

Remote working is a working style that allows you to work outside of a traditional office environment. Here are some top tips...

1. Set and stick to a routine

Follow your normal sleep and work patterns if you can and stay consistent. Get up at the same time, eat breakfast and get dressed (i.e., do not get caught on Zoom in your pajamas!). Try scheduling in your "commute time" and spend it exercising, reading, or listening to music before logging in.

Most importantly, when your workday stops, stop working. Shut down, stop checking emails and focus on your home life.

2. Make a dedicated workspace

If you can, find a quiet space away from people and distractions like the TV (or the kitchen, when you feel snacky). Get everything you need in one place, before you start work – chargers, pens, paper, and anything else – and shut the door if you can. Even in a small or shared space, try to designate an area for work.

Lastly, get comfortable. Use the NHS Guidelines to set up your workspace correctly, as much as you possibly can. If you do not have office furniture like an adjustable chair, try using things like cushions to support you in your chair, or a box as a footrest. If you are employed by a company or organization that supports your work-from-home setup, request the equipment you need as soon as you start working from home, or within a day or two when you realize you need something new.

3. Give yourself a break

Making time for breaks is important to help manage feelings of stress – try to take lunch and regular screen breaks. Give yourself time to concentrate on something else so you feel more focused when you return. Even just 5 to 10 minutes of short breaks each hour can really help your productivity too.

If possible, set a time to go for a walk, run or bike ride for some fresh air, or a coffee – just make sure you follow social distancing guidance when outside your home. Working from home means you might be spending a lot more time without moving your body. If you are feeling stiff or tense, try doing some light stretching or exercise with a 10-minute home workout.

4. Stay connected

In and out of work, human interaction matters so schedule video calls and pick up the phone instead of emailing. If you are struggling with working at home, speak to your colleagues or manager about your concerns. And remember, your colleagues probably feel the same as you. Ask how they are doing and whether there are ways you can support each other.

Make time to socialize virtually – schedule in a digital coffee break or Friday online get-together.

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Information Sheet 04

Working Remotely

5. Set boundaries

Setting boundaries with other members of your household is key to mental wellbeing while working at home. You can be more flexible when working from home, so enjoy it. But it can also be difficult if there are other distractions to deal with, like children at home, who may think you are on holiday and want to spend time with you. So, discuss your needs, especially with family. Remind them that you still have work to do and need quiet time to do it and share your schedule.

6. Think longer term

You may be continuing to work from home for a while, so think about ways you could improve how you work while at home. If you have a room that is warmer or has a window that lets in a lot of light, could you work there instead?

7. Be kind to yourself

Remember, the pandemic is an unusual situation and things will not feel normal. Be kind to yourself and acknowledge that you might not be as productive as you usually would be (although some workers report been more productive when working at home). Be realistic about what you can achieve given the circumstances and relax when your work is done.

8. Socialize with Colleagues

Loneliness, disconnect, and isolation are common problems in remote work life, especially for extroverts. Companies with a remote work culture usually offer ways to socialize. For example, they might have chat channels where remote employees can talk about common interests, meetups for people in the same region, and (once the coronavirus ends) in-person retreats.

It is important to figure out how much interaction you need to feel connected and included. If you are not at a company with a strong remote culture, you may need to be more proactive about nurturing relationships.

9. End Your Day with a Routine

Just as you should start your day with a routine, create a habit that signals the close of the workday. It might be a sign off on a business messaging app, an evening dog walk, or a 6 p.m. yoga class. Something as simple as shutting down your computer and turning on a favourite podcast will do. Whatever you choose, do it consistently to mark the end of working hours.

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