

Adjusting to Home Working

A Guide for Employees

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, you may find yourself working at home for one of the first times in your working life. Or you may have worked at home on occasions before, but never for quite such a prolonged period of time.

We've put together some guidance on how to make the adjustment to working at home along with some other key considerations during this time.

1. Remember you're at work

The temptation to work in your pyjamas or jogging bottoms will be huge but it's better for you mentally to remember that you are still at work. So, keep to a routine wherever possible. Get up at the same time as normal, shower and get dressed.

As important as getting up at the same time, is going to bed at the same time. Don't get tempted into the thought process of *'I can stay up as I don't have to go to work tomorrow'*, you do have to go to work and you need to be as fresh and motivated as you would if you were going to the office.

2. Set out your workspace

If you're not lucky enough to have a home office, try to establish a proper working space that you go to every day, and that you can step away from to keep 'work' from invading every part of your home.

It's also important for you to ensure that your workstation is properly set up from a health and safety perspective. Your homeworking situation could continue for a number of weeks or months and poor work stations can, over a period of time, lead to muscular aches and strains that will take a long time to get over.

3. Communicate

Remember that you still need to communicate with your manager and your fellow team members. Don't isolate yourself from them. Use the video technology that's available to us now, such as MS Teams, Zoom or Facetime to continue to interact with your manager and your colleagues as you would normally.

Try not to hide behind email when phone conversations can help you deal with issues more quickly and also keep you connected.

4. Take breaks

Remember to take breaks. Have your normal lunch break and get outside and get some fresh air. However, you might find that you benefit from taking shorter breaks more frequently. This can help with focus and avoid distractions. If you find you're struggling to focus, try the Pomodoro technique – a 25 minute chunk of activity followed by a 5 minute break. This can really help you to focus and get tasks completed. You can download an app specifically for the Pomodoro technique if you wish.

5. Be honest

The current situation has changed everyone's lives and it's possible that you are now juggling childcare and home schooling along with your normal job. It's important to be honest with your manager about your situation. They will understand that it may not be possible for you to work normal hours and will help you put a more flexible working pattern in place. Do not add to your stress at this time by keeping your domestic situation a secret from your boss.

Additionally, if you are struggling mentally with any anxiety caused by isolation from working at home or due to worry about the current pandemic or your domestic situation, do tell your boss. These are difficult times for everyone and it's better to open up and discuss your feelings. Your boss may be able to suggest ways to help you.

6. Be respectful

Your employer or manager is probably dealing with one of the most significant strains that will ever hit the business and they will be working hard to keep the business afloat and ensuring you to still have a job at the end of the year. Show some respect to them at this time and don't abuse their trust or the situation. Offer them your support and show them that you have the best interests of the business at heart. This kind of loyalty will be remembered.

If you are concerned about any aspect of homeworking, you should seek immediate help from your line manager. These are strange times and it's okay to be concerned or anxious. You can seek support with your mental health from Every Mind Matters who have tips specific for this situation.