

How to Make Working at Home More Successful

As we all adjust to working from home and exercising social distancing, we want to ensure that you have all the support and resources you need right at your fingertips.

The following tips and strategies are to help you adapt to teleworking and deal with this temporary “new normal.” These tools will also help you in supporting our learners to succeed.

Work Space

Ensure your environment is conducive for working by having a dedicated space or room so you can focus on work with minimal distractions.

Get started early

When working in an office, your morning commute can help you wake up and feel ready to work by the time you get to your desk. However, at home, the transition from your pillow to your computer can be much more jarring. Believe it or not, one way to work from home productively is to dive into your to-do list as soon as you wake up. Simply getting a project started first thing in the morning can be the key to making progress on it gradually throughout the day. Otherwise, you'll prolong breakfast and let the morning sluggishness wear away your motivation.

Don't Work in Your PJs

We know — this is one reason why people love working from home. If you enjoy working in your PJs, then you are killing your productivity. “Dress for success” isn't just a corporate catchphrase; it really matters when you work from home.

Beyond psychologically getting you in the right mindset for work, you'll be ready to handle any kind of video chat or check-in with a teammate. You'll be prepared to get work done, and you will be mentally and physically prepared for the day.

Pretend as if you *are* going into the College

The mental association you make between work and an office can make you more productive, and there's no reason that feeling should be lost when telecommuting.

When working from home, do all the things you'd do to prepare for an office role: Set your alarm, make a cup of coffee, and wear nice clothes. Internet browsers like Google Chrome even allow you to set up multiple accounts with different toolbars on the top -- for example, a toolbar for home and a separate toolbar for work.

Structure your day like you would at the College

Without things like an in-person meeting schedule to break up your day, you can be quick to lose focus or burn-out. To stay on schedule, segment what you'll do and *when* over the course of the day. If you have an online calendar, create personal events and reminders that tell you when to shift gears and start on new tasks. Google Calendar makes this easy.

Choose a dedicated work space

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Just because you're not working at an office doesn't mean you can't, well, have an office. Rather than cooping yourself up in your room or on the couch -- spaces that are associated with leisure time -- dedicate a specific room or surface in your home to work.

Exercise & Stretch Regularly

Exercise **naturally boosts endorphins**, which increases happiness, enjoyment, and interest levels, all of which are important for productivity. Regularly stretching helps you maintain great posture. At a minimum, stretch throughout the day so you don't get sore or hinder your quality of life.

We recommend exercising in the morning when you have fewer objections and a longer payoff throughout the day.

Eat healthy meals and snacks

Another work from home reality is that we have full access to the kitchen. So, when it's time for lunch or a snack break, we are immediately drawn to the usual snacks, such as chips, cookies, or leftover pizza.

When we work in an office, we are at the mercy of whatever is available in the cafeteria or whatever lunch we brought from home.

Research has shown that eating fruits and vegetables has a direct link on overall productivity levels. Try your best to reach for food that fuels your body, not what is closest..

Use Video Chat

Yes, the video conference—the hallmark of remote work. Working from home can get pretty lonely, especially if you are single or live alone. Make it a point to chat with colleagues, team members, or clients each day.

It matters. You're not just a cog in a machine. You don't even have to talk about work, but just to connect as co-workers and people. Humanity must not be lost in working remotely.

Depending on the nature of your work, you could end up spending almost all of your day on video conferences chatting with your team. We recommend working in a well-lit room; it brings out your best features.

Video chat is a great way to stay connected with your team. Meet regularly, and don't forget to relax and have a little fun.

Make it harder for yourself to mess around on social media

Social media is designed to make it easy for you to open and browse quickly. At work, though, this convenience can be the detriment of your productivity.

To counteract your social networks' ease of use during work hours, remove them from your browser shortcuts and, according to Fast Company, log out of every account. You might even consider working primarily in a private or, if you're using Chrome, an "Incognito" browser window. This ensures you stay signed out of all your accounts and each web search you conduct doesn't autocomplete the word you're typing. It's a guarantee that you won't be tempted into taking too many social media breaks during the day.

Assume Positive Intent

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One limitation of working from home is that team chat messaging sometimes falls short of expressing ideas clearly. It's easy to think a quick remark was made to be rude or even flippant. Remind yourself not to take *seemingly* short responses offensively. For some members of the remote workforce, they are just efficient in their replies. ***Focus on the facts and assume positive intent where it might not otherwise be seen.***

Stay Vigilant Against Security Risks

Just because you're not at the College doesn't mean you're not a target for hackers. Your work machine is incredibly valuable for thieves and criminals, so work securely.

- Be aware of Algonquin's policies such as the use of Wi-Fi, personal devices, and more.
- Employ a "trust but verify" mentality for documents sent to your inbox.
- Ensure you have access to Virtual Private Network (VPN) for encryption so you can access all of your files.
- Know how to get IT assistance and report security threats.
- Close your room's door to avoid disclosing sensitive information to family members or visitors.

Plan out what you'll be working on ahead of time

Spending time figuring out what you'll do today can take away from actually doing those things. And, you'll have planned your task list so recently that you can be tempted to change your schedule on the fly.

It's important to let your agenda change if you need it to, but it's equally as important to commit to an agenda that outlines every assignment before you begin. Try solidifying your schedule the day before, making it feel more official when you wake up the next day to get started on it.

Communicate expectations with anyone who will be home with you

Of course, you might be working from home but still have "company." Make sure any roommates, siblings, parents, spouses, and dogs (well, maybe not dogs) respect your space during work hours. Just because you're working from home doesn't mean you're home.

Plan and take breaks

It can be so easy to get distracted as a telecommuter that you avoid breaks altogether. Don't let the guilt of working in the place you sleep in prevent you from taking "five" to relax. Rather than just opening YouTube and watching some comfort clips, use your breaks to get away from your desk. Go for a walk outside (respecting social distancing) or spend time with others who might also be in the house.

Pick a definitive finishing time each day

You might be under the impression that working from home establishes more work-life balance, but be careful with that assumption. Working from home can also feel like being at a casino — you can get so caught up in your activity, in a relaxing environment, that you lose complete track of time.

In lieu of coworkers, whose packing up and leaving the office reminds you to do the same, set an alarm at the end of the day to indicate your normal work day is coming to an end. You don't have to stop at exactly that time, but knowing the work day is technically over can help you start the process of saving your work and calling it quits for the evening.