



Working from home – Guidance for employees

As the coronavirus continues to impact upon our lives, people are being encouraged to work from home as a temporary measure. Working from home can be a challenge if you are not used to it. Despite the initial challenges, working from home can also offer a real opportunity to tailor your working day to suit your personal circumstances and to really focus on the aspects of your work that need your attention the most.

Please use this guidance to help maintain your physical and mental well-being.

Getting organised

Choose a designated workspace

Just because you're not working at an office doesn't mean you can't 'go to work'. Dedicate a specific room or surface in your home to work, if you can. Setting your work-related stuff out in the morning will put you into 'work mode' and clearing it away when you finish will allow you to stop work creeping into your home life.

Getting comfortable - Work station set up

Make sure there is enough workspace to accommodate your documents and equipment. Remember to keep all work equipment safe and in good condition. Remember to wash your hands regularly and if possible clean the work equipment using antibacterial wipes.

Try to set up your PC/laptop/mobile device to prevent poor posture, screen glare and tension in your shoulders, wrist and upper back. Posturite specialise in ergonomics and employee health and wellbeing; click [HERE](#) for helpful hints on setting up your temporary workstation at home or [HERE](#) for more details on desk set up.

Breaking up long spells of work on devices helps prevent fatigue, eye strain, upper limb problems and backache.

Plan your day

Structure your day as if you were going to work. Without things like a meeting to break up your day, you can quickly lose focus or burn out. To stay on schedule, segment what you'll do and when over the course of the day. Use your online calendar to create personal events and reminders that tell you when to shift gears and start on new tasks. Try to pepper your day with calls and online check-ins so that you don't feel lonely. Talking to others may also help you to stay motivated.

Limit the number of times you check your e-mail

You might find yourself constantly checking e-mails because you're worried about being out of the loop—but while it's important to stay connected, spending too much time on e-mail can be a distraction. Try not to flit between email and the task you are trying to complete. Do one thing until you are finished and then look at your email.

Prioritise: write a 'To Do' List

Thinking 'what do I do now?' can be the first step to potential boredom and demotivation. Using a daily or weekly 'To Do' list can really help with self-motivation. Take ten minutes before you stop work every day to make the next day's list— give yourself something that you can look forward to completing each day. Prioritise no more than three bigish tasks, and don't be afraid to have a secondary list on a different page with things that need to be done, but not necessarily tomorrow. Know what you must achieve and what you would like to achieve and give yourself a timeframe to realistically do each task well.

Building a routine

Work when you're at your most productive

Nobody sprints through their work from morning to evening - your motivation will naturally ebb and flow throughout the day. When you're working from home, however, it's all the more important to know when those ebbs and flows will take place and plan your schedule around it. To capitalize on your most productive periods, save your harder tasks for when you know you'll be in the right headspace for them. Use slower points of the day to complete the easier, logistical tasks. These "small acts of success," can help build your momentum for the heavier projects that are waiting for you later on. Balancing something you enjoy with something you need to get done but find less enjoyable is equally important. Consider doing the less enjoyable task first thing so that you can 'reward' yourself with the tasks you enjoy later on in the day.

Pay attention to your 'lark or owl' preferences

Some people are larks, and feel most energised first thing in the morning, whereas others are owls, and don't come alive until later in the day. Although we are all expected to make ourselves available during working hours, working at home could provide you with the flexibility to start work before breakfast and finish earlier, for instance. Or you might prefer to do more work in the evening when you feel at your best. Just make sure you agree what and when with your manager so that he/she can find you when needed.

Looking after your wellbeing

Exercise

Depending on the lockdown restrictions that may be imposed upon us, it is important to move about outside and get some fresh air. Energy levels dip after lengthy periods of time sat at a computer, so get into the habit of going outside at least once a day. Spending a little time outside will help you feel grounded and energise your system, providing a variety of health [benefits](#). Schedule time for regular exercise, aim to exercise for at least 30 minutes a day, fresh air is key.

Avoid the feeling of isolation

Working at home for a prolonged period of time may make you feel detached from others. Determine suitable and appropriate methods of keeping in touch with colleagues and sending and receiving updates on developments. Use Zoom for regular team meetings or to discuss a problem with colleagues "face to face".

Managers should also be regularly checking in with employees, not just about work, but about wellbeing too whether by phone, email or a face-to-face meeting every now and again. It is best to use a variety of communication methods for homeworkers and it shouldn't be restricted to telephone calls and emails.

Make sure you remember to take a break

Small [breaks](#) and [stretches](#) will really help you both physically and mentally, without a water cooler and co-workers around, you may forget to take time away from your desk. When you take breaks, you'll be more productive.

Have breaks from social media

This is a good rule of thumb anyway, it can be refreshing to get away from social media as it can be consuming. It is important to remember that how things are portrayed on social media are not always the reality and at times distressing news stories may also get a lot of coverage and play on your mind if it is spread across the many social media channels. Of course social media has its place but it is a good idea to put a time limit on it and be conscious to not continually check social media.

Avoid burnout

Burnout is a state of exhaustion, whether it be emotional, physical, and mental, and it is caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It can occur when you're feeling overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands. It is crucial that homeworkers strike a balance between work and home life.

[AnxietyUK19](#) suggests practicing the "Apple" technique to deal with anxiety and worries:

- **Acknowledge:** Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.
- **Pause:** Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Pause and breathe.
- **Pull back:** Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful and not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are not statements or facts.
- **Let go:** Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.
- **Explore:** Explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else - on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry, or do something else - mindfully with your full attention.

[MIND](#) also provide advice on anxiety whilst social distancing measures are in place, click [HERE](#).

Prepare Food the same way, eat healthy snacks and keep hydrated!

If you meal prep on a Sunday night or make a packed lunch in the evening for the next day then keep up your routines! You don't want to have to take time out of your working day, even if you are at home, to make yourself lunch if you don't usually! Ensure you have healthy snacks to hand, such as fruit and keep hydrated throughout the day with plenty of water.

If you have any concerns, or fall ill whilst you are working from home please contact your line manager.