

Top Tips for Working from Home

No commute. Peace-and-quiet. Tracksuit bottoms! For many of us, the benefits of remote working can be short-lived. What if we lose touch with teammates, let our motivation levels drop, or raid the snack drawer too often? Whether working from home is the norm or extraordinary, following these tips will help you to remain productive, connected and energised all day.



Create a workspace

Try not to roll out of bed and switch on your laptop. A dedicated workspace helps you to approach home work in an organised and efficient manner.

If a home office isn't doable, set up your workspace in your least-used room. Like a quiet corner of your living room. This will help you **separate work from home** when you're on and off the clock.

Your work area should be comfortable, with good lighting, storage and space for your equipment and documents. If you're using a laptop, you should have **a stand or docking station** to raise the screen to your eye level. And add an ergonomic keyboard and mouse if you're using your laptop for long periods.

What's more, remember to keep your desk tidy and organised. Just like you would at the office!

Minimise interruptions

Ideally, no one else should flit through your home workspace. For most of us, flatmates or family make this impractical. So, it's important to establish some **ground rules** with the people you live with. These could be:

- Asking others **not to disturb you** at your desk or when your office door's shut (unless it's to ask if you want a cupper).
- Letting people know if you have a **virtual meeting** coming up – and asking them to try keep the hum of hoovers and other background noise to a minimum.
- Telling friends or family who phone you're at work and will **call them back**. (Just like you'd do in the office.)



Equip yourself

To work effectively at home, ensure you have all the necessary equipment. So, as well as the obvious PC or laptop, what about a stand, ergonomic keyboard and software updates?

Frequent home workers could also invest in a **filing cabinet or in-tray** to keep files organised. Similarly, do you need an external hard drive to go with that work laptop? Your employer may be able to provide you with some of this equipment. So, it's a good idea to ask HR before you buy.

If you're on calls a lot, and don't have access to a company mobile phone, consider a **separate phone line** to separate work and home calls. Better yet, can these calls be of the free, virtual variety?

Have a contingency

Ever notice tech glitches happen at the worst time? So, if you have a power cut or lose your broadband connection, make sure you can access your work email or **messaging app from your smartphone**. Or is there a back-up coffee shop nearby you could sneak to for a flat white and Wi-Fi access? Just bear in mind any security issues around accessing work information remotely.

What if your PC packs up? Do you have access to another computer in the house? If it's

someone else's, is it **password protected** – and does it have the programmes installed on it you need?

When working from home, remind colleagues to inform you if there's a tech problem with any systems back at the office. And to give you a likely timescale for a fix. Thinking through the possibilities before they happen – and having a plan – **help minimise wasted time** (and stress) when something does go wrong.



Be prepared

Before you get started, ensure you have all the necessary resources and information for home working. Take some time the day before to collect everything you might need.

Think spreadsheets, reports, presentations and contact information. Depending on the nature of these resources, you may need to transfer some of your files to a shared computer drive or a portable memory stick. Or take physical documents and folders home with you.

Apps such as **Google Docs** and **Microsoft SharePoint** can save these files in the cloud. This makes them accessible anywhere you work from, and open for colleagues to work on at the same time.

Plan your day

Time management is key to working from home. Many organisations and employees benefit from flexible working hours. For example, earlier starts or later finishes to account for lunchtime jogs or school pick-ups.

But you should still **organise your time** as carefully as you do in the office. So, try to establish a daily routine – decide what time you intend to start and end your day – and break for lunch.

It's also a good idea to write a **prioritised to-do list** each morning. This helps you focus on what you need to achieve. And ticking off items as you complete them tops up your motivation levels throughout the day.



Keep in touch

Maintaining contact with your colleagues while you work from home is important for a number of reasons. Staying in touch:

- helps you build and maintain effective **working relationships**
- establishes a **support network** who you can ask questions of and make suggest ideas to
- ensures you have **a presence** in your team even when you're not physically there. This helps you feel involved and engaged, and prevent you from feeling lonely or isolated

If possible, it's a good idea to come into the office from time to time to catch up with your colleagues and spend some time with your team. Similarly, it's important to take part in team events such as training sessions and development days whenever you can. So, make sure your manager and team give you plenty of notice for these events.

And finally... get dressed!

It may be tempting to wear old, baggy, comfortable clothes while working from home. But getting dressed properly at the start of the day helps move you from 'home-' to 'work-mode'. Plus, it's tough to feel professional if you're still in your pyjamas at lunchtime!