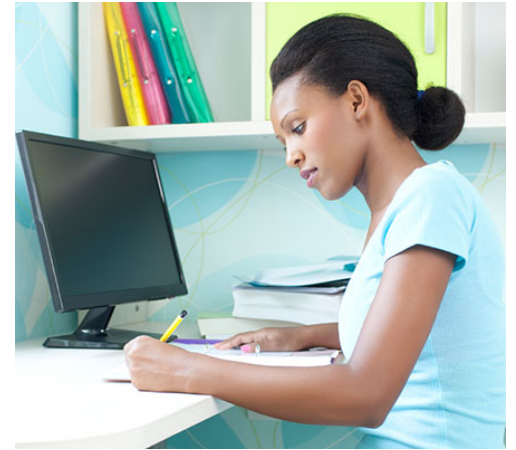


Tips for Remote Workers

In certain situations, employees who have typically worked out of an office may be requested to work from home. Working remotely, often called telework, offers many benefits to both employees and employers, including:



- Reduced travel time and the stress of commuting
- Greater flexibility
- Increased work satisfaction
- Improved performance and productivity by providing a distraction-free work environment
- Ability to maintain business operations during emergencies or inclement weather

Telework has proven to be an effective solution for quite some time, although it can present some unique challenges. Fortunately, these challenges are easy to overcome with some basic adaptations to work habits.

Establish Your Workspace

If you are fortunate to have a dedicated space in your home for a home office, this is the most effective location to use. If not, it doesn't mean you can't successfully work from home; you can create a similar environment by setting up a temporary workspace. Some suggestions to make a comfortable and effective space include:

- A work surface at a comfortable height to write and use your computer and keyboard.
- A comfortable chair; avoid using the bed or a sofa.
- An appropriate background in case you need to use a webcam or participate in a video chat.
- A location that is out of the main traffic areas to limit audio and visual "noise."
- Storage and organizational materials.
- Basic office supplies that you most commonly use or need (such as pens, pencils, stapler, tape, etc.).

Stick to Your Routines

To the extent possible, maintaining your regular routine will help you get – and keep -- yourself in the right mindset for working. Consider the following tips:

- Get up at your regular time. Use the extra time you typically would have spent commuting to plan for your day, enjoy a cup of coffee or accomplish other tasks.
- Prep the same way you would for your usual work environment. Dress in clothing you would normally wear for work and stick to your usual routines. Not only will this help you get into a work mindset, you'll be ready in the event you need to participate via video chat or conferencing.
- Maintain a regular meal schedule and eat healthy foods. Avoid the temptation to snack on treats that may be more easily accessible at home than at the office. You'll feel better and fueling yourself with healthy foods will improve your focus.

Leverage Technology

Make certain your home tech will allow you to work effectively. Here are some strategies that can help:

- Make sure you have what you need. Talk to your manager to determine the equipment and software required to support effective telework. If you frequently collaborate, ensure your team members know what tools will be used such as video conferencing, instant messaging, etc.
- Review your home Internet bandwidth and speed. Is it sufficient to allow you to work efficiently while you when you are working at home? What if others who live with you are also home and online? Do you need to consider increasing these during the time that you are working from home?
- Do you need any "accessories" that will help you work more efficiently: a separate keyboard and mouse? A monitor?
- If possible, do a trial run. Invest a few minutes one evening to confirm you're able to access your company network and applications, as well as any shared files.
- If your company has a centralized tech support team, be sure you know how to get in touch with them.

Maintain Boundaries

A common challenge faced by experience teleworkers is maintaining the balance between their personal and professional lives. Some suggestions to maintain healthy boundaries between your work and life include:

- Keep focused. Distractions like household chores, kids, and other interruptions may prevent you from accomplishing as much as you want or need to. Having a defined workspace can help. In addition, establish specific times when you focus exclusively on work and keep interruptions and distractions to a minimum during those times. If you find yourself consistently challenged to maintain focus, make changes to ensure productivity.
- Take brief but regular breaks. When working from home, it's easy to get immersed in your work and forget to take regular breaks, which can lead to stress. Consider taking a short, brisk walk at lunchtime or stretching at your desk to relieve tension.
- Establish start and end times to your workday to avoid burnout. Some people may have a tendency to work longer hours when their workspace is constantly accessible. If this is an issue for you, once you're done with

work for the day, consider turning off the computer, turning on your voice mail, and shutting the door to your office space (if possible) to separate work time from family time.

Stay Connected

While working from home has many benefits, some teleworkers may find they feel isolated and disconnected from coworkers, clients and others. When you are working at home, you may have to put some extra effort into maintaining relationships. Consider these tips to stay connected when you work remotely:

- Technology is your friend! Use tools like instant messaging, video chat and even a regular phone call to stay in touch with colleagues and others. Not only will you feel more connected, these direct interactions are often more productive for a complex or potentially difficult conversation.
- Share calendars with coworkers so everyone knows where and when you are working and the best way(s) to reach you.
- Stay connected to your workplace and team members by being available and responsive (e.g., answer calls and respond to emails promptly).
- Avoid isolation. If you find you are starting to suffer from cabin fever, give yourself breaks and get out of the house or reach out to others. Go for a walk, run a quick errand, have a conversation with a loved one, take the dog for a walk, etc.

Set Family Expectations

Especially when you have not previously worked from home, your family may not understand that you are working. Although an occasional, brief interruption may provide a needed break, it's important to stay focused and minimize distractions. Here are some strategies that may help:

- Explain to your children what it means to work at home and that your attention needs to be on your work.
- Communicate your telework schedule to family and friends and ask them to respect that time as dedicated to work.
- Set rules/expectations for behavior during work hours – especially related to interruptions.
- Ahead of time, plan activities to keep children busy.
- Plan for care arrangements if your child cannot go to school or child care. Similarly, plan for senior care options.

The experience of teleworking is very different from working in a traditional office setting, but with the challenges and uniqueness come benefits and opportunities. By setting guidelines and sticking to them, you can make teleworking a success for you and your organization.

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