



Top 12 SMART Working Tips for Employees

SMART Working has become the new norm. As companies mobilise and transition to a 100% remote work force, employees and managers are facing new routines and a lack of social interactions. How do you maintain optimal productivity, working relationships and a suitable home environment? Here are our top 12 tips for employees:

1. Stick to a schedule for working hours

To maintain a work-life balance, set clear guidelines for your working hours. Your employer may require you to extend your hours to accommodate different time zones, but make sure to establish boundaries and focus on productivity. Start and finish at the same times; and replicate as far as possible, what you would do in a physical office environment.

2. Create a morning routine

Now that you are no longer commuting and swinging by the local coffee shop in the mornings, come up with a routine that will guide you into your work day. Perhaps this involves some outdoor exercise to get some fresh air or cooking breakfast first. Create a morning routine that ends with you starting work.

3. Get dressed for work

Clothes can be used as a ritual into a professional mindset. Whilst there is no need to don full business attire at home, do change out of your pyjamas and groom for potentially unexpected video calls.

4. Keep a dedicated “Office” space

In an ideal world, every employee would have a dedicated office in their home, plus separate computers, for work and personal use. For most, working from home means clearing up a corner on one of your tables. Make it a rule to dedicate this as your work space and set up just as you would at the office, i.e. notepads, pens etc. If you are using a personal device to log on, make a rule to use the workspace for work and to sit elsewhere during personal time.

5. Set ground rules with family and flatmates

Given the current challenges, most people will find themselves in living arrangements that are unusual. Perhaps you have family around or flatmates who may disrupt your focus patterns etc. Work out and discuss the best way to manage shared spaces and set clear rules about what works best. If that means waking up a little earlier to find more quiet time for analysis, do so.

6. Be mindful of communication challenges

Always chose the highest quality communication mode as possible. Whilst you can no longer walk over to someone’s desk for a casual chat, avoid emailing unnecessarily and chose video calls in the first instance followed by phone calls, chat software or voice

messages. Emails are often prone for misinterpretation, and best used to summarise or record previously agreed points.

7. Replicate social contact

If having a little bit of banter with your team every day is important to your happiness at work, find ways to replicate this. Check in on colleagues, have a few informal interactions and be supportive as you would in the office. Along with you, colleagues will face extraordinary circumstances and it is important to motivate each other. Whilst remote working means you no longer bump into colleagues by the coffee machine, that doesn't mean you can't ping them a quick chat message to wish them a good morning.

8. Schedule breaks

Stick to regular break times and take them. A lunch hour and two 15-minute breaks seem to be the standard for most employers. Use break times the way you would at work – perhaps you have a favourite colleague you have lunch with that you could connect with or use the time for exercise.

9. Ask for what you need

Your company will likely support you with as much equipment as necessary, but you might start noticing that you need specific equipment to support your work from home. Don't be afraid to ask for a chair or a mouse. The priority is to be as comfortable as possible so that you can optimise productivity and health.

10. Find outdoor time

Whilst we await evolving government advice on isolation during the coronavirus pandemic, try to leave the building for some fresh air, maintaining a safe distance as per current social distancing advice. If you have a garden, spend your break times or morning ritual there, or set up a balcony with some window boxes.

11. "Show Up" to meetings and be heard

Where possible, chose to use video facilities to dial into team meetings, rather than just an audio line. Speak up and wish everyone a good morning, try to create team cohesion in the absence of sharing a table. Demonstrate engagement and make a particular effort to express support for ideas or add value to the discussion.

12. Be mindful of your manager's challenges

Managing time-sensitive deadlines and a team or even an entire department remotely will come with unprecedented challenges for line managers. Be mindful of your interactions, find ways to overcommunicate to avoid misunderstandings and be supportive of your manager's deliverables. Be extra prepared for your 1:1 catch ups and team meetings, ensure technical glitches like logging into video calls are resolved ahead of time. Prioritise building a trusting working relationship.