo workspace. Walk the dog. Weed the garden. You get the picture.

5. Don't Hesitate to Ask for What You Need

Request the office equipment you will need as soon as you start working from home, or shortly thereafter when you realize you need something new, but keep it within reason. Ordering a new office chair and desk might be asking too much. Consider a mouse and keyboard plus a back-supporting cushion instead.

6. Keep a Safe and Dedicated Office Space

Identify appropriate and secure job-related technology (computer, printer, Wi-Fi, etc.) and establish a quiet, private and ergonomically safe workstation somewhere within your home for telecommuting purposes. Follow your organization's policies governing personal internet browsing on company devices.



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7. Use Technology to Stay Connected

Work with your company or organization's IT department to establish protocols for responding to work-related phone calls from home. This will help you to maintain a healthy and productive work-life balance. Use a VPN to work from home but try not to overtax the system. Be prepared to share the VPN with your colleagues who may also need remote access to work-related files and documents.

Work. It's not always fun, but we've all got to do it. Thankfully, armed with Wi-Fi and a cell phone, you don't have to spend your 9-to-5 in solemn silence or listening to Sponge Bob entertain your kids in the room next door. Instead, you can fill your ears with the wonder of streaming music and podcasts while blissfully spending your work hours a world away. Consider the purchase of a Bluetooth-enabled stereo speaker and/or headphones for your home office to help screen out any unnecessary distractions and brighten your otherwise hum-drum day.

8. Socialize with Colleagues

In order to avoid feelings of loneliness, disconnection, and isolation while working at home, talk with your supervisor about how much and what types of social interaction are appropriate. Periodically reach out to your colleagues by phone, text or email just to say hello or discuss work-related questions, comments and concerns.

9. "Show Up" to Meetings and Be Heard

Certainly, you'll take part in video conferences and webinars from home. Be sure to speak up during these meetings, so everyone knows you're in the loop. A simple, "Thanks, everyone. Bye!" at the close of a meeting will go a long way toward making your presence known.



10. Take Sick Days

When you're not well, take the sick time you need. Remember, if you are too sick to work but you do so anyway, there is a good chance you will be neither productive nor useful. Do everyone a favor and just make it up the next day when you're feeling better.

11. Overcommunicate

Working remotely requires you to overcommunicate. Share your work calendar. Inform everyone who needs to know about your schedule and availability. When you finish a project or important task, say so and repeat as often as necessary.

12. Communicate Electronically with Care

Brevity is the soul of wit, but the less face time you have with people, the less they will know how to interpret your intended tone and meaning when crafting emails or text messages. When you work remotely, you must be positive, even to the point where it may feel like you are overdoing it. Otherwise, you risk sounding like a jerk. So, accentuate the positive! Pass out the praise! Embrace the exclamation point! Find your favorite emojis! You're going to need them.

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Also, when working from home and communicating primarily via email or text message, there is a thinner margin for error due to inadvertent typographical mistakes. We've all experienced the sting of the typo. They can happen to anyone, and often at the most inopportune times.

Re-read and spell-check your messages carefully before hitting the "Send" button, especially when dealing with sensitive issues or personalities. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

13. Health and Wellness

Just because you are not in the office doesn't mean ergonomics and wellness should go out the window. Make sure you set up an ergonomically friendly workspace. You should avoid working on your computer from your bed or couch. SDAO has created a webinar for tips on proper ergonomics at home. You can access this recording at www.sdao.com/ouch-my-back-tips-for-proper-ergonomics-at-home.



Also, it might be a good practice to set specific times to get up and go for a walk. You could also rotate through different stretching techniques or exercises every half hour or hour. There are a lot of examples available such as on WebMd.com (<https://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/features/exercise-at-your-desk#1>) and Healthline.com (<https://www.healthline.com/health/deskercise>).

14. Commit to Doing More

Telecommuting can present unique opportunities to achieve even more than might be possible under more conventional circumstances. Take on those special in-depth projects such as publishing newsletters, drafting policies, composing instructional guides, generating trainings, preparing presentations, etc. that might be more difficult to accomplish amidst the sometimes hurly-burly atmosphere of the main office.

15. Don't Be Too Hard on Yourself

The most successful remote employees have a reputation for being extremely disciplined. After all, it takes serious focus to do any full-time office job from home. That said, everyone lets their attention drift at times. If you find yourself working one minute and checking sports scores or stock prices the next, don't reprimand yourself too harshly. Instead, ask yourself whether people in an office setting do the same thing. If the answer is yes, cut yourself some slack, then get back to work.

16. End Your Day with a Routine

Just as you should start your day with a routine, adopt a habit that signals the close of the workday. It might be an evening stroll or a 6 p.m. yoga class. Something as simple as shutting down your computer and turning on a favorite podcast will do. Whatever you choose, do it consistently to mark the daily end of working hours.

17. Make It Personal

Above all else, figure out what works best for you. Sometimes the answer is apparent, but other times, you might need some inspiration from other folks who are in the same boat. Share your questions, comments and concerns about working from home with a fellow telecommuter colleague whom you trust and respect. Two heads are often better than one.

If you have any questions regarding working from home or proper ergonomics for your home workspace, please contact the Risk Management Department at 800-285-5461 or riskmanagement@sdao.com.