

10 top tips to successfully work from home (provided by MIND).

If you are facing the prospect of home working and perhaps worried about how you will manage in it, here are a few tips to maintain a healthy body, mind and relationships.

1. Stick to your morning routine - Get up at the same time and get showered and dressed. Don't make the mistake of thinking that an extra 30 minutes in bed then switching on your computer in your jammies is a good idea.
2. Get outside in the morning and at lunchtime - Sunlight and fresh air are critical for our health, mood and productivity. Get out for a walk (until we are told we must stay indoors)
3. Keep the same working hours - Make sure the added flexibility doesn't blur the lines of work and home life. Have set start, lunch, break and end times.
4. Exercise - You will naturally be less active so make sure you get some exercise either before or after work. If you can't get to your gym (or whatever exercise activity is normal for you), have a look at routines available online. There's plenty of different options!
5. Set up your computer in a spare room / office - Keep your work and home life separate by creating this locational divide.
6. Block social media from your computer during working hours - There are lots of tools to increase productivity and remove distractions by blocking websites and apps. Try Freedom or FocusMe
7. Set 2 hour working blocks - Take a short break every 2 hours for a cuppa or a short walk around the block to re-energise and reset your attention.
8. Use video calling - Communicate with colleagues using video chat tools like FaceTime, Skype or Zoom. It's important to stay connected and these are much more personal and uplifting than phone calls.
9. Switch off and end your working day - Turn your computer off and put your phone away. Keep work time and home time separate.
10. Cook from scratch - Use the time saved on commuting to spend more time in the kitchen. Cooking from scratch is healthier and supplies will last longer.

Coronavirus: the role of the unexpected remote manager (from an HR website)

The unfortunate truth is that the remote work that most people will experience right now – the homeworking forced by COVID-19 – is not the kind of remote work that is usually advocated. Transitioning to online collaboration is a thought-through process, a planned change in behaviour, which requires a change in mindset.

Remote workers often choose to work from where they work best: from a co-working space, a different regional office, a café, a library, even their home... But currently, many knowledge

workers are being forced to work from home – sometimes without suitable access to technology.

And how you carry out remote work is heavily influenced by context - and the context within which we are working right now is an unusual one. So remote work in this context requires a different approach. Here are some tips to help you manage at this time:

Be flexible – even with your regular homeworkers

Even the context of those who are regular homeworkers has changed. People's home contexts are probably different, with people who are not usually in the house during working hours now heavily present.

And even if nothing has changed visibly, mentally it will. Their mindset will be affected by the current uncertainty. This is not business as usual for anyone. Take that into account.

For those who have been forced to suddenly work from home, it will take a while to understand how they work best in the new context. They will need some flexibility in their schedule, as they try different things to find a new way of working for them.

Understand the context in which team members are working

People's living situations are going to be incredibly different. Some people might live alone; others might be sharing a small space with flatmates; some will have families; others will become the primary carers of a relative; some will live in urban areas; others in more isolated properties.

All of this will influence how they approach their work and their communication over the coming weeks. Negotiating workspace will be something new they have to do with partners; others might have to work when there is other activity going on in the house. Some will struggle not having their closest friends nearby.

Spend time understanding team members' context and facilitate communication of the different circumstances in your team. Share your own context and set up, so that others understand the circumstances that you are working under too.

If it helps, share a photo of your current setup in your team (on an email thread, in your collaboration platform, at the end of a meeting), but be mindful that some might want to continue keeping their home and work life separate.

Be the connector to the rest of the organisation

As manager or team leader, you will probably have access to more information about what's happening in the organisation and access to a range of people beyond the team. Bring back to your team what's going on inside the organisation – be the connector that reminds them how their work feeds into something bigger than themselves. Help them make connections with individuals outside the team.

Be patient with internet connections

Even those team members enjoying the benefits of the best broadband in their homes might feel it these days. With children taking classes online, partners uploading and downloading heavy files, or streaming their video during online meetings, this is bound to affect everyone.

Turn off video if someone is having internet problems and reschedule for later if necessary. Don't get frustrated at them for having a poor internet connection.

Not every decision needs a meeting

One of the easiest things to do when you work remotely is set up a meeting. Yes, they feel different to those you would have in the office, but a meeting is a meeting. It's familiar. Having regular online meetings will start to impact people's health – eyes will be dry, necks will be stiff and it will mean that people rarely get a break from their desks.

Use your meetings to check-in as people, to have those conversations that are difficult to have by text. Delegate decision-making when you can and if decisions need to be made in a meeting, consider who needs to be there and who just needs to be informed.

Don't lose the real-time social connections

If your work doesn't require you to meet regularly, then set up some informal meetings during which you and your team members can socialise. "Virtual coffees" are very common in distributed organisations. Meet up online via Google Hangouts, Skype, MSTeams, Zoom...

Turning up to a meeting without a plan might feel strange at first, so give the sessions a theme: things learned recently, tips for crafting your home workspace, book clubs, TV series catchup, etc.

Advice on homeworking (from the Business School)

Find a quiet, comfortable place to work

If possible, try to separate yourself from the business of your household. Set up a home office with a door that you can close if you need to drown out the noise of your pets, children, partners, or TV to keep remain productive and professional.

Use a good chair

Good posture is important and you don't want to have to strain your back or neck while hunched over your computer screen. Choose a chair that's comfortable but offers good support too.

Set a schedule

It can be difficult to establish a set schedule when you're working from home. However, try thinking of your work-from-home hours the same way you do office hours. Choose a start time,

lunch break, and finish time that you stick to as closely as possible so you can maintain a healthy work-life balance. Beyond emergency correspondence, our email curfew should continue to be adhered to.

Get up and move

It's good to get up and stretch your body between periods of sitting. Stand up and pace around during calls if you have them or take a break occasionally to stroll around the house, do a few stretches or lift some light weights. If you need to, set a timer to help you remember.

Stock up on healthy snacks and drinks

You might be tempted to eat whatever unhealthy foods you have in your kitchen when you're working from home, but resist the temptation. Pack yourself a bag full of healthy snacks by your desk and keep a water bottle handy to sip from throughout the day.

Control your environment

You're in charge in your home! Open your windows to let some fresh air in to reinvigorate yourself, set the thermostat to whatever temperature feels most comfortable to you and turn on as many lights as you need to see without squinting or dealing with glare.

Give your eyes a rest

It's not healthy for your eyes to be glued to a computer screen all day. For every hour spent on your computer, close your eyes for a few minutes or look at something else to make sure you're not straining them. Set a reminder if you need the prompt.

Create a support system

Without regular interaction with colleagues, it can get a little lonely working from home. Develop a support system of co-workers, friends or family you can chat with online – you can video link, for free, via What's App, Facebook, and Skype for non-confidential discussions – or use instant messenger – available through Skype Business, which you can install onto your laptop and / or phones to take your work calls as usual – every now and then. You could even schedule regular “coffee breaks” with colleagues over a video call!

Change out of your pyjamas!

You might be tempted to forgo the shower and lounge around in your pyjamas all day, but this isn't a good recipe for productivity. Shower before you start working and put on something other than pyjamas to get out of the lazy mindset but, of course, dress for comfort too.