

Effectively Working from Home



Set up a dedicated workspace.

The couch may be calling your name, but to do your best work, create a space in your house that you can treat like your office. If you don't have a room in your house you call an office with a desk and place for your computer, use your dining room table or another room where you can close the door and keep distractions minimal. Add a good chair that will help you maintain good posture or invest in a standing desk if you prefer to work on your feet.

Create a routine.

Start your day like any other—wake up at your normal time, shower and get dressed in real clothes. This will help you to prepare for the day and get into the “I'm going to work” mindset. Set your office hours and let your colleagues know when you will be available. This will help you maintain a work-life balance.

Take breaks.

If you were in the office, chances are you would stop by a colleague's desk and chat for a few minutes or take a walk to the coffee shop for an afternoon pick me up. Do the same at home. Plan for a few breaks throughout the day to walk the dog or play with the kids or grab the day's mail. This will help give you a mental break and refresh your mind to keep up the good work.

Stay organized.

Create to-do lists to keep yourself organized and focused, and share the status of your lists with your supervisor so they know you're on top of your work.

Be communicative.

When at a distance from your team, it's important to be extremely communicative. Tell everyone who needs to know about your schedule and availability. Let the people you are working on a project with know your status at the end of each day and share your timeline for when others can expect your part of a project to be completed. Lean on technology including email, instant messaging and video chatting to conduct meetings, update on statuses and generally communicate.

Encourage community.

Maintaining a healthy and vibrant culture is hard to do from a distance. Take steps to bring your teams together. Start one of your virtual meetings with each team member giving a tour of their workspace, taking in possible distractions and constraints (i.e., is it a shared workspace with roommates? Is there city noise outside the nearest window? Could a pet start barking at any moment?). Being aware of your team's surroundings will allow for a greater sense of understanding. Use email and programs like Microsoft Teams to share stories and daily doses of inspiration. Do what you need to go out of your way to reach out to your colleagues and let them know you are there. Working from home can become isolating if we don't stay in touch. Find little ways to brighten someone else's day. ■