



Working Remotely / Telecommuting

What is Telecommuting?

Telecommuting is a work arrangement in which some or all of the work is performed from home or another off-site location. In general, regular office hours are worked and deviations from that schedule require supervisor approval.

Which jobs are usually best suited for remote work?

Telecommuting is easiest to implement for jobs or tasks that require reading, writing, research, working with data and talking on the phone. In general, and at management's discretion, a job is suited if the job or some components of it can be done off-site without disruption to the flow of work and communication. In unique situations, some jobs that may not seem appropriate at first may be modified so that employees can telecommute.

What's most important to starting a productive remote working arrangement?

When clearly outlined and executed remote working arrangements can prove beneficial to employees and managers alike. Managers should articulate clear procedures regarding check-in times and hours of availability. With proper planning, communications problems can be minimized. Indeed, well-planned flexible work arrangements sometimes enable departments to extend their service hours, and to make more effective use of space and equipment.

Tips for Employees

Employees often learn that working remotely is different than they expected and that it requires specific skills and habits. The following tips will help you get to work while at home.

1. Define your workspace.

It can be easy to sit on the sofa with your laptop and expect to get work done. Experienced teleworkers will tell you they tried that and it simply doesn't work!



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We are creatures of habit and most of us are used to lounging with our laptops to read the news, watch TV, play games and chat with friends and family. Establishing a workspace, even if it is your kitchen table, gives your brain a cue that it is time for work and not play.

2. Master the basics. Add your telecommute schedule to your email signature line.

Set up call forwarding and how to access your voicemail from home. Know how to remote into the Rice network and other online tools you regularly use. Use Zoom or another agreed-upon instant messaging client to stay connected to colleagues. Plan for a video calls/meetings by making sure you know how to turn on your computer's camera and microphone and being aware that your colleagues may be able to see the background behind you.

3. Set daily goals, track them and share your progress.

You may be surprised by how differently the work day passes without the comings and goings of an office to break things up or influence what you do next. Start each day of by writing down what you need to achieve and then track your progress. Pay attention to how long tasks take you and start adjusting your daily goals to match your current rhythm. Communicate with your supervisor and/or colleagues if you think your telecommuting plan needs to be adjusted.

4. Eliminate distractions.

If home is where your heart is then working remotely can mean pets, children or a favorite hobby are only a few feet away. Depending on your living arrangement, you may need to hang a "do not disturb" sign so your family members don't interrupt you. Pets often need a closed door to keep them away and you might need headphones to block the neighborhood noise.

5. Prioritize privacy.

Whether you are in your home or a common area, take five minutes to assess the privacy of your workspace. Can someone standing behind you read your computer screen? Are your windows open so your neighbor can hear your phone call? What information do you need to secure before grabbing a cup of coffee or heading to the restroom? Your personal privacy matters too, so see if there anything around you that would not want visible during a video conference with your boss.



6. Stay connected.

Many people say they do not call or instant message colleagues who are working remotely because they don't want to bother them. Remember, they are working, not vacationing at home! You should feel confident about calling or messaging an employee who is teleworking anytime you would walk to their office or call them if you were working on-site. You can even keep your daily coffee run – simply plan to call or video chat with a cup in hand at the time your crew would normally walk to your favorite espresso cart.

7. Dress for work.

Just like sitting on the couch can make us feel a little too relaxed, wearing pajamas all day makes it hard to get into work mode. Dressing casually is definitely a perk of working at home but getting “ready for work” is a daily ritual that many teleworkers swear by.