Advisory Board

15 tips to boost your work-from-home productivity

When it comes to work, everyone has different preferences and habits. But working from home can easily disrupt anyone's daily routine. Below, we've rounded up tips to boost productivity and create a more positive work-from-home experience.

Your schedule

Don't cut the 'commute'	To maintain a boundary between work and home life, consider bookending your workday by walking around the block, browsing the news, or listening to your favorite podcast.
Adjust your calendar to your new workflow	Working from home brings new and different responsibilities. If you can, work regular hours to simulate the office environment. If not, work with your manager to find a schedule that best supports your productivity and work-life balance. Consider aligning tasks with your personal workstyle—such as critical thinking tasks in the morning and meetings in the afternoon.
Keep a running (and prioritized) to-do list	It can be hard to feel productive while remote. Consider writing a master "to-do list" each week, categorized by your "must do's" each day. To boost productivity, consider setting targets for how long to spend on each task—and pulling up with your team if a task is taking far more or less time than expected.
Set boundaries, and stick to them	Try to resist the urge to check e-mail after hours or during a day off. If you're concerned about missing an important update, communicate your schedule to your team and share alternative ways they can get hold of you.
Schedule breaks, too	While working from home, it can be easy to work through lunch and skip over impromptu catch-ups or coffee walks with your colleagues. Consider blocking times throughout the day during which you can catch up with a co-worker over a virtual lunch or host a walking check-in.

Your setup

Stake out some privacy (if you can)	If possible, designate a workspace where you can reduce distractions, and separate your workspace from other places where you spend a lot of time, such as your living room or bedroom.
Make your 'office' work for you	Make sure you have all your personal "must have" materials on hand, such as a monitor, a notebook, etc. But also take advantage of the opportunity to personalize your workspace. Consider adding a photo or plant to create a comfortable environment.
Don't forget about your posture	Good posture will boost productivity, and your back will thank you as well. Ensure that your table and chair height are appropriate, and, if needed, stand up while you work.
Stretch your legs when you can	Dedicate time to get up and move around during the workday. It can be as simple as just standing up and stretching, or going for a short walk outside.
Take it easy on your eyes	Staring at screens improperly or for too long can cause eye strain, headaches, and other problems. Ensure your workspace is well lit, position your monitor slightly below eye level and an arm's length away, and remember the "20-20-20" rule—every 20 minutes, focus your eyes on something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

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15 tips to boost your work-from-home productivity (cont.)

Your team

When you can, use your video	Research shows that a significant amount of communication happens through non-verbal gestures, and using video increases the sense of connection among teammates. If you are a manager, set the expectation that you will be using webcam—and expect others to as well.
Make the most of virtual meetings with clear ground rules	This can include sharing an agenda beforehand, setting clear meeting goals, and building in time for virtual introductions. If possible, consider holding shorter and less-frequent meetings. Experiment with chat functionality or annotation to give everyone a chance to participate.
When in doubt, pick up the phone	When working from home, you miss the opportunity to swing by a colleague's desk for a quick brainstorm or clarification. A lot of important information is passed through these informal channels, so try to recreate them virtually. If you can, make yourself available over the phone or via chat for in-the-moment questions.
Don't forget about social time either	Schedule bonding events such as team lunches or coffee breaks to keep in touch with colleagues and friends as you would in the office.
Check in to see what's working and what isn't	As a manager, communicating and working with your team may be more difficult virtually. Check in often to see how your team is feeling—and bring suggestions for how to more effectively communicate. It's a learning curve for everyone, so we recommend experimenting with a couple of approaches to see what works best for your team.

▶ Additional resources to support remote work

7 ways to avoid (or recover from) 'Zoom fatigue'

4 ways to help staff who are struggling to work from home

Manager's guide to leading remotely through Covid-19

8 ways to work from home successfully

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