

## Working from home

### Where do you start?

Here's a quick guide on how to start the ball rolling ...



## 8 Quick Tips on getting you set up to work from home

Never before have workers telecommuted on such a broad scale and never before has there been an exodus from the cities like we've seen in recent times.

Millions of people are trying to work from home — if they can, of course. Pandemic Partners are here to help you prepare to work from home, set you up in case self-isolation becomes real, like in France & Italy, especially if you're doing so for the first time.

We've also got episodes on [health precautions you can take](#) (like washing your hands!) and one about [keeping kids entertained and active during all the school closures](#).

NPR has prepared some pro-tips for working remotely, possibly for an extended period of time.

### 1. Get your technology in order.

Technology is what enables remote work in the first place.

So make sure to take your laptop home, and don't forget your charger. Also, take home your mouse and keyboard — anything that might make working on your laptop from home a little easier.

If you don't have a work laptop and you'll be spending a long time remote, ask if your supervisor wants you to take your desktop computer home. If you don't drive and it's too much to carry on public transport, ask your employer if you can expense a taxi or rideshare.

Then there's the software. Make sure you have the right applications. Lots of remote workers are leaning heavily on Slack, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom or GoToMeeting. Iron out what your team is planning to use ASAP.

Of course, you'll want to make sure all your technology actually works from home. Do you need a secure line? Are those applications accessible from your home Wi-Fi? Do you need a security key to log in? These are all questions to ask your supervisor or IT department.

### 2. Make sure you have bandwidth.

Another thing? Internet access — is yours robust enough at home to allow you to video conference? Many conferences and almost all nonessential work travel are being cancelled right now, so people want to use online video conferencing, which requires a good Internet connection.

If your bandwidth is low and you're on a video call, try shutting down other programs to lighten the load on your connection. If your connection is really choppy, you can often shut off the video portion of a call and participate with audio only, which defeats the purpose of seeing your team but will still allow you to participate in the conversation.

Another Internet hog? Kids.

If your connection is not robust, set some ground rules about when kids can't be online because mom is on a conference call, or stagger your video meetings with your partner or other family members if possible.

### 3. The kids are alright — but they're home too.



With school closures and concerns about putting kids in day care, as well as staffing those places up, parents are faced with a challenge, especially parents who have to physically go to work because they have no remote work option.

If you are working from home with kids in tow, you'll need to make a plan for education and entertainment. Stock up on books and puzzles. Also, it's OK to use streaming services – NetFlix, Stan, ABC.

One note on play dates, though, since school closures are designed to limit contact among kids

"If the school is closed for a certain amount of time, even if it's long and difficult for parents to organize the care, it's important that they do not regroup children again because the effect of the school closure will be much less."

Click through to our FB Page [PandemiPartners2020](#) to assist you with things to do for kids – we've got schedules, games, ideas that will help you set the agenda for your day.

Families across the country are getting very creative with virtual play dates using video chat as well as platforms like [Roblox](#), which allows kids to chat while playing a video game together.

Also, be flexible about how much work you might realistically be able to get done if you're balancing child care. #WorkLifeBalance. Just not the kind you were hoping for. *Here are [more tips on managing parenting in the time of coronavirus](#), including ideas for working from home with little ones.*

#### 4. Manage expectations.



It's wise to have a discussion with your boss about what can actually be accomplished from home.

Ask your manager what the priorities are, and discuss how tasks will get done.

How are teams going to track projects they're working on? How will they meet to discuss this? Will you all be connecting on Slack or email? Will there be standing meetings at a certain time to get everyone coordinated?

This should be an ongoing conversation. Remember, going fully remote is a new experience for many companies and their workers. Be honest about what isn't working or can't get done in these circumstances. More overall communication is going to be necessary.

#### 5. Know thyself (and thy WFH weaknesses).

If you're distractible, get ready for work every morning like you are going to physically go into work. Dress up, do your hair — whatever you'd normally do. This puts you in a professional mindset.

It's hard to draw a sharp distinction between home and office when you're *at* home. But to the extent possible, create a space at home that looks and feels like your office to you.

If you're the type of person who never takes a break at home, set a timer to take time for lunch, and turn off your work. Or go for a walk. If you don't change your venue at some point during the day and take a breather,

it can make the claustrophobia worse. Try to maintain normal work hours, and shut things down when you would normally leave the office.

Try to appreciate the benefits that do come with remote work. You're not commuting. You're able to make your own lunch and save money doing so. You have more control over your schedule and more time with family. Focus on whatever positives you can find.

#### **6. Embrace the webcam.**

Conference calls are tough — there are time delays, not knowing who's talking because you can't see the person, people getting interrupted on accident.

Webcams can solve a number of these issues: the sense of isolation and that confusion.

"To be able to see the person you're talking to I think is important," says Matthew Hollingsworth, who heads operations at Tiny Boards, a company that has several job boards for remote work.

And also, he says, because we miss cues when we aren't working together in person, make doubly sure all colleagues understand their marching orders.

"I tend to overcommunicate, and I think that's a good default setting," he says. Don't be afraid to ask, "Is this clear?"

You can even try repeating back what you heard the other person say, to make sure you interpreted the person's meaning correctly.

#### **7. Stay connected.**

One undeniable loss is the social, casual "water cooler" conversation that connects us to people — if you're not used to that loss, full-time remote work can feel isolating.

To fill the gap, some co-workers are scheduling online social time to have conversations with no agenda. Use Slack chats and things like that if you miss real-time interaction.

Again, embrace video calling and webcams so you can see your colleagues. Try an icebreaker over your team chat: What's everyone's favourite TV show right now? What's one good thing that someone read that day?

#### **8. Do what you can; discuss when you can't.**

Be clear about your capacity to work from home — during this time it is imperative to communicate well, clearly and effectively with your Team. This will set up clear objectives and build team work — if you will be distracted by children at home and manage 1 hour blocks of work at a time, say that, planning and preparedness is everything in this time and people will understand and be able to work with these issues, as long as they know about them! Be collaborative, consultative and clear about your abilities and time constraints. Your colleagues maybe able to step up, offer flexible times to chat about programs or projects.

In America, before the spread of the coronavirus, roughly half of American workers were doing at least some telework.

But about a third of American workers cannot work remotely — fast-food and factory workers, people who are stocking the shelves in grocery stores and warehouses, nurses and doctors on the front lines of health care. They can't work from home.



If you really can't work remotely, ask your employer what you can do to make sure you're not losing pay. That said, this is a shifting landscape. It's not clear that hourly workers or workers who can't do remote work will be paid if they can't work.

The lack of paid leave or sick leave is certainly in the spotlight because of this virus. Some companies, including McDonald's, Walmart and [Amazon are now saying they will offer paid leave or sick leave](#) to protect the health of customers as well as their workers.

Airlines are paying flight attendants who signed up for shifts and are quarantined, for example. And some unions are trying to negotiate the issue of missed pay.

So the best thing is to ask your manager or human resources department. If you cannot do your work remotely and you cannot come to work, what is the alternative? Or if you can work, what are the precautions they've prepared for you? And finally, if you do get sick, will your employer pay for your leave or workers' compensation? This is all being worked out currently with the FWO and we will be releasing more information as soon as it comes to hand.

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