

COVID-19:
Working From Home

Staying happy and productive in self-isolation



The current COVID-19 outbreak underscores the need for workers to think about how they will handle the shift from an office environment to a work-from-home situation. Continuous or long-term work-from-home may pose some challenges if it is not what you are used to.

We have put together some guidelines to help you navigate the new reality we are all facing.

WORK SCHEDULE — MAINTAIN REGULAR HOURS

A 9–5 workday might not be feasible at home

There is no one-size-fits-all solution, so where possible, experiment and find what works best for you! Then set a schedule and stick to it...most of the time.

Having clear guidelines for when to work and when to call it a day helps many remote workers maintain work-life balance. That said, one of the benefits of remote work is flexibility, and sometimes

you may need to extend your day or start early to accommodate someone else's time zone. When you do so, be sure to wrap up earlier than usual or sleep in a bit the next morning to make up for it. It's also helpful to figure out what times of day you're most productive versus when you lose energy. You can use that information to your advantage by reserving your hours of high focus for your most important tasks

CREATE A MORNING AND AFTERNOON ROUTINE

Establishing a clear beginning and end to your workday is recommended to best maintain a satisfying work-life balance. Bookend the workday with morning and evening routines.

You should practice a morning routine that indicates you're about to start work. It might be making a cup of coffee or returning home after a jog. It might be getting dressed (wearing pajama pants to work is a perk for some, but a bad strategy for others). A routine can be more powerful than a clock at helping you get started each day.

Gearing down at the end of your workday is also important. One of the most common end-of-the-work-day habits is planning out what needs to be done the next day. Writing out tomorrow's to-do list at the end of the workday helps you stop thinking about work.

Whether you begin your day with breakfast and walking the dog and end with a to-do list, dinner preparations or connecting with family and friends electronically, it's important to simulate an active routine. Do what works best for you.

HOME OFFICE

Working from home should be as comfortable and ergonomic as possible

In an ideal world, remote employees would have a dedicated office and two computers: one for work and one for personal use—or at least a dedicated desk. However, we all need to work within the space we have available.

An appropriate home office environment might include:

- *A space or room where it is easy to concentrate—preferably separate from other living areas and away from distractions.*
- *An ergonomic chair. Avoid sitting on soft surfaces such as sofas and chairs with plush upholstery—your back will thank you.*
- *Reliable internet connection.*
- *Control over temperature, light and sound.*
- *Discussions with your household members about options that will allow you to stay focused on work tasks, except when needed urgently.*

- *Take regular breaks and don't eat at your desk.*

Ensure you step away from your screen occasionally to give your eyes and your mind a rest. Try some sitting stretches to ease aches and pains. Avoid “focusing fatigue” by looking away from your computer and gazing at an object in the distance. Looking into the distance relaxes the focusing muscle inside the eye and reduces fatigue. Remember to blink frequently to reduce your risk of computer-related dry eye.

Step outside once a day. Your body needs to move, and fresh air and natural light will do you good. You don't have to put yourself at risk to get away from your solo workspace. Take a walk. Rake the garden. Enjoy the sunshine on your face.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Loneliness, disconnection, and isolation are common issues with remote working, especially for extroverts. But just because you're not sitting next to your co-workers doesn't mean you're on your own.

We recommend that you stay in regular contact with your team and managers to stay up-to-date—both on professional matters as well as

social ones. Maintaining communication is the best way to ensure you don't fall behind. Using tools like Outlook and Skype are perfect for day-to-day communications, and we recommend you schedule regular phone check-ins with your direct manager and keep them abreast of your situation and any concerns.

A QUICK NOTE ON CYBER AND DATA SECURITY

Our current working arrangements mean that we may be sharing space with family members or roommates. It's important we all take care to keep our organization's information confidential. That means placing files and printed material in a secure location, such as a file cabinet or drawer.

Be careful when printing confidential documents. It is very easy to hit "print" from home and find you have accidentally sent something to an office printer, leaving confidential information vulnerable for an extended period.

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre has issued warnings about cyber criminals using the current situation to lure individuals into clicking on and opening malicious links relating to COVID-19. Use your best judgment and stay on the lookout for:

- *Unsolicited emails with embedded links (phishing and spearphishing).*
- *Fake surveys and articles posted on social media.*

Working from home efficiently and effectively has quickly become the new norm. Remember to reach out to a team member, your manager, your Human Resources team or office administrator if you have any questions or concerns.

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