

7 simple tips to tackle working from home

It's fair to say that life has become more difficult for everyone. Coronavirus (COVID-19) has changed everything, and we have all had to adjust to new ways of living and working.

There are some perks to working from home that some of us can enjoy (bye bye commute!), but feeling stress, boredom, anxiety and uncertainty is also completely normal. Alongside this, many of us are worried about future job prospects and trying to look after kids as well.

These simple tips can help you while working at home, to feel more productive and take care of your mental health in these difficult times.

1. Set and stick to a routine

Without steady schedules, the lines between work and personal time can get blurred and be stressful to get right.

Follow your normal sleep and work patterns if you can, and stay consistent.

Get up at the same time, eat breakfast, and get out of your pyjamas! Try scheduling in your "commute time" and spend it exercising, reading or listening to music before logging in.

Most importantly, when your workday stops, stop working. Shut down, stop checking emails and focus on your home life. And at the end of the day, try to get to bed at your usual time.

2. Make a dedicated workspace

If you can, find a quiet space away from people and distractions like the TV (or the kitchen, when you feel snacky).

Get everything you need in one place, before you start work – chargers, pens, paper and anything else – and shut the door if you can. Even in a small or shared space, try to designate an area as your work space.

Lastly, get comfortable. While it might be tempting to sit on the sofa, it's much better to sit at a desk or table. Use the [NHS guidelines to set up your workspace correctly](#), as much as you possibly can.

If you do not have office furniture like an adjustable chair, try using things like cushions to support you in your chair, or a box as a footrest.

3. Give yourself a break

Working at home can make us feel like we have to be available all the time. But just being "present" is no use to anyone if your mental health is suffering.

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

If possible, set a time to go for a walk, run or bike ride for some fresh air.

Working from home means you might be spending a lot more time without moving your body. If you're feeling stiff or tense, try doing some light stretching or exercise.

4. Stay connected

While working from home has its benefits, you may also feel more isolated. But there are lots of ways to stay in touch with those who matter – boosting their mental wellbeing as well as our own.

In and out of work, human interaction matters so schedule video calls and pick up the phone instead of emailing. If you're struggling with working at home, speak to your colleagues or manager about your concerns.

And remember, your colleagues probably feel the same as you! Ask how they're doing and whether there are ways you can support each other.

Make time to socialise virtually – schedule in a digital coffee break or an online get-together, following the latest social distancing guidelines.

5. Set boundaries

Setting boundaries with other members of your household is key to mental wellbeing while working at home.

You can be more flexible when working from home, so enjoy it. But it can also be difficult if there are other distractions to deal with, like children at home, who may think you are on holiday and want to spend time with you.

Have a discussion about your needs, especially with family. Remind them that you still have work to do and need quiet time to do it, and share your schedule.

Similarly, set boundaries with work. It's easier to stay logged on when your home is your office, but try to switch off when the work day is over, and enjoy time with family at home.

6. Think longer term

You may be continuing to work from home for a while, so think about ways you could improve how you work while at home. If you have a garden, could you work there if the weather's warm?

Try to explore how you work with others. Are there different ways to talk online or new software you could use?

7. Be kind to yourself

Remember, this is an unusual situation and things will not feel normal!

Be kind to yourself and acknowledge that you might not be as productive as you usually would be. Be realistic about what you can achieve given the circumstances, and relax when your work is done.