

Master the art of
Remote Work
Stay happy, healthy, and productive

People are learning to work together remotely. It is definitely an adjustment. Is remote work uncharted territory for you? We created this guide to make the change easier.

Master the Art of Remote Work

Whether you have a job that ‘went remote’ or are if personal matters made this a more workable option for you, you are probably scrambling to set up a peaceful, inspiring place in your home where you can work and figure out how you can master the art of remote work. We created this guide to make the change easier.

As community minded researchers in the field of human resource management and more specifically working remotely, we garnered information from thousands of remote workers across the globe that choose remote work and thrive on their challenges, self-sufficiency, and productivity. We were seeking a better understanding of what kept them motivated, energized, trusting, and supportive of each other.

Remote workers are a keen community of people. Through them, we have found more meaning in our company mission of supporting remote workers to have better lives. They inspired us to develop this guide and share it with you. Our joint expectation is that these ideas will help you to re-imagine working from your new home office while enjoying a healthy work-life balance.

These digital nomads have proven that, free of the regular workplace distractions, they are more focused and productive working from home. They enjoy their day. No one misses the daily waiting drill! Waiting in traffic, waiting for elevators, waiting for a meeting to start, waiting in line for fast food and coffee from a paper cup – all those minutes spent “waiting” and commuting add up to several hours in the week. Remote workers appreciate spending that time more productively on work and more enjoyably pursuing other important aspects of their personal and professional lives.

Remote workers have shown the business world that it has been incorrect in training us to believe that being at home and working remotely is distracting, less productive, and just plain mysterious. There is no mystery when a growing number of organizations hire hundreds of remote workers, and in many cases choose to go fully remote because business owners realized that workplace productivity is splintered with an abundance of workplace time mismanagement and plenty of distractions. Just because people spend time next to their colleagues at matching desks does not necessarily mean they worked the whole time. Organizations that have gone remote benefit from the productivity of happy employees and save a bundle on office space and overhead. Everyone benefits.

You probably take work seriously. Whether your autonomy comes from your accomplishments, your output or your working style, we trust that working from home will give you a feeling of pride in what you do. It’s your turn. What will you call yourself? Digital nomad, remote worker, or flexible employee? Will you put on shoes to start your work day?

Key points covered in this guide:

Carve out a Dedicated Workspace that Works for You

- Home Office Essentials

- Choose Ergonomics and Comfort

Minimizing Distractions

Evaluate Your Workspace and Make Adjustments

Check out Co-Working Spaces

Working Remotely When you Have Children

Establishing a Routine for Work-Life Balance

- Schedule Work and Non Work Hours

- Start with the Vibe that Grounds Your Day

- Work with your Body's Natural Ebbs and Flows

- Trust Your To-Do List

- Avoid Multi-Tasking or Switch-Tasking

- Dress the Part

- Acknowledge the Significance of Work-Life Balance

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Focus on the Benefits to Affirm Your Choices

Manage Collaboration Tools for Work-Life Balance and Connections

- Be Visible

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- Tech Support or You

Productivity Tips from the Pros of Remote Work

Your Physical and Mental Wellness Starts With You

- Pledge to Be Kind to Yourself

- Ground Yourself with a Morning Routine

- Fit in Activity and Relaxation Breaks

- Stroll in Nature

- Fitness Does not Have to be Painful

- Save and Restore Energy with Breath

- Do Things You Love

- Foster Positive Coping

- Start Saying No
- Avoid Scrambling
- Don't Stress the Mess
- Avoid Burnout
- Make a Clean Break Between Work and Home

Dealing with Isolation

- Human Interactions Every Day
- Assess Your Day
- Match Your Music to your Task

Avoid "Ideal Worker" Burnout

- Be Proactive about Burnout
- Preventative Measures to Prevent Burnout, Isolation, and Anxiety
- How to Recognize the Signs of Burnout

Self-Directed Learning Suddenly Becomes Crucial

Remote Work is not for Everyone

Finding a Remote Job

- Figure Out Your Working Style
- What Kind of Company Meets Your Hierarchy of Needs
- Tailor Your Resume and Portfolio for Remote Work
- Remote Job Interview
- Nail the Answers to Commonly Asked Interview Questions

Working from Home as a Couple

- Communication is Key
- Establish Rules and Write Them Down
- Morning Routine and Rituals
- Settle on a Timetable
- Plan to Have Morning Meetings
- Review the Next Day's Schedule the Night Before
- Share a Calendar for Meetings and Obligations
- Power Outlets, Lighting, Temperature Control
- Background Music
- Remember to Hydrate
- Privacy
- Romance
- Courtesy
- Management of Differences with Your Significant Other
- Human Interactions

Carve out a Workplace that Works for You

Your home office should be more than a spot on the couch where your Wi-Fi is strong. You'll be spending most of your time there so it should be comfortable and functional. Your office space should be conducive to a productive schedule and a place where you feel inspired, focused and motivated. You work from home, so you call the shots!

Set up a workspace that suits your lifestyle and caters to your hierarchy of needs. A comfortable and efficient workspace with inspiring, calming elements can help you feel and do your best. Whether you like a soothing ambience, minimalist vibe, or provocatively edgy feel, you should fine-tune the space to make it easy to slip into your "work mode".

Remote workers agree that the key to perfect work-life balance is to separate life from work by making sure that your home office space is for work and your bedroom and living room are places where you want to live. If possible select a place where you have room to spread out your work materials and leave them out the entire day. Creating this separation may not be easy. You may have space limitations, a family, or share workspace with a spouse, which must be factored into your plans and routine.

Working from home takes many forms. If you live alone and all your meetings are virtual, you have fewer limitations. If you have a roommate and occasional meetings with clients or work on projects with a team may need a productive meeting space that is not too personal or compromised by a roommate's routine.

It may take a bit of trial and error to figure out what area of your home is most conducive to getting work done. The majority of our digital nomads agree that five things are fundamental when setting up office space:

1. Have the essential tools
2. Choose ergonomics and comfort
3. Ideally, your space should be free of distractions
4. Evaluate your workspace and make adjustments
5. Check out coworking spaces for flexibility, connection with the business community, professional development, sparking new ideas, collaborative meetings, and a relaxed place to focus, or meet other digital nomads.

Home Office Essentials

There is plenty of advice on investing in various work tools. Some are tools of your trade and necessary. Check what things your company will provide and pay for. Then determine what you can afford.

Collaboration Tools/Software for Remote use - test everything before you officially move your work online, you should make sure these technologies work. You may want to try out a few different setups to ensure the person on the other end of the call can see you easily.

Cyber Safe Software - practicing good security habits is key to protecting you and your clients or the company that employs you.

An efficient office includes:

- Computer, monitor and printer that meet your needs
- Strong Wi-Fi connection
- Desk or writing table and ergonomic chair
- Adequate lighting – opt for natural light or consider obtaining daylight bulbs that are designed to replicate natural daylight. Don't forget curtains or blinds for shading your space.
- Noise-canceling headphones
- Calendar, whiteboard/chalkboard
- Notepad and pens for jotting down quick thoughts
- Filing cabinet/organization system/storage/bookcase to keep clutter to a minimum
- Temperature control , fan for air circulation or air conditioning
- Reliable cell phone for business only

Inspiring or calming elements:

- Plants, art, or other elements that stimulate your genius, or soothe you or bring your office to life.
- Music, playlists
- Access to outdoors, fresh air, leisure activity (hobby, reading) for activity breaks
- Proximity to coffee maker, fridge or snacks
- A designated and separate place to eat meals

Consider these enhancements:

- Adjustable laptop stand
- Adjustable desk-riser which converts any surface into a standing desk
- Standing mat
- Dual monitors
- Use a white noise app, white noise machine
- Privacy screen
- Invest in a power strip to plug into your outlet for maximum coverage. Wrap up your cables or organize them in a cable box with clips so you won't end up tripping or rolling over them with your chair. With no messy cords spilling out from behind your desk your room will look chic.

Choose Ergonomics and Comfort

This may be repetitious, but it is serious advice from the pros of remote work. Be kind to your shoulders, neck, and back! Get a good quality chair, desk, and laptop stand. These are items you will utilize the entire workday so aim for features that offer comfort and ergonomics.

Choose a chair that supports your spinal curves and has ergonomic arm rests – good lumbar support to maintain spinal alignment and keep your legs at a 90 degree angle. Ideally, the chair should be padded for comfort and of adjustable height to fit your body size and also accommodate different desk heights. If possible, choose one that fits in with the aesthetics of your décor. It's nice if it fits under the desk surface when it's pushed in, especially if you have space issues. When choosing, adjust the height of your chair so that your feet rest flat on the floor or on a footrest and your thighs are parallel to the floor. Adjust armrests so your arms gently rest on them with your shoulders relaxed. Some employers view ergonomics as a serious investment business and provide for this in a remote work budget. If your company is switching to remote, your employer might consider the option of allowing you to take your ergonomic office chair home.

A good laptop stand adjusts the level of your laptop between 6 and 12 inches which is better for your neck no matter the height of the desk surface you use. A good one folds down for travel or storage.

The kitchen counter or dining room table may function as a workstation, if you never need those surfaces for living the rest of your life. Consider if you or a family member could trip over cords and wires. Will you eventually suffer from neck or back strain? Pick a desk or writing table that is an appropriate height for you or is adjustable for sitting or standing so you can avoid staying sedentary for too long.

Evaluate Your Workspace and Make Adjustments

Evaluate your workspace after your first day working from home.

Acknowledge how it went:

- Did your Wi-Fi work consistently during your conference call?
- Do you have a hand cramp from using a laptop mouse? Would buying a different mouse or external keyboard fix that?
- Do you need a second monitor to mimic the setup you have in the office?
- Were there distractions? What kinds? What changes can you make to minimize noise or interruptions?
- What might you add or change to feel more energized.

Keep in mind that your home activities and work routine also influence how you utilize your time, space and tools. Evaluate your work@home space and routine every week until you get the vibe just right.

Minimize the Distractions

Let's talk about what our contributors considered to be the biggest distractions working from home.

Put your Phone far Away

Look around you. People touch their phones a lot. Check how many minutes or hours you spend checking messages, social media notifications, email, or playing games. When you work from home, accessing your phone too often can easily get out of hand. To counteract this distraction, turning the volume off is not enough. Pros tell us they plug their phone into a charger in a far away part of their home, or bury it in the couch or closet so they cannot see it. When the day is done, they free the phone from captivity and choose when and with whom to be connected. Many remote workers shared that they learned not to keep their phone in the bedroom when it was time to sleep to remove the temptation to work as soon as they woke up.

Another great tip: they left their phone at home when they went out of for exercise and out of reach during relaxation breaks.

Cleaning is not Always Boring

If you are intent on trying to do household tasks while you are working from home, be realistic about what you can accomplish. Taking a quick break to go check for the mail, deliver the garbage to the curb, dusting a room, or marinating chicken for dinner may get you away from your desk. However, tackling a mountain of laundry, painting a wall or vacuuming the whole house may not be practical all at once while you are on the clock. In the beginning, some remote workers said they used cleaning as an excuse to procrastinate. So, it made sense to them to develop a routine that allowed them to schedule cleaning before or after their official work day. If you are distracted by dishes in the sink, dust on your blinds, or bookshelves that are not alphabetically arranged, you might try facing a wall while you work so you have less of your home to look at. This will help you stay on task.

Use household tasks as a work timer. Instead of three songs off your music playlist, you could use the built-in timer of your laundry cycle to remind you to stay on task.

Snacks can cut into Productivity

One issue that was common among remote workers was snacking all the time. They fixed it by buying fewer snackable foods or designating snack times. They opted for healthy snacks like grapes or crunchy vegetables and made preparation of their snacks an enjoyable five-minute break.

Turn off the TV

Pro digital nomads say they realized how much time they saved by turning off the TV.

The Distraction of a Spouse, Family, or Neighbors

Every remote worker loved their noise-canceling headphones to block out sounds in their home and neighborhood. However, those that had families at home were often drawn into distracting conversations. Even if you do not have a dedicated office, try to make it off limits to the rest of your household while you are working. You can preclude disruptions with a privacy screen, a warning indicator that tells others “please wait, I’m busy”! Headphones can also be a signal to other individuals in your home that you are not to be disturbed. Make sure you have kind conversations with your family about your schedule:

Stephen King has a famous quote about writing that is equally important for working from home: “Write with the door closed, rewrite with the door open.”

One of the most demanding issues was having a spouse or significant other also working from home, and the times they shared office space and technology. (In this guide we include a section on that issue.)

Another issue was being asked by neighbors or family to be on call “because you are home anyway”. Of course, you should help in emergencies, but avoid being the on-call person for feeding pets, receiving deliveries, being a last minute caregiver, or listening to gossip. This can quickly become more time-consuming than is fair. Establish clear boundaries about when you are and are not available, and stick to them. You may have to establish a boundary or devise some sort of signal that keeps a neighbor from interrupting your workday unnecessarily.



Check out Co-Working Spaces

We all have days when we do not want to be stuck in a studio apartment with pets, plants or our significant other. We may need a change of surroundings for inspiration, or connecting with other professionals that we might not normally cross paths with in a normal week. Coworking spaces offer more perks than the traditional company space or home office. Some of them can be a haven when you are struggling for connection. You might like the vibe, the people, the change of pace or scenery for few hours a week. Can you relax? Thrive? Check out what kinds of networking or career development events they offer?

Besides coworking spaces in your community keep in mind that now that you are a digital nomad you can actually work from anywhere in the world. You can plan vacations that include remote work. In fact, there is a community of remote workers who travel together to work from historical, exotic, intriguing places for a few weeks and then move on to another interesting location.

Working Remotely When you Have Children

You are finally working remotely. You have what most working parents dream of – no commute, no office distractions, no one questioning why you are leaving the office for a pediatrician's appointment. It's just you, a comfortable home office, and the opportunity to spend more time with your kids.

The opportunity has its own challenges. However, a flexible work schedule, realistic expectations, a positive attitude and effective tactics will make it easier to work with children around.

Embrace a flexible work schedule that is meaningful to you and your children:

- Several remote workers tell us they work for a couple of hours before their children wake up, freeing up the afternoon to spend time with them.
- With flexibility you can arrange your work schedule to match your childcare, rather than the other way around.
- If you have a child enrolled in a program that takes only two hours you could work from your car instead of traveling back and forth.



Being flexible doesn't mean being undisciplined.

It's more about efficiency and work discipline. Working parents have a lot of competing demands on their time. They become efficient out of necessity because there are only so many hours in the day. Being efficient is a better option than partly doing something or pulling an all-nighter and feeling drained for both work and children.

Don't be too slow to take the pressure off of yourself.

If things are not going as well as you had hoped on a particular day, it may be best to default to concentrate on the children and make a plan to catch up on work after bed or the following day.

Show your kids that you are truly at work even though you are home.

Use that vanished commute time to do something pleasant with them, maybe a walk followed by a healthy breakfast, after which you go to work in your home office and they settle in to also do something constructive.

- Get dressed, don't work in pj's
- Have a dedicated work space that you physically enter at a designated time.
- Give them something to look forward to for the end of your day's work.

Children require structure and a healthy home environment. Your family will benefit from the routine that replicates that of a normal school day with breaks for meals, activities, fun, and quiet times.

- Define times for lunch and snacks. Prepare healthy food ahead of time. Enjoying time with them during food breaks means they may demand less of you later. If children they are old enough, allow them to be self-sufficient with snacks when you need to maximize your time.
- Create a safe play zone near your workspace so you can keep an eye on young ones while you work.
- Older children may be able to use headphones for some of their entertainment.
- Make sure they have fun things to do. Let them pick their own activities so they become less bored. Rotate toys to keep them interesting.
- It can be freeing to let the kids be free for thirty minutes to do something truly child-wild indoors and outdoors – dancing, banging pots, playing tag, making a mess painting the fence.
- Use teachers as a resource. They put a lot of time into schedules that help students get their school work done. Teachers also may have suggestions for activities.
- Enlist the assistance of a spouse, family or friends to take your children on an outing when you have a particularly project or deadline.
- Find a buddy who is also a remote working parent. Once a week you take their child and next they take yours for the day.
- Hire a babysitter, part-time.

Talk to older children about work-space boundaries. This can help you get work done while still letting them know that you are there for them when they need you. One of our remote work respondents suggested getting the children involved in an arts and craft project to design the signs that indicate they should not disturb mommy or daddy. Tracing their hands into stop signs, finger painting a separation curtain that could be opened and closed, crafting a green door sign for “yes, you can walk in. They are more apt to pay attention to their own creation.

When it comes to work life, our remote workers recommended transparency with your co-workers. Let them know you are juggling the needs of your children. You and your co-workers should discuss what is going to work best for each person. You will have days when you might have to warn colleagues that if a child walks into the room you will handle it and be right back. Be flexible and forgiving about the life situations of your co-workers.

Oh, and we have a separate section on working at home along with your significant other. [Check it out.](#)

Establish a Routine for Work-Life Balance

Now let's focus on routine because when you work remotely you need it for good work-life balance. Remote work often takes on a slightly different schedule than a typical office day. When you start working from home, one of the most difficult things to adjust to can be routine. Hopefully, if you are part of a team your employer offers some flexibility and your team agrees on common working hours that are not in conflict with what you want or need for work-life balance.

Schedule Work and Non-Work Hours

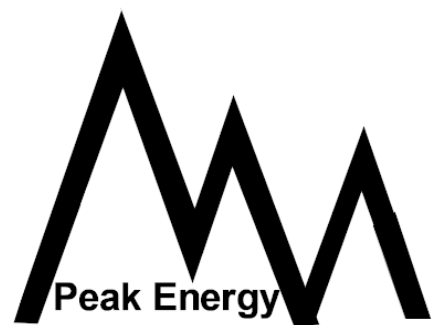
Working from bed, sitting at a desk, staying there for hours until you have accomplished all of your tasks does not set you up for success. You will quickly get tired and bored of your work, and you may even burn out. You have the freedom and autonomy to plan a schedule for work and off-work hours that works best for you and allows you to maximize the positive lifestyle benefits of working from home.

- Since you no longer commute make sure you can put those hours into doing the things you love.
- Maybe you prefer to schedule the day with a three-mile walk at sunrise and then plow through your work and finish your work day by 2:00.
- Remember, it's okay to schedule "me-time" in between those hours of work.
- Whenever possible, try to start work and end work around the same times every day. Obviously, there will be times when a deadline or project requires you to alter your schedule. Otherwise, enter your workspace at your designated start time and close your laptop at a specific time.

So, you may have to experiment with a variety of routines to see what works best for you. Give yourself a weekly check-in to avoid remote work burnout. Make adjustments to determine a schedule that feels right, lets you fulfill your responsibilities, and is not so tedious or overwhelming it jeopardizes your work-life balance. The key is to find your groove.

Work with your Body's Natural Ebbs and Flows

Your body's energy has its own path and you are naturally more energetic and motivated at specific times of the day. Work with it. Determine the hours you have peak energy and be intentional about capitalizing on your most productive periods. Recent studies indicate that working in 90-minute blocks followed by a real break, turns out to be the most effective way to manage your energy level.



Plan to do your most intense work without interruptions then. Let the people in your life and organization know what this time is dedicated for. Save your harder tasks for when you know you will be in the best headspace. Use slower points of the day to take care of easier, logistical tasks. When you have a busy schedule, you may want to consider tuning into digital communication tools at designated times during the day. Perhaps a 40-minute nap in the afternoon recharges you,

Use Boundary Crossing Activities or Rituals to Start and End Your Workday

To help you separate work from the rest of your home life, you should consider pairing the physical boundaries of office space with mental ones through a ritual. Rituals are symbolic actions performed at key moments that help you to mentally switch context to start your work day or end it. Remote work experts call these “boundary-crossing activities”.

Putting on your work clothes or finessing your daily to-do list can indicate that you are changing from “home you” to “work you.” Replacing the commute with a ritual physical activity, like a walk to a nearby park or around your home can be invigorating as well as a boundary-crossing activity that tells you it’s time to head into your office space. Even if you’re working a flexible schedule because you’re looking after kids, you need little reminders to help you move between the different “states” of your day.

To end your day with a ritual you can clean your desktop, put your laptop in the closet, read a chapter of a book, or go for another walk which would also relieve tension in your body and give you a breath of fresh air.

The Vibe that Grounds Your Day

One of our remote workers says, “Starting my morning with coffee, my journal and sunshine, have become a non-negotiable in my life. This ritual always lifts me into a high vibe so I do it regularly. It’s my practice before I enter my work space.”

Establishing a morning routine can help set a positive vibe that grounds you for the day. Maybe you prefer to start the day with a two-mile walk at sunrise and finish for the day by 2:00 PM. The key is to find your groove.



Dress the part

It is a bonus to work from home and wear what you want and be comfortable. To keep a sense of routine and feel the work mode try to have a shower and get dressed and do it around the same time every day. Wear what makes you feel sharp and confident. Establish a dress habit that gets you into the right frame of mind to separate your work from other aspects of your life. It might be putting on jewelry or comfortable footwear that establishes it is time for work. You could separate a work wardrobe from your comfortable clothing.

Trust Your To-Do List

You can fumble through the day spending valuable time trying to figure out what to do first and second guessing which should be done next. Remote workers agree that it is much better to follow an agenda that outlines every assignment before they begin. With advance planning you won't have to constantly make choices about what to focus on. If you get off-task or distracted, look at your list. To spend less time in reactive mode, experienced digital nomads keep "two" to-do lists and solidify the schedule the day before, making it feel more official when they wake up the next day to get started on it.

The first list should contain everything you need to get done soon. It should be a comprehensive list of short, medium and long-term projects and tasks. Updating this inventory of commitments every few



days will bring clarity and focus to help you know what's most important.

The second to-do list should be what you can reasonably expect to get done today, and today only. Your tasks do not need to be massive time-consuming jobs. If you need to fold your laundry, add that to the list. Need to call the doctor? Add it. Be fair to yourself. Factor in the likely disruptions. By prioritizing your work and breaking it down into small, achievable pieces, you greatly increase the chances that you will be satisfied with your day's accomplishments. Print the list out on brightly colored paper; this keeps it from getting lost on your desk. Checking off micro-tasks will not only help you get more done on a day-to-day basis, but they'll also help you reach your bigger goals too.

Naturally, it's important to let your agenda change if you need it to, but it's equally as important to commit to working off your daily to-do list.

Plan for Real Breaks

In recognizing the value of work-life balance you will find that you concentrate better and feel less stressed when you purposefully detach from work and enjoy a real break during a workday. The science clearly shows that taking a cognitive time-out helps you work better and feel better. The experiences of remote workers confirm that.

Our remote workers strongly recommend that you plan a schedule to take care of yourself in special ways, do things you love and take care of your well-being, mentally, physically and emotionally. Above all, they stress adhering to your schedule and taking real breaks. A break is not staying seated in your office. It is not browsing the internet or checking your phone. An effective break means you allow your brain to absolutely disconnect from work. It should make your brain and mind feel refreshed and your energy restored.

Use a calendar, a visible one, to block off time to complete important work related tasks and also allocate frequent times for the following:

- Schedule real breaks, including:
 - Meals – train yourself to prepare lunch rather than ordering in. Cooking will put your mind at ease, give your eyes a break from the screen and will give you the opportunity to be creative and healthy for what you put into your body. Try not to eat at your work area.
 - Spend time in nature – once a day get outdoors to stroll in the fresh air, sit on your balcony, walk the dog, take a bike ride to get coffee.
 - Stretching and snack breaks – even with an ergonomic comfortable chair it is not wise to remain seated for long periods of time. Get to know your body and how to remove tension and avoid over-straining it. Train yourself to stretch your muscles at regular intervals. You might use your stretching breaks to do a household chore or get fresh air before you switch to a standing desk for part of the day.
 - Learn the art of stillness – no apps, no cell phone. Take a break in silence: daydream, read, nap, draw.
- Establish a fitness routine and stick to it. In fact, make fitness a steadfast rule, even it is just walking around the block.
- Schedule time for cooking healthy meals and relaxing.
- Plan post-workday activities that you enjoy: hobbies, sports, socializing with friends, connecting with family, and having fun.
- Treat yourself to a daily reward for finishing the business day. Food is a go-to reward. That's okay, if you are good at self-control and can limit yourself to a spoonful of ice cream. You could opt for turning up the tunes and dancing, or sit on the balcony to unwind with your favorite soothing drink.

Avoid Multitasking or Switch-Tasking

Focus on getting one project finished before switching to the next. We've all heard about people who think they can get more done by multitasking, but in reality, when a person switches between different activities frequently, their duration of focus on any one activity reduces as a consequence. It actually takes a toll on productivity. Evidence shows that switching attention between different tasks results in a 50% longer time to finish those tasks, compared to focusing on one task through to completion before starting the next.



People simply have limited attention resources. According to Dr. David Meyer, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor "trying to split your attention between tasks that require effort and concentration means one or both of them will suffer." He says we simply don't have the brainpower to multitask. In one of his American Psychological Association articles he added, "Switching between tasks can result in as much as a 40% loss of productivity.

Many other studies have found that excessive multitasking results in more mistakes, stops you from getting into a state of flow and inhibits creative thinking. According to a study done by Microsoft, University of California and MIT, it takes the brain up to 24 minutes to re-focus after switching attention to something else. (23 minutes and 15 seconds to be exact) So if you try to multi-task, you are really just interrupting what you were doing and it is going to take a longer time to get your work done.

Excessive multitasking has severe consequences on our mental and physical well-being. Anecdotally, people were reporting they were crushed by all of these different projects and when they should be finished work, they spent time fretting over what they might have accomplished if only they had more time. Generally, people who multitask do not enjoy guilt-free downtime.

What should you do? Learn to prioritize. Instead of spreading out mundane or routine tasks (email, twitter, blogs, messaging, podcasts) out over the day, several times a day. Bundle them into a block or two of time. When you are done with that block of time, completely remove yourself from those apps. Sign out, close your browser windows, put your phone in another room, do whatever is necessary to eliminate them as distractions or interruptions, Clear your mind and turn your attention to the next block of time which is dedicated to one important task/project that requires your undivided focus.

Abandoning efforts to multitask might be the ultimate act of self-care. [Learn more about the fallacies of human multitasking and the studies on attention resources, and digital distraction.](#)

Acknowledge the Significance of Work-Life Balance

Even if you are coping well, remember that working remotely may feel isolating for your co-workers (even for introverts), so as part of your routine, try to interact with your co-workers regularly. When they plan virtual events plan to participate.

Be a role-model for family, friends, and co-workers. When they ask how you fit in classes, fitness, cooking, volunteering, and getting a good night's sleep while also working eight hours a day, you can proudly tell them how you achieve your work-life balance.

Create Accountability for Yourself

So how do you avoid the distractions, stay laser-focused, and keep productivity levels high when children, a new puppy, social media, or a Netflix binge are but a few steps from your work desk? You have to hold yourself accountable. With a solid routine and the right “guardrails” in place, you’ll maximize the feeling of being in control.

Here are some tips for staying accountable while working from home.

- Be visible at work. As a rule we fear being found unproductive. In an office setting, other people who are working hard surround you. They might check in on your work at any moment. Being visible to your colleague will discourage you from wasting your time. Check in with your team to let them know what you are doing. Mark your progress on collaboration tools or send a message at the start of every day listing all of the main tasks you hope to accomplish. If people know what you’re working on, you are more likely to finish.



- Commit publicly – this ensures you stay on track.
- Stick To A Fail-Proof Morning Routine - morning routines encourage productive habits, jump-start your brain, and get your workflows in a rhythm. In fact, several remote workers swear that their morning ritual or routine is the secret to their success.
- Adhere to your daily schedule. It is an effective ways to stay accountable to your goals.
- Find a remote work accountability buddy, someone to voice a concern to, or someone who can help keep you on track. Tick a box every day. Make sure you tick thinks off your to-do list.

Save yourself a lot of trouble by establishing communication and work expectations with your work team early on. Find out what hours you can expect your manager and teammates to be available and what kind of turnaround time to expect from them. Determine if you will need anyone to review or approve your work. If it is not already arranged, set up regular (weekly or bi-weekly) meetings with your team to touch base. Proactively reach out to coworkers when you are unsure.

Does your Professionalism Define You?

People who work remotely use some of their time in pursuing career advancement. They enroll in classes, volunteer to gain experience, join mentoring programs, or conduct research to write blogs or books based on their field of expertise.

- Continue to network and foster new relationships while working from home.
- Advance your skills and professional development with online courses or self-study.
- Give yourself permission to explore other opportunities.
- Join a professional network and meet other like-minded professionals.
- Connect with other professionals in great online communities where there are lots of free webinars.
- Check out online speed networking events.
- Seek out coworking spaces that offer networking opportunities, business events, and skill development classes.
- Be open to sharing your tips and secrets of working remotely.
- Volunteer your time in pursuits that fit or advance your chosen profession.
- Schedule reading time. Every job or professions requires some reading: about the company, the industry, the marketplace, the economy. Make time in your routine to review newspapers, electronic newsletters, industry magazines, company memos and other reading. You'll find that being up-to-date with your business has many advantages, just one of them being a sense of control about your own situation.



Remote workers enjoy a flexibility that is rare for full-time workers. You might exercise that gift every now and again by giving back to your community. Participate in events. Find a cause and volunteer time.

Focus on the Benefits to Affirm Your Choices

How many times have we heard from remote workers, “I come alive working from home? I get a surge of excitement at the end of a productive day!” We also hear about days that are not so happy. If you wake up to one of those bad-hair days remind yourself of the benefits:

- Saving time and money by not commuting, eating out, or splurging on a workplace wardrobe.
- You have more time for family.
- You have more time to get fit and healthy.
- It’s better for your mental health.
- It’s better for your family.
- You avoiding the frustration of a commute or distracting coworkers.
- You can turn time into hobbies, rest, or advancing your professional goals.
- You have more financial freedom.
- You can work from anywhere.
- You can establish a sleep schedule that works for you.
- You can establish a work schedule that is more conducive to your body’s natural ebbs and flows and working style which results in more productivity.
- You can relocate to somewhere more affordable or somewhere you love.
- You enjoy the independence. You feel liberated.
- You feel more productive.
- You can have an important meeting while only dressed appropriately from the waist up.
- Your pet can be perched lovingly in our lap while you study budget projections.
- You can meet an old college friend for coffee. Have lunch with your spouse, parents, or family any day a week you choose
- Make yourself a poster that reminds you why you love working from home.

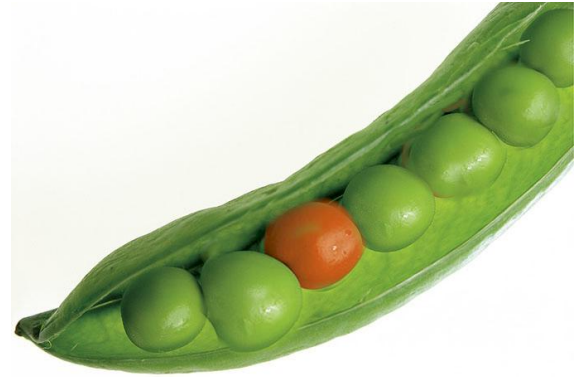


Manage Collaborative Technology for Connection and Work-Life Balance

Collaborative technology is a lifeline for remote workers. There are many ways to assimilate it into a full spectrum of interpersonal experiences. It allows you to be virtually present, stay in touch with coworkers, and remain connected to your team. Remember that you do not need to be present all day every day. Excursions to run an errand, attend an appointment, or take a day off are a very natural part of work-from-home life.

Be Visible and Accountable

Use the technology to keep you visible and demonstrate your commitment. What your colleagues can't see, they can't appreciate, so visibility or frequent contact is smart because it will provide clear signals that your commitment and work ethic are unwavering. As a means of announcing that you are working, send emails first thing in the morning. Let colleagues know that you have read their emails and documents carefully. The visibility will help you stay accountable and remind your office counterparts that you are still an important part of the team. Your coworkers regard you for your input, your contributions, your ideas and your helpful online presence. Being visible will make it easier for other people to assign you tasks, or if they see your tight schedule they may assign a task to someone else. You do not have to be present all the time to be present visibly, but choose to be present and visible when it matters.



Use the technology to ask for help. You should also reach out to your colleagues when you need help — it's better to ask for help than be stuck on a task for a day and get stressed.

Celebrate Your Wins

Use the technology to celebrate your wins. When you are working remotely, it can be difficult for others to stay updated on your progress. Whenever you complete a big task or do something important tell your team and encourage them to celebrate with you. Wins bring you together as a team.

Communicate Responsively and Assertively

Communicate often and clearly. In being present virtually, you have to make your office hours clear to your manager or co-workers. Let them know when you've entered the office and when you plan to step away for a short time or be offline for deep work. There may be times when your virtual office needs to be open for longer periods so that your colleagues feel comfortable cold-calling you or asking for help, rather than being worried about intruding.

Be responsive, but refrain from one-word answers or meaningless contributions. Be expressive and genuine. It makes it easier to express doubts, questions, concerns or feedback and share in honest communication.

Collaboration can be Demanding

Virtual collaboration can be exhausting or over-stimulating after several demanding sessions with all manner of people looking to connect in various ways. Wherever possible try to plan for measured refreshing breaks between collaborative sessions to be alert to what is important and express yourself concisely. Ten minutes gives you time to make notes, run to the restroom, get a drink of water and generally decompress before you settle in for the next session. Never rush into the connection. Set the vibe. Here are some suggestions to manage these types of face-to-face virtual connections when you feel unsettled or preoccupied or weariness sets in:

- If you cannot take a refreshing ten-minute break, you could make a quick trip up and down a set of steps, do a couple push-ups, skip rope for a few seconds, brush your hair to stimulate your scalp, or rub an ice cube over your tummy.
- Breathing space – prior to establishing connection give yourself at least 3 minutes to settle in and ground your attention before you start. If a call takes you by surprise and you cannot ignore it, take a few deep breaths, feel your body in the chair, place your hand on your heart in a comforting way to say “I’m here for you; it’s ok to feel how you feel at this moment”
- At the very least revive yourself with water.
- Take a moment to smile for yourself – always give yourself a thumbs-up, fist-pump, and a smile, before clicking start. Better yet, laugh out loud – the sound and energy of laughing can be energizing.
- Check in early to say hello to each person before the meatiness of the meeting begins. “Hi, how was your weekend?” or “How was your daughter’s birthday party?” are perfectly friendly things to say, something you might say in the coffee room or as you walk by someone’s desk.
- It can be a challenge to track all those faces on a screen. If the program allows, choose “speaker view” to focus attention on the speaker and see everyone else peripherally.
- To soften the strain on your eyes, you might periodically look beyond the screen to see out a window or ease your focus on a painting, but always pay attention to the participants.
- Above all avoid multi-tasking. You cannot hyper-focus with distractions and low energy.
- Set aside time at the end of the meeting for chit chat, laughs, and planning for virtual social time.



Once virtually connected, do not rush into work mode:

- With your full attention, take the time to truly greet whoever is in the collaboration. Give a moment for each person to make an impression on you, and give yourself an opportunity to feel what it feels like to be in the presence of another human being. This initial connection time can give you an energy boost as well as help you feel less isolated.
- Once the greeting phase is over, switch to “speaker view” to focus attention on the speaker.

When virtual collaboration seems to be too demanding, don’t be shy about getting on the phone. This is the best way to be real and human, and to remember that everyone else in your organization or within your team is real and human as well.

When a meeting is deadly dull or you are in danger of nodding off, you could feign a poor connection and disengage from the call, but let’s face it, your team would be better served if you were brutally honest about your energy level and they agreed to other arrangements.

Don’t forget to explore the variety of popular software that not only helps in collaboration but also provides fun ways to keep in touch with the people you work with.

Tech Support or You

When you work remotely, you are a one-man office management team. Too often, this means you are the tech support. A power outage is not anything you can fix. However, if you experience hardware or software problems or no connection, you must have the tech know-how to troubleshoot the problem or have a contingency plan so that your day is not ruined. Make it a priority to know who you should talk to if you need help.

Productivity Tips from the Pros of Remote Work

- Creating structure helps keep you focused and productive.
 - Designate a neat place to work.
 - Keep your workspace or home office clean and free of excess. If you are just setting up to work from home you can start from a blank slate.
 - Assign an area for storage to keep your space clean.
 - If you've been working from home for a while and your desk is more an accumulation of paper and files that distract you from your daily mission, you'll have a bit of an issue. Maybe a storage ottoman or box in a closet will help you hide the things that clutter your space.
- Get sufficient sleep. (see our sleep guide) Keep hydrated, eat regularly and choose healthy meals.
- Establishing a routine helps you maximize the positive lifestyle benefits of working from home. Your routine should fit your working style and work best for you while still allowing you to meet the expectations of your employer.
- Do not wake up and begin working from your bed. Not even emails.
- Avoid sitting at your home office space during off hours or on your days off.
- Do something you love every day.
- Get rid of the things that cause you to procrastinate.
- Stay off social media. Hide your phone if you have to.
- Use productivity tools.
- Do not try to multitask.
- Try virtual coworking – don't laugh. It might be your saving grace from procrastinating.
- Have an accountability buddy – check in with each other and outline what you plan to accomplish in the day and help each other stay on track.
- Remember your professional goals. Post them on a board along with motivational messages.
- Reward yourself with things you want after you hit your targets.
- When you feel fatigue and need to finish a project, sing or dance, go for a swim, or take a contrast shower. It is extremely relaxing to your mind and body. Start with a hot shower followed by a cold shower and repeat the cycle three to four times.
- Take proactive measure to care for your well-being. This is very important so we will dedicate the next chapter to it.

Your Physical, Emotional, and Mental Wellness Starts with You

Every remote working professional has to learn to balance the working-from-home tips for success with how to feel great in both mind and body. There are specific measures to care for your mental, emotional and physical well-being. The best time to get started taking care of you is right now.

Self-care is a daily necessity. Self-care is 100% about the things you do to make yourself happy, to refresh and renew your spirit and take care of your mind and body.



There is no one-size fits all approach to self-care. Self-care is unique for each person. You will speak to self-care and implement self-care practices in different ways than another family member or friend. The solution to good self-care is two-fold. One, make “you” the priority. Two, practice self-care daily. You need to make clear choices on your own behalf.

Let’s delve deeper into some of these choices:

1. Pledge to be Extra Kind to Yourself
2. Recognize that the Best Version of Yourself Should be Your Vision
3. Ground Yourself with a Morning Routine
4. Fit in Activity Breaks
5. Stroll in Nature
6. Fitness does not Need to be Painful
7. Save and Restore Energy with Breath
8. Do Things you Love
9. Foster Positive Coping
10. Learn to Say ‘No’
11. Accept Help from Other People
12. Setting and Honoring Boundaries
13. Avoid Scrambling
14. Don’t Stress the Mess
15. Make a Clean Break between Work and Home

1. Pledge to be Extra Kind to Yourself

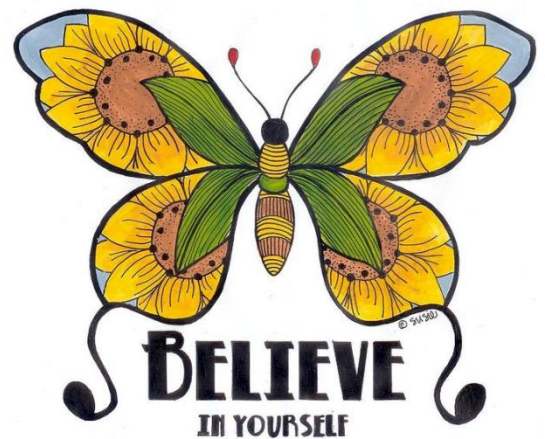
One of the best things you can do is be kind to yourself. In other words “cut yourself some slack”. This does not mean you give yourself permission to lounge all day on the sofa eating fudge or spend endless hours shopping online. Quite, the contrary! Like drinking when thirsty or eating when hungry you should boost your well-being by consciously treating yourself with respect and compassion, out of the kindness of your heart.

Discomfort, stress, making mistakes, disappointment, loss and pain are all part of the human journey. Be kind to yourself instead of letting your internal monologue get into an emotional tug-of-war alternating between judging yourself too harshly and knowing you should be self compassionate.

Being kind to yourself means:

- Respecting your body, so that you are more likely to eat nourishing food, get plentiful sleep, and exercise regularly.
- Finding appreciation in your challenges.
- Enjoying your loved ones.
- Surrounding yourself with encouraging, supportive friends.
- Being able to express gratitude aloud to yourself or others.
- Doing things you love.

Try to think of your difficult emotions and thoughts as data, valuable information about who you are and what really matters. Self-compassion allows you to acknowledge and accept all of your feelings, even when they are negative. Self-compassion can lead to greater emotional resilience helping you to not exaggerate your distress or become engulfed by it.



2. Recognize that the best version of yourself should be your vision, not anybody else's.

You can waste a lot of energy trying to live up to what somebody else wants you to be. It can also be tempting to think about the best version of yourself as some intangible point in the future. Yet it is much more interesting and fun to make progress today. Launch the best version of you when you wake up. Make a list of the three most important things you have to do today that will make the largest impact on you being your best self. Do that every morning and be conscious of doing them. You can also make progress by:

- Using your strengths to do things that are meaningful to you.
- Develop work from home habits that empower you.
- Learn one new thing every day.
- Centre yourself within good vibes, whatever they may mean to you.

3. Ground Yourself with a Morning Routine

Establish a morning routine that does not center on work. Starting your day with a routine that is intentional will set the tone for the entire day – it grounds you. Your routine might include a shower, putting on clothes that are not pajamas, eating a healthy breakfast.

Three things about a morning routine are worthy of your attention.

- Taking care of your appearance is a sign of respect to yourself.
- Doing one thing you love jump-starts your brain, and gets your workflows in a rhythm.
- Quiet reflection, the sunshine and fresh air are always rejuvenating in preparation for a day's busyness.
- Morning routines encourage productive habits.



4. Save and Restore Energy with Breath

Did you know that the breath acts like a barometer for how well you are feeling? You can use it like a tool to shift gears or change your mood. When you feel under pressure, deep-breathing and paying attention to thoughts and sensations in a non-judgmental way can be helpful. It is very challenging to talk yourself out of a state of mind. However, if you calm your nervous system, which is what you do with breath, then your mind will start to calm as well. [Explore "Intentional Breathing Exercises"](#).

5. Stroll in Nature

Being out in nature will shift attention away from work-related or stress-induced issues. What better way to recover from cognitive overload. Focus on your bodies and engagement with warm sunshine or a cooling snowfall, noticing the varying colors of nature, listening to songbirds or a drizzling rain. Walking barefoot on cool grass is much better than a regular lunch break.

6. Fit in Activity and Relaxation Breaks

Do you let work consume you? Short activity breaks can improve your energy, mood, sleep, and health, which in turn reduce anxiety, stress, and depression. When you return back to your work, you will be full of new ideas and fresh energy to move forward.

One trick to encourage moving is to take a phone call while walking around the house or leaving your phone in another room so you are forced to get up to check messages. You could set a reminder to remind your body it is meant to move.

You will feel less stressed and can focus more on wellness when you purposefully detach from work and your workspace to enjoy a 15-minute break at least twice per day. Ideally, you should take a break after ninety minutes of intense work.

- Mindful relaxation
 - Deep breathing exercises
 - Laughing with friends or family
 - Grooming your pet
 - Physical exertion
 - Sit in the sunshine to reflect
 - Doing something you love
 - Learn something new – juggling, a new yoga position
 - Playing a game with children
 - Walk around outside in your yard to enjoy the sunshine, pick a few weeds, or pick some flowers to enjoy indoor.
 - Engage in a virtual tour of a museum, nature park historical town, or cultural fair.
- Many global organizations share content for people to enjoy.
- Listen to music
 - Brink an old hobby back to life
 - Learn a new language



When you can fit in longer breaks, you might want to pursue a side project, something you always wanted to pursue. Maybe it is doing something productive outside of work that makes you happy and helps you become a better version of yourself.

7. Fitness Does not have to be Painful

Even in an ergonomic space, prolonged sitting and working at a computer places excessive stress on muscles making your back, shoulders, neck, wrists and hands stiff and sore. Frequent stretching can help keep you comfortable while you work. Still, stretching is not enough. Your health will falter if you do not make an effort to engage in some kind of physical activity. If you've been experiencing nagging aches and pains, this is the perfect time to put in the work necessary to build the foundational strength and stability required to resolve these issues before they accelerate into something more seriously debilitating.

Is there a “No Pain, No Gain” mantra rattling around in your head?

You do not have to spend hours in a gym or force yourself into monotonous or painful activities to experience the physical and emotional benefits of exercise. You can get fit in the confines of your home. If you have difficulty establishing an exercise routine or going to the gym, start by ditching the “all-or-nothing attitude”. Even adding modest amounts of physical activity to your weekly routine can have a profound effect on your mental and emotional health. Try short five, ten, or fifteen minute bursts of activity.

Start your day with a stretch. In the middle of the day, if you are not inclined to skip rope or do squats, you could establish a routine that includes one or more of the following:

- Climb stairs
- Dance to music you love.
- Walking, of course, is excellent, especially if you can get out into nature.
- Have you considered that chores, such as vacuuming or scrubbing the bathtub can constitute a work out? Chores may not burn the same calories as an entire fitness class, but they get you off your chair and moving around.
- Take up yoga or tai chi.
- Follow along with a short exercise video – consider doing virtual work-outs with a friend or co-worker.
- Take your dog for a walk around the block.

Physical activity helps increase delivery of oxygen to your brain and helps you build and maintain a healthy immune system by promoting good circulation. Remember to do some deep breathing exercises, too. Everything you do for your physical health overflows into benefits for your mental health.

8. Foster Positive Coping

During Covid 19, self-isolation and curtailed social activities caused people's fear and stress levels to escalate. Our research shows that people use a wide variety of coping strategies in new and stressful situations. Some, such as increased alcohol consumption, are not very healthy. What do you do when the fitness center is closed and sharing a dinner with friends in a favorite restaurant is not feasible?

- Check out what kinds of coping solutions your company might offer. Your employer may have vetted professionals who offer help online or via the phone.
- Several apps and websites offer temporary substitutions. Has your company vetted any or offered to foot the bill.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Enjoy the outdoors.
- Practicing mindfulness – focusing your attention to be fully present in the moment – can be especially beneficial to your mental health.
- Consider adopting a pet. Research has shown that human-animal bonding can reduce anxiety, lower agitation, and improve overall health and wellbeing. Playing with and caring for a pet, walking a dog are good coping strategies.

What did our remote workers say on the subject of coping? A daily walk and walking in nature topped the list, followed by daily human contact such as phoning or face-timing with friends and family. Not surprisingly, meditation, yoga and mindfulness exercises were high on the list. Their other suggestions centered on healthy habits which are linked to how you feel while working:

- Water, water, water. It is easy to forget to hydrate.
- Avoid sugary-heavy drinks by replacing them with seltzer, flavored water and tea.
- Avoid overeating while working from home. Try to only eat when you're hungry and not because you need a break. Eat healthy foods. Food should make you feel great. Eat foods that make you feel fresh, not sluggish.
- Avoid over snacking. Eat healthy snacks. Do not buy junk food, even as a treat. Get snacks that crunch - pre-cut sticks of celery and carrots ahead of time, so that they're easy to grab and don't require peeling every time you want to eat them. Take a snack with you and take a walk in the early afternoon for a break.
- Take regular refreshing breaks. Try to get outside at least once or twice a day. Yes, this is repetitious, but so crucial to your well-being we cannot emphasize it enough.
- Make sure your kitchen is an enjoyable place.
- **Don't buy junk food, even as a treat.**

9. Do Things you Love

Some things like grocery shopping or washing a floor we may do out of necessity. When we are bored we might do something productive: water plants, clean out drawers or make plans for a week-end excursion or Netflix party. We congratulate ourselves for another productive day at home and relax with a glass of wine or fun cocktail and watch a movie.

So often, we have our long to-do lists, work, and other responsibilities and we forget to give ourselves the time to do something we enjoy outside of responsibility. It is crucially important for remote workers to make time to do things they love, whether that be reading, catching up with more friends or indulging in hobbies, sports or leisure activities.

10. Learn to Say “no”

Sometimes that little word is the hardest to say. “I don’t think I can” or “I’m not certain” do not mean the same as saying “no”. It is OK to say it! Think about the anguish, stress, and resentment that saying yes has caused you. Would it have been much easier and straightforward to just say no in the first place?

The word “no” should be something that you decide on your own, based on your own judgment. It is important to manage people’s expectations, so if you can’t take something on and give it 100 percent, then you know it is better to not do it at all. Besides, saying “no” honors your existing commitments to colleagues and clients.

Here are 8 ways for you to say 'NO' in a polite manner:

- I am honoured you thought to ask me, but I have another commitment. ...
- I wish there were two of me. ...
- Unfortunately, now is not a good time. ...
- Sorry, I'm booked into something else right now. ...
- Thanks you so much for thinking of me. It sounds lovely, so next time.

11. Accept help from other people.

Don’t let your pride get in the way. Whenever necessary, do not hesitate to reach out to senior management or health workers to ask questions or seek assistance. Most successful people needed help along the way, too. You can help other people become the best version of themselves through helping others. You’ll find it helps you stay motivated and the lasting connections you build from being helpful to others will benefit you moving forward.

12. Don't Stress the Mess

While it doesn't hurt to make sure you are not showing off anything you would rather not, don't let life happening in the background, a closet, bed, or children bother you. While it is important to reduce distractions for video meetings, you might occasionally get to wave hello to someone else's children, significant others, and pets as they walk by. Remote workers who have been at this for several years encourage their team members to bring their whole selves to work – meetings are about work, not the background. They recommend that you do not waste time trying to find the perfect backdrop.

If you really struggle with what is happening in the background, you can solve the problem by creating a focal point in your backdrop. Set up in front of a collection or display of your hobby. One respondent co-worker, who has a poster collection, says he displays a different one each morning. It delights the others to see it and discuss it on their video calls.

13. Setting and Honoring Boundaries

Communicate expectations with anyone who will be home with you. Make sure any roommates, siblings, parents, children and spouses respect your time and space during work hours. Establish boundaries and rules for friends and neighbors. Plan to schedule frequent short periods of time for your young family during your work day; it may be easier for them to reciprocate with less intrusive behavior.



Be conscious and respectful that others may work at different times than you do. For some it might be a child's nap, for others it might be when their partner is cooking dinner. If they have not communicated their preferences or their availability schedule, ask for it. Keep it as reference for future contact. If you slide into your desk chair on a Sunday afternoon and you wind up checking work emails and answering clients, remember that you're also putting yourself in a place where people may reasonable assume you are happy to respond to a message outside your traditional office hours.

In five studies, a Harvard Research project revealed: "Senders of after-hours work emails underestimate how compelled receivers feel to respond right away, even when such emails are not urgent." Be conscious of sending work emails during office hours, so that you do not make it difficult for your supervisors, colleagues, and employees to maintain boundaries.

14. Avoid Scrambling

Avoiding multi-tasking and you avoid scrambling. It is difficult to maintain focus when you scramble from one task to another or one location to another. You lose a lot of time and expend a lot of valuable energy in switching attention and trying to re-gain focus. As a remote worker, you got away from noisy offices and chatty coworkers, now it's time to turn your back on trying to multi-task. [Read more about Multi-tasking](#)

Your particular job might not make this easy. However, removing the mundane pressures of an office allows for deep work. Whenever possible create an environment where you are free to focus on just one thing.

- Determine the hours you are most productive and plan to do your most intense work without interruptions around that time. Schedule chunks of uninterrupted time where you turn off your phone, go offline, avoid looking at messages or email so you can concentrate on essential, deep work.
- Block off time to do non-essential or mundane tasks after you have done some important or deep work.
- Create a clear workspace that removes the reminders of non-essential work that might draw your attention away from deep work.
- Remove the pressures of your personal agenda, too. Your brain cannot help but think about all those things on your nagging to-do list. When you are a remote worker, you can bundle some of those personal matters into more than one modest and manageable list. Carve out time everyday or every week to work on one bundle and check it off your personal list.

One remote worker told us: “For me, self-care is less about carving out time to relax amid chaos, and more about removing nagging to-dos from my crowded life.”

15. Make a Clean Break Between Work and Home

You remember that grounding yourself with a morning routine that is intentional will set the tone for the entire day? When your day ends, make sure it ends. Do things that are intentional to establish a clear break between work and home.

Let your coworkers know that you are not available until XYZ time tomorrow. Sign out of your email and apps. Close down your computer. Hide it away if you have to. Stride confidently out of your work space and reward yourself for a fulfilling productive day (walk in nature, relaxing tea on the patio, a couple spoonfuls of ice cream, face-time with mom and dad).

Spend the rest of your day enjoying your life and doing things you love. By mentally and physically removing yourself from work and getting a good night's rest you will be re-energized and inclined to hit the ground running again the next day.

Dealing with Isolation

When you work remotely, dealing with isolation can be a complicated issue that also affects your work-life balance. First, it is important to differentiate solitude and loneliness from isolation. They are similar terms, but they have distinct meanings:

- Loneliness is the feeling of missing someone or something, a craving for social contact that can be linked to feelings of sadness and emptiness.



- Solitude is the state of being alone. Solitude is not about avoiding being with other people or feeling lonely. It is a choice, a form of self-care. One could say it is a skill to take a break to self-reflect, enjoy the quiet, and reconnect with your basic human needs, goals and feelings. Spending time by yourself is healthy and necessary. Your mind is sharper in uninterrupted solitude. Solitude can be a rejuvenating experience, especially after an intense day of work. Loneliness should be remedied; solitude is a natural part of life.

Some people require more healthy solitude than others do. Introverts enjoy spending lots of time alone and can feel drained through social interaction. Extroverts often need extra social interaction to feel fulfilled. Unless you are truly feeling lonely, solitude is not something you need to try to 'fix' by filling up every waking moment with activities, time and people that might be shallow and less fulfilling.

- Isolation is the state of being detached, or separated with a lack of social relationships or emotional support. Isolation is an internal feeling. You can be in a room full of people and feel completely alone because it is a reaction to a situation or environments that is not enriching or beneficial.

Unwanted isolation and loneliness are feelings we humans do not like. For remote workers isolation can be complicated. Remote workers have to take deliberate steps to avoid letting isolation bring their spirits down or allow it to lead to loneliness.

Human Interactions Every Day

The key to feeling less isolated is to make time for real human interactions that are both work-related and social. It is easy to substitute simplified social media connections for tangible human relationships, but these types of connections can be shallow and less fulfilling than engaging with real humans in real time. Engaging with real humans allows you to be seen and heard.

You need a plan for engaging intentionally in daily conversation with other co-workers or friends.

- You collaborate on files, projects, and sit in virtual meetings together. However, it is important to be proactive in finding ways to engage with people socially. Your co-workers may be feeling isolated too. Make time for small talk, stories, jokes, sharing music, or stretching together.
- Be more communicative than usual, if only to boost camaraderie. Do not let the day go by without social time with colleagues, even if you have to make it short. Do your best to be available for conference calls or other collaborations, even if you don't have strict work hours or have a scheduled day off.
- Explore the variety of popular applications that not only helps in collaborations but also provide fun ways to engage with people.
- Take the initiative to organize virtual happy hour or online get-togethers with colleagues, friends and family. If you are a small business owner or freelancer, you may want to do something similar for your closest work-related contacts such as clients, vendors, editors, artists, service providers, or other entrepreneurs.
- If you need the buzz of a work-friendly atmosphere and human contact, you can join a coworking group, which offers business and networking perks for entrepreneurs and remote workers.
- You have the freedom to work from anywhere, anytime, so lap-top-friendly cafes might offer enough ambiances to help you feel less isolated.
- Connect with others who are learning to work remotely Join online discussion groups or professional networks that are relevant to your special interests.
- Lunch-and-Learn events are a great way for people with a certain specialty to share a skill or hobby interest with the rest of a group. Anyone can virtually drop in and learn about a specialty with a Q+A session at the end.

In your personal and work related interactions you could establish a variety of communication lines, as long as the channel is used at an appropriate time. Oh, and remember you can also make a phone call. Pick up the phone to say hello or congratulate someone after a job well done, or the completion of a project rather than sending an email or IM.

Remember: You are working from home, not the moon. Interacting with other people during the day is allowed, even if they are not your coworkers. For a pleasant break from diligent routine, plan time to connect with friends or family during the day.

Assess Your Day

Take a few moments to assess the emotional challenges you might face each day. Almost as important as your to-do list is your 'be-prepared-for' list. Make an inventory of what you might face during the day: tough phone calls, boring meetings, challenging customers, frustrating red tape, droning detail work and any other mental challenges you can identify on the periphery of the job. Then accept that they are inevitable and prepare yourself to get through them without anger, frustration or impatience.

Match Your Music to the Task

It makes sense music can help you focus on your work while making tasks more enjoyable. You can listen to music that matches the energy of the project you are working on. Music feeds your soul. The right music has the power to take away all your worries. It is also a tool that can calm you and make you happy. There are lyric-free sound tracks designed to help you focus.



Remote Work Not for You?

Whatever the reason, not everyone is suited to remote work – and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Some people lack the discipline it takes to work from home. Others simply can't work without the buzz of a busy office or the casual banter of their cubicle colleagues. However, it might take a while to adjust, so be sure to give remote work a fair shot before you decide if it is a good fit for you or not.

Avoid 'Ideal Worker' Burnout

People who work in offices get burned out by waking up at 6 am to commute for two hours, spend eight to nine hours at the office and then spend two more hours commuting home. People who work from home get burned out, too.

Those of you who are working remotely for the first time may struggle to preserve healthy boundaries between your professional and personal lives. You may think that you have to work more to show your loyalty, devotion, and productivity. Maybe your employer is expecting too much. If you slide into your desk chair on a Sunday afternoon and you wind up checking work emails and answering clients, remember that you're also putting yourself in a place where people may reasonably assume you are happy to respond to a message outside your traditional office hours. Occasionally, it feels good to check that nagging task or big project off the list, but please do not let working long hours become a bad habit. It could lead to burnout. Burnout rarely happens all at once. Rather, it sneaks up on you, eventually coming to a head after days, weeks, or months of overwork.

Be Proactive About Burnout



Is your workday blurring into your home life?

If you are a diligent employee or passionate about what you do, you may find your workday blurs into your home life and you could forget to clock out. It is crucial for your mental health that you draw lines between your professional and personal time, especially if you are working from home as a working parent.

While working one additional hour to move a given project forward is likely not debilitating when viewed in a vacuum, it can trigger a revised baseline where you must continue to overwork in order to maintain some new status quo. You do not need to be available all day, every day. You do not need to respond to every email or notification the moment you get an alert. If you think about what others may be wondering about your work habits or response times, it will be difficult for you to actually concentrate on things that really matter on the job as well as at home. You do not need to prove you are working. The proof of your work lies in your outputs and meeting your goals.

How to recognize mental health struggles

We have compiled a list of symptoms related to burnout, isolation, and anxiety.

- You're constantly tired
- You no longer enjoy things
- Your job performance suffers
- Your physical health suffers (headaches, irregular breathing patterns, etc.)
- Your relationships are strained
- You feel socially zapped
- You disable video for team calls to prevent others from seeing your pain
- You are perpetually concerned with whether you are doing enough
- You worry that your contributions are too few or too insignificant
- You feel unable to choose family first

Be Proactive about Burnout

So how do we compartmentalize work from home life? Based on Harvard research and other academic literature you have to be willing to acknowledge that burnout happens and then to avoid it take proactive steps for yourself and to help others.

For yourself:

- Determine a start and end time for work and forget about the demands of work in those off hours.
- Take regular “me” breaks for relaxation and activities that you enjoy several times during the day, every day.
- Make sure others know when you will be working. There is collaborative software for that purpose. If others become intrusive of your “me time” you may have to remind them of what your hours are.

For your peers:

Be proactive when it comes to recognizing and avoiding burnout, isolation, and anxiety among your peers. People who suffer from burnout are usually unable to spend the mental energy to recognize they may be overwhelmed, overworked, unproductive, and unhappy. People might be trapped by their own fatigue, too worn out to find the creative solutions needed to take a break. Encourage them to communicate and take time off to focus on things that are relaxing and improve their overall health and welfare. You may have to ask permission to help them arrange things so they can take a break.

Prevent Burnout, Isolation, and Anxiety

Everyone has days when they don't want to work but if you hear yourself saying things like: I don't have the motivation to work, or I feel agitated, or I have nagging headaches, this might be a sign of being overworked for prolonged periods of time. If you are feeling irritable, lethargic, or unmotivated and have difficulty sleeping they could be symptoms of burnout. Seriously, evaluate your situation and make changes:

- Take a vacation. Taking a three- or four-day weekend sometimes even does the trick. You do not have to travel; you can visit places in your city or region and try things you typically don't have time to do.
- Take a day off here and there – just to pursue your interests and passions.
- Stop working week-ends.
- Take a "mental health" day to lower your stress (spend time outdoors, get a massage, get some exercise)
- Take your lunch and activity breaks away from your workspace.
- Schedule activity and relaxation breaks and be disciplined about walking away from the grind of work to do things you love. Set an alarm to remind you to walk away from the computer.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Schedule time to cook. Cooking is therapeutic. The sounds, smells and tastes heighten your senses in different ways. Using cooking as a way to “create,” is something that summons up your positive energy. Channel your frustration or lethargy into slicing fruit or vegetables, or using a blender to make an amazing smoothie.
- Find a buddy (friend, coworker) that you can voice your concerns to and keep you from overwhelming yourself with work.
- Be honest about if something “can wait”. If the answer is yes, engage in a leisure activity you enjoy and call it quits for the day. Above all, please do not suffer in silence



Burnout is real – very real – for many people! If you're feeling down, remember: there is life outside your apartment and a world outside your neighborhood.

Take a step back. Figure out what you could do to solve things.

Remember that if work is giving you anxiety, there are very healthy ways to work from home. It could be that you are not taking the relaxation and activity breaks you need to do things you really love and enjoy. Maybe you need more time in nature or outdoors. Take a couple days off. Plan a longer vacation. Relax with dreams about travel until you can get away for a week-end.

There are also healthy ways to talk about how you are feeling. Your company may offer counseling. Maybe online therapy could help. Check out support groups online. Maybe talking to friends more regularly could brighten your day or help create positive vibes. Remember to virtually socialize with the people you work with on a daily basis.

Above all, and this is a biggie, make time for human interaction. Connect in person with family and friends, or socialize with them virtually, but remember it is important for you to have human connection outside of work.

If the job demands are part of the issue, you may want to explore another job.

Remember that you are human, not some type of superhero. Social media can make lots of people look perfect, but if we look past the background set-ups and highlight reels we can see that not everyone is having the best day ever. This is especially so in our work lives. Do not be too hard on yourself to create perfection. Accept your faults, work on your struggles to create solutions and give yourself a break. You are the Perfect You! Maybe you needed to hear that right now!

Self-Directed Learning Suddenly Becomes Crucial

Transitioning to working remotely can be a major shift for some people. What to do with that extra time? Working remotely can be an excellent opportunity to put all that time you are saving to good use in learning new skills. You may want to advance your skills for professional development or need certain skills expected for remote positions. You have to be proactive when it comes to learning and honing new skills.



Be resourceful. There is no shortage of online resources (webinars, self-study). You name your need there is a course for it. Local colleges and organizations offer classes on a number of skills. Talk to your manager. If your company has skill development programs in place, you might not have to do much more than register for a class and attend sessions. If you are an independent contractor or entrepreneur, it is up to you to do everything you can to remain professionally relevant and competitive. Remember the expenses can be written off, if you are contractor or entrepreneur.

Working remotely as a contractor forces you to be more resourceful. You are the janitor and the IT person. It falls on you to make sure things get fixed so you don't miss a deadline. Rather than view this as a problem you could think of it as an opportunity to cultivate a new skill.

[Check out our library of resources](#)

Finding a Remote Job

Remote jobs are desirable. Are you interested in working remotely and seeking a job that fits and supports that lifestyle? If you have these attributes, common among the most effective remote workers, remote work might be for you:



1. Self-motivated and disciplined
2. An adaptable and flexible nature
3. Strong written and verbal communication skills
4. Great organizational habits - ability to prioritize - good time management
5. Independent decision-making capacity
6. Self-confidence and reliable judgment
7. Successful troubleshooting Skills
8. Attention to detail
9. Accountability and trustworthiness
10. Tech savvy
11. Resourceful
12. Proficiency in the skills required by your field of expertise

You do not have to make a list. Just think about your best traits and what you need to improve. If you do not possess a fair number of these traits, you could struggle with a work from home arrangement.

Looking for a New Challenge

Before you explore the various remote work opportunities, ask yourself if you like the organization and people where you are currently working? If you like your current job, you should first ask your boss if working remotely is a possibility. Maybe they can transition you into being fully remote.

Some industries are naturally more suited to remote work and new sectors are opening up to virtual work as companies tailor more jobs to remote positions. You can learn about new job opportunities at the remote-friendly companies through online research or job search boards. Terms that are often associated with remote jobs are telecommuting jobs, virtual jobs, home-based jobs, distance work, or even work-from-home jobs. Seek out networking opportunities at coworking spaces. Virtual job fairs are gaining more traction. They showcase companies that value remote workers. They are an excellent way to collect information about remote jobs and the culture of companies. You can interact directly with employers and recruiters, submit resumes to apply for available jobs, and be interviewed using videoconferencing technology.

Your Ideal Life-Work Vision

Before you begin your job search you should envision what you truly desire from a work-from-home lifestyle. You need well-grounded reasons to work remotely. Wanting to shop all day or binge watch movies during work hours is a signal that you are pursuing remote work for the wrong reasons. Once you know your motivation, you can fine-tune what you need in a remote job:

- Do you require full-time work or part-time employment?
- Do you want a fixed or flexible schedule?
- Are you a free-lancer with sought after skills?
- Are you a self-starter, interested in entrepreneurial opportunities?
- Are you a creative?
- Are you an innovative risk-taker?
- Do you need a job with structure?
- Are you an extrovert that loves working with people?
- Do you excel at customer service?

Do you need to Enhance your Skills or Proficiencies?

Evaluate the education, experience, and skills that are most sought after in the jobs that appeal to you. You might need to familiarize yourself with some newer programs or technologies or enroll in taking additional courses to enhance your candidacy in the field of remote work. You may find volunteer work that helps you gain experience.

Figure Out Your Working Style

Your working style is the way that you go about your day-to-day tasks on the job. It is how you work best. Work style—or the way you think, structure, organize, and complete your work—is the foundation upon which organizations operate, grow, and thrive today. The best organizations want diversity in the work styles of their team members. Knowing your style helps you communicate your strengths to a new employer. Maybe you'll discover your style is suited to freelancing or entrepreneurship.



How do you work best?

- Are you more efficient when you work independently and are responsible for your own schedule and tasks?
- Do you like having a team for feedback on your ideas, provide support or helping stay on track?
- Do you bring emotion into the workplace or do you focus on the facts?
- When it comes to problem-solving, do you pay close attention to details or are you more of a big picture type who drives change and is able to integrate priorities and competing ideas into one innovative strategy?
- Do you have a social connection with your co-workers while having sole responsibility for a task?
- Are you versatile and able to adapt to different roles?
- Are you supportive of your colleagues?
- Do you thrive on collaboration rather than competition?
- Can you anticipate future obstacles and turn them into opportunities?
- Do you need structure to thrive?

There is no right or wrong working style. The key is to know your own style so you can be more aware of how you communicate with others and get a better handle on how you can contribute best to a team. It helps you determine what does your ideal remote job might look like and how you would fit into a new organization.

What Kind of Company is Compatible with your Hierarchy of Needs?

These questions are more about learning if you will do well in a particular position or remote culture.

- Do you like waking up early and getting a head start on your work?
- Do you prefer to work traditional office hours?
- Do you want to work through the night?
- How many hours can you work each day or week?
- Do you need a flexible schedule to take care of children?
- Will you accept having to go into an office? How often? How far are you willing to travel on those days?

You need to think about this in advance because some organizations have specific policies about how and when their remote workers will work. Not every organization fosters an environment where everyone can thrive.

An organization that operates in different time zones may have different needs than a local business. Before you start applying for jobs, think about when you would be willing to work, and whether you would be able to compromise on that schedule. If family and friends or your long lasting relationships are priorities that come before your work, you probably want to explore the culture of a company that demonstrates diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Get Noticed for Remote Work

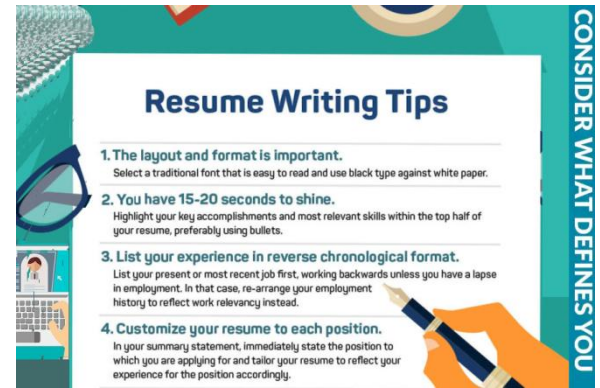
You want to make a good impression with hiring managers and recruiters. As in a traditional job search, much of this comes down to the details of research and preparation.

- Plan to do your homework about the company. Learn as much as you can about the culture of the company and the position. Familiarize yourself with the company's products, services, and general information. If you have any contacts that are familiar with the company, ask them for information they think might pertain to your resume.
- Tailor your resume and portfolio to tell employers that you've got what it takes to not only do their job, but do it remotely.
- Highlight all the communication tools, project management applications, video conferencing platforms, and documentation tools you can use proficiently. This will demonstrate to a prospective employer that you will not require training on core technologies.
- Showcase your professionalism during all stages of the interaction.
- When you get an interview double check your computer, your internet connection, and your technology in general to troubleshoot any issues.

Tailor your Resume and Portfolio for Remote Work

Update your resume and portfolio for each application to ensure it is favorable to remote work and also promising to the organization reading it. A common complain among companies that are hiring is that candidates failed to highlight the skills and experiences that made them a good remote worker.

- It should include all the jobs you have undertaken, every project launch, or skill you have acquired that augments your candidacy.
- Tweak your resume to include those things that the potential employer has specified as pertinent to their industry or the remote position.
- Make sure you highlight skills that are valued by remote employers.
- If you lack remote work experience think about other things that you have accomplished that might relate. Have you been a distance student? How did you succeed at self-study? What did you like best about it?



Prepare for the Remote Job Interview

The communication dynamics of a remote job interview are different. Likely you will be interviewed via video-conferencing, which is an opportunity to demonstrate your effectiveness as a communicator, showcase your professionalism and how you use collaborative tools. By paying attention to the details that matter, you can improve your chances of coming out of the interview with an offer.

- Prior to the interview, review the job description and make a list of the sought-after skills and experiences. Match that list to your skills and experiences and think of specific examples that illustrate when those attributes were successful for you on the job. Familiarize yourself with the company's products, services, management, and general information. Check what media might be reporting about the industry.
- Review your answers to questions that are bound to be asked? Be prepared to discuss why you want to work remotely and how you are equipped to do so. The interviewer will want to know about your workspace, computer, internet connection, familiarity with communications software and apps, and other technology you may need to know to do the job.
- On the day of the interview ensure that the technology is working properly, volume, video quality, background setting are good. If you expect to showcase some of your work, have it handy.
- Business attire or at least business casual (depending on your industry) is important. A tidy home office is generally a better venue to stage your discussions.
- Eliminate all distractions. During the interview, direct your focus at the camera, not at the documents on your computer screen. Be aware of your body language. Don't fidget.

Nail the Answers to Commonly Asked Interview Questions

What Is Best About Working from Home?

There is no micromanagement on a remote team. You need to be self-motivated and able to work alone. A potential employer asks this question to make sure you can be productive in an unstructured work environment.

If you thrive in this kind of work environment then you need to get that message across. Strong answers will emphasize why you do your best work at home and why you are a strong candidate for the job. Be sure to prepare an answer to this question in advance and provide examples to illustrate how working from home improves your job performance. You can emphasize that you are more efficient with fewer distractions, or that working from home gives you a better work-life balance, which makes you happier and more productive. Be honest, but positive to emphasize your enthusiasm for remote work, but do not over-sell yourself. You can add a short anecdote if it enhances the quality of your response.

Examples of the best answers:

- I really like the flexibility in hours that a stay-at-home position offers. I tend to do my best work very early in the morning. Being able to set my own hours allows me to work when I am most alert. Ultimately, I am more productive when working from home than commuting to an office and wasting time stuck in traffic.
- I love the quiet atmosphere of working from home. Without the constant distractions of an office, I am able to stay focused on my work and complete tasks quickly.
- I achieve a much better work-life balance when I work from home. Flexible hours allow me to be there for my kids to get them off to school and be there for them when they come home. Knowing I have that time with my family allows me to be much more productive because I am not worrying whether or not they forgot their lunch or arrived home safely.

What interests you about working for this company?

Employers want to know you are being selective about where you work and for whom. They want to know “you want this job”. Arm yourself with the background to demonstrate your enthusiasm.

“Your business is known for its community outreach. I would love the opportunity to use my 10 years of experience in marketing to support the community along with you.”

Tell the interviewer what you need the most to thrive and be an important asset to the organization. This tone expresses your eagerness, but it is also good to be deliberate with your intentions and understanding regarding the trajectory of your career path.

Strong Answers to Common Questions
Asked of Remote Workers



Why do you think we should hire you?

The organization is aiming to maximize high productivity and cooperative teamwork for their business. In order to do this, they must determine how to get the most out of their remote workers. There are many factors – including your working style – that contribute to how you will work with others, how you will meet deadlines, how you will deal with clients, and how you will solve problems. This is your chance to deliver a concise sales pitch for yourself. Match your working style and skills to what the employer has asked for in the job description and interview.

Example of how to structure an answer:

- “You describe in the job posting that you were seeking _____ who could _____. In my previous job at _____ I learned three new languages and received an award for my initiative in using them to _____. I communicated by phone and through email, messaging, and document sharing platforms to get my work done because we all worked in different time zones. “

Four years ago, I enrolled in some courses to enhance my skills in _____. This allowed me to help several clients: I utilized those skills in creating an annual catalogue for _____. I’ve facilitated these projects and did so ahead of schedule: _____. I mentored colleagues in my position with _____

Discussing your leadership roles, training experience, or volunteer efforts as they relate to the job are excellent examples. Describing how your improvement in a certain area can affect the performance of a new team shows that you are being proactive in highlighting where you see yourself in the future with this organization.

What do you like least about your current job?

This is a biggie.

- When you answer never talk about people.
- Shift the focus to talk about tasks and situations when highlighting your dislikes.
- Note how the impact of those experiences led you to further your leadership skills, training, or education.
- Always end your answer with a brief outline of some positives regarding your current job and how you will take those positives into your new role.

Questions to Ask an Employer

You should also ask questions that will help you decide if the remote job and the organization are the right fit for you, if you get an offer.

- How would you describe the responsibilities of the position?
- What kind of orientation or training do you provide?
- Are there set work hours or is the schedule flexible?
- Would I be guaranteed a certain amount of hours each week?
- Do I need to purchase any equipment or supplies if I'm offered the job?
- If extended a job offer, how soon would you like me to start?
- If I am hired, will I be paid as an employee or an independent contractor?
- Is the pay an hourly rate, commission, or otherwise.
- How often will I be paid?
- What can I tell you about my qualifications?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- Would you like a list of references?
- Are there any other questions I can answer for you?

Working from Home as a Couple

If you and your partner both work from home, you can have lunch dates or early dinners without the commute. Still, you may need some tips to survive the space constraint, remain productive and maintain the great parts of your relationship. The goal is not to go crazy.

For starters, if possible, try and work in separate spaces. This may be more challenging if you are in a small apartment or live with a revolving door of roommates. Avoid setting up shop in the bedroom. The bedroom needs to be a place where you just chat, sleep or be romantic.

If you simply have no choice but to work in close proximity or the same room, you need to define the areas as needed for each person and ensure ways to achieve the privacy necessary to collaborate with work colleagues and also get tasks accomplished without interruptions. Decide your home office basics so that each person can set up their comfortable space day after day.

Here's a suggestion: Visit co-working spaces and see what appeals to you most. Was it the lighting, the lack of distraction, unlimited beverages? Try to replicate those favorites at home to emulate the vibes.

Based on our research with remote working couples we prepared a guideline:

Communication is Key

Most of us do not live with a psychic so we have to express ourselves clearly. Communicate well and communicate often. Be frank, but kind. Tell each other exactly you want and need from each other. Discuss the challenges you might face.

- What are our work hours?
- Where do we go in the house when one of us needs to take a call?
- Where will our individual workstations be?
- Who keeps an eye on the kids and when?
- Does one of you like the constant murmur of the TV and the other cannot stand it?
- Who will monitor a child's activities while one of you is engaged in important business?
- Define which products are to be shared, and which cannot be. Some tech items may be off limits, first-come-first-serve, and some you may have to share. Will you share headphones, a wireless keyboard, or an iPad as an external second monitor?
- You will both need separate storage space.

Collaborate to figure out a routine that takes into account work, home and family responsibilities.

Establish Rules and Write them Down

Determining rules will help you and your partner avoid the moments of confusion and frustration that can occur when there are no limits or boundaries to guide decisions and behaviors.

Morning Routine and Rituals

When you were commuting you had a system for the morning routine. It may have been dependent on personal needs, obligations at work, commuting time, or children. Do you want to keep to that morning routine or switch to a more relaxed pace? You no longer need to debate about make-up, what's best to wear, or if there is time to iron a shirt before you leave. You don't need to warm the car up, pack a lunch, or leave early to stop for gas. You won't have that mad dash to sit next to a smelly person on the bus or line up for another morning coffee. You might substitute these hassles and your commute time with breakfast together, a morning walk, me-time, or sleeping in.

Decide on the most mutually beneficial time to wake up. Decide how many alarms you set and if one person is responsible for waking the other in time for a meeting, call, or obligation. Decide who gets the shower and when. Who will make coffee, breakfast, or do morning tasks. Consider the pros and cons of taking turns.

The most important thing is to create a morning ritual that allows time for both of you to have prep time to get ready without a rush, sanity time and time to relax before the day kicks in. Morning rituals, doing some of the same things every morning, doing something you love as a couple or individually will create balance and help both of you feel fresh, ready and prepared. Your ritual should include starting work on time.

Settle on a Time-Table

Your work-from-home schedule should be based on your employers' deadlines with clients, when your team can collaborate and for how long, business strategizing, or outreach needs. Determine a time to begin work, take a lunch break, and call it quits for the work day. Do not forget to include activity and relaxation breaks, time to run errands, walk a pet, or tend to the needs of children. The busy couples from our research did not all quit at 5:00 pm on the dot. They were still doing things until six or later because they chose to take healthy breaks during the day to do things that were important to them.

Many of our digital nomad couples reiterated that when they first started working together they were so caught up in the newness and excitement of working from home and together they botched some of their together time by not having conversations that were not work related. They had to learn to keep work-type conversations separate from their personal relationship. Therefore, consider blocking time for these various work related conversations in your schedule.

Most of our couples agreed that their nightly routine did not change. They already had an end time for reading, watching Netflix or being on social media. When they began working together from home, they knew there was work to be done the next day. They agreed on how important it was to pick a bed-time.

Two other things they said:

1. Once you fine-tune your daily routine, keep it consistent.
2. Remember it is perfectly okay to laugh or take afternoon walks together. Be spontaneous where schedules allow or put joint activities on your schedule – just to do something other than work side by side during working hours.



Share a Calendar for Meetings and Obligations

A shared calendar is the best solution to track each other's daily work schedules. It shows when you are available, unreachable or immersed in work. Document which meetings are by phone and which are by video so each partner knows what to expect and can behave accordingly.

Review each day's Schedule the Night Before

When there is no fixed daily schedule, you can avoid confusion and conflict by taking a minute the night before to be clear about the schedule for the following day, as a reminder to your partner.

Plan to have Morning Meetings

Start your business day with a morning meeting with your spouse or significant other. Ensure that the meeting takes place every business day without fail. Ensure it is constructive feedback you are sharing and that you are kind to each other in these conversations:

- Take a few minutes to evaluate the prior day. Discuss what worked and what didn't. Ask each other questions. What would we like to change? Was it useful to take a lunch break at the same time? Was it OK that I came over and looked at what you were doing?
- Talk about things you may not have had to discuss before.
- This is the time to consider adjustments to your daily routine.
- Review today's schedule and ask each other, "How can I help you succeed today." If one schedule differs from day to day due to client needs, the daily schedule is particularly important to discuss.
- It is crucial to talk about who has obligations and when. Are meetings by phone, or video? Do you need to be seated at your laptop or will you be milling around? These are all fair items to discuss as a couple.
- This might be the best time to decide who is going to let the dog out or if you both can take it for a walk?
- It is also fair to discuss the schedule for the following day so compromise can be reached and avoid conflict.

Power Outlets, Lighting, Temperature Control

Determine if you have adequate power outlets in the room you are working in for all devices being used or charged. Maybe you will have to run an extension cord from another room so as to not overload a circuit. If so choose one that doesn't tangle or pose a risk to someone walking nearby.

Decide on a lighting configuration that works for both of you. Be mindful of how your partner's needs. Talk about if starting the day off with bright lights will wake you both up or if it is annoying. Discuss the use of lamps, overhead lights or light coming from the window, and how each of you can utilize the best light for particular projects. Consider candles for cozy vibes.

Talk it out to agree on comfortable temperatures for different times of the day. You might consider opening a window or using a fan for air flow. Luckily, the closet should be in the next room so each of you can dress appropriately to accommodate a partner's needs.

Background Music

Decide if you will play music to cut through the silence, when there are no meetings. If one of you requires motivating tunes, noise-canceling headphones are ideal.

Remember to Hydrate

Are you drinking water? It helps you feel energized and less lethargic. Working with one person or alone, it can sometimes be easy to forget to consume water to avoid dehydration. If you opt for another cup of coffee, make sure you are consuming just as much water to counterbalance over over-caffeination. Lack of proper hydration can alter moods.

Privacy

Designate a 'Do Not Disturb' place or time for when each of you need absolute focus to meet a deadline, focus on a project, or collaborate with colleagues or clients without interruption.

Find ways to demonstrate when you are available for interruption. For instance, sitting at the dining room table could mean you are taking care of emails and other lighter tasks that can handle a pause. A closed door means, "I'm concentrating!" When there is no door use something visible as a sign that you need absolute privacy. It is easy to positioning a flag or book, or hang a sign over a chair that says, "Come back later. Knock on the wall or ring the bell, if it is an emergency."

Confidentiality

It is important to review and consider what you or your spouse may be required to do to protect company information. Confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) with contractors are not unusual.

Romance

Think about if you want to limit romance during the workday. Think about what you're envisioning for your relationship. Most couples found it easier to separate work from their relationship when they were working from home. They held hands when they walked or shared laughs or hugs, but they steered clear of the bedroom during working hours. They maintained their professional obligations and work persona during work and when the bell signaled the end of day they goofed off to enjoy hobbies or chill out together with an intimate dinners or date night.

Human Interactions

Our pros could not stress the importance of having other human interactions every day. Make sure you are interacting with real humans in real time. It could be a check in with a friend who also works remotely from home, touching base with a coworker, checking in with a client, or proposing virtual happy hour or an online get-together later in the week with your team or distant friends. Make plans with friends to meet at a café or bookshop or workout class. Encourage your partner to engage in social activities with colleagues, family or friends, even if remotely.

Courtesy

While tensions may be high, try to give your partner the same basic level of courtesy and tolerance you would give a coworker if your boss were on the premises.

Follow the rules: the single most important courtesy is to follow the rules. If the rules are not working, discuss them at your morning meeting and agree on a change to the rules.

Communicate if things are busy or slow: Tell your partner, what time you anticipate your day will end. If things are super busy, let your partner know. If it's a light week or a light day, mention that in the morning meeting, as well.

Respect your partner's schedule: Schedules may be set for some jobs, but for some people the schedule is up in the air, dependent on factors out of their control. If your partner has to get up early for a late scheduled meeting, accept the reality instead of complaining that you will get be awakened by an early alarm. If one of you must work late on a project respect the need to meet a deadline. Likewise, respect the other's need to chill out and unwind.

Be careful not to treat your spouse like a coworker: Do not expect him or her to be available to brainstorm work ideas or discuss what is happening with co-workers or clients. You are already sharing an office, along with domestic and childcare duties; neither of you should add to the other's burden of responsibility or time. Make time to say in touch with your colleagues for these work-related discussions.

Think about what kind of clothing: What makes you feel best. Allow your partner the same consideration. However, make sure your partner is aligned with what you consider as appropriate work-from-home attire, just in case he or she walks into the room partially dressed while you are collaborating with clients or colleagues. You might want to signal your partner when you are taking a video call so the he or she avoids walking through the background.

Overlap in Schedules: This is a tricky one to work around when you and your partner are sharing an office and have space limitations. You should have a plan for when your partner's business meeting goes on longer than expected. An overlap in video meetings or telephone conversations means you could face an overlap in sound and distraction issues. In that instance, one might have to dart into a bedroom or bathroom for privacy.

Be mindful of sounds: Consider which task or activity emits distracting or loud sounds that interferes with your spouse's business call or concentration. If the person on the other end of your spouse's conference call can hear you blending a smoothie, vacuuming, or your yoga video, determine if you can put it off a few more minutes or save chores for another part of the day. Can you take the children for a walk during these crucial conference calls?

Management of Differences with Your Significant Other

Sharing the same workspace and being together 24/7 could cause strain. Psychologists sum up the central task of a marriage as “the management of differences”. The 8-12 hours separation during the workday helps couples manage their differences. These differences can become magnified when a couple is together 24/7.

The obligatory morning meeting is one of the best ways to manage your differences. However, it should not be the only time you acknowledge and enjoy each other’s presence. A smile, a wink or a wave of support can tell your partner that “I’m glad you are here with me.” Even short activity breaks or a quick hug while getting coffee can significantly reduce the stress of working in the same room.

Here are some other suggestions from our remote working pros on how to keep your home life alive:

Separate work from your lifestyle: When your office is your home and your home is your office the work-life balance can be a blurrier line. One or both of you may feel like you are always at work or should be working. When work is happening under your roof, for both of you, our pros say to choose to stop talking about work after the workday is done. Make it fun to do cook or do chores together. You may have to designate select times for enjoying yourselves in special ways. You can put those events on your shared calendar a few days in advance, so that it gives you both a goal for ending your workday.

Enjoy Lunch: Get up to cook a healthy lunch, or order something to support a local business. Cooking or enjoying lunch at home rather than eating a cardboard take-out can give you peace of mind in the middle of the day. In fact cooking can be therapeutic. There is joy in creating a tasty meal: seeing diced vegetables accumulate on the cutting board, the success of frying the perfect egg, the crunch of salad and a self-made dressing, a tang of a new hot sauce. Cooking makes you feel like you created something, and that’s why cooking can be so therapeutic. Enjoy that you can take advantage of home cooking now, as opposed to the feeling of eating your previous desk lunch at work.

Code word: When tensions are high, you can use a code word to mitigate the pressure and damage that might be caused by an explosive outburst on a bad day. Decide on a code word or inside joke to signal your office mate that you need a break from participating in further discussion.

Blame 'Franky': Create a make-believe scapegoat to avoid pointing fingers. Blaming an imaginary co-worker or butler breaks the tension. Like: 'I can't believe Franky didn't take the dishes out of the dishwasher!' or 'Franky is a such a loud worker!'

Invitations: Utilize your shared calendar to invite each other to couple events, like a bike ride, share a bottle of wine, or just to chill watching a sunset.

Thoughtful Surprise: Surprise your partner with a new recipe, play list, bottle of wine, or no special occasion greeting card.

Date Night is not Dead: Date night can still happen any day of the week.

Utilize a co-working space: One or both of you may need a break from each other or the children. A coworking space also gives you a professional place to host meetings or collaborations. Coworking spaces are more inspirational than a traditional office and are great places to network because they are designed for professionals who have all sorts of jobs and talents. You will meet people that you might not cross paths with otherwise. These spaces offer an alternative to the traditional 'work from home' model in that you no longer have to be lonely if you have a remote job. You can work remotely alongside others who do the same, in an inspirational space with perks. The best coworking spaces offer private space for small focused meetings or board rooms for larger collaborations or space to impress clients. They offer refreshments, a lounging space for socialization and they host networking or professional development events. Sometimes switching your surroundings is the best inspiration of all.

Avoid Constant Overdrive: Talking about non-work things is crucial for any relationship, whether you're living with your partner, spouse, relative, sibling, best friend or domestic partner. If you have to, schedule time to talk about non-work things.

Choose to take a break. You can take a break anywhere in your home. Your break might just be choosing a different location to work for a few minutes and not lose out on work time. Make sure you gravitate back to your home office set-up for ultimate efficiency.

Choose to take breaks together. In fact, in between meetings, schedule a break. Besides coffee or stretching breaks it is important to participate in fun activities with each other or your children. It is particularly important for your general health and overall well-being to have activity breaks where you can laugh, go for a bike ride, and indulge in conversation with each other or human connection.

Encourage each other in hobbies or leisure pursuits: Make sure you get up and enjoy the hobbies that have always brought you together, whether it's physical activity, games, book clubs, or simply taking walks or enjoying other human interactions.

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