



xplore

**At home, not alone**

**How to**

**WORK FROM HOME**

**A practical user guide**

# How to work from home, stay productive and be healthy ... start your day right!



## Get up

It's important to stick to your routines, especially your sleep routine. Don't sleep in, hit the snooze button more than two times, or go to bed super late. A good sleep pattern is vital for concentration, productivity and good mood.

## Get dressed

You're not going into the office but it's important to feel like you're working. Part of that is getting out of your PJs. It helps create a mental shift from 'rest mode' to 'work mode'. Also, you might be seen via Zoom so you want to look presentable.

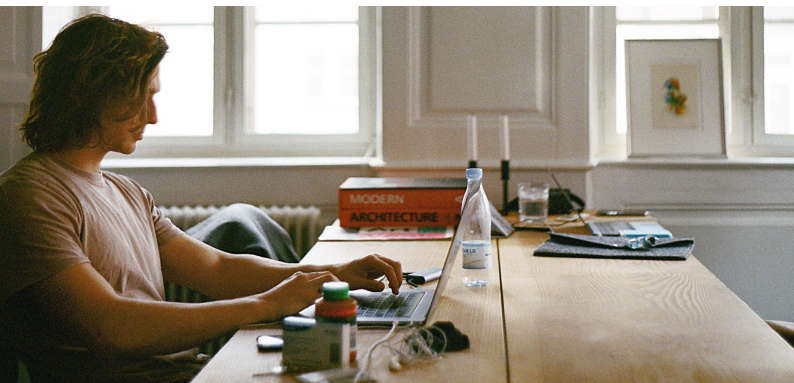
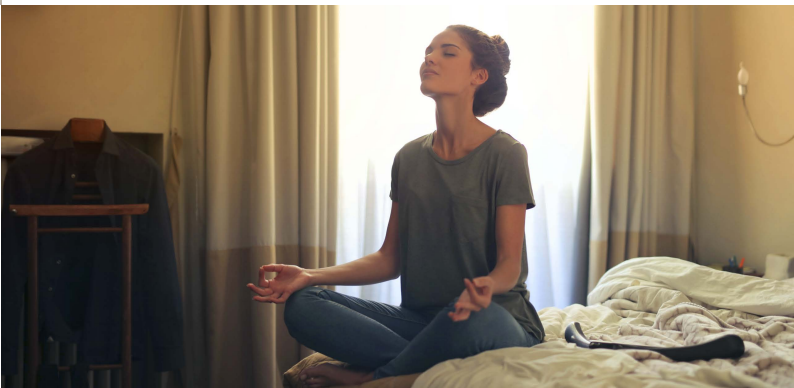


## Get moving

You're not travelling to work, so you have time to exercise. Commit to moving your body — however you can. Unless you live in a mansion, you won't be getting many steps done compared to heading out to the office every day. Make up your own routine or do an online class to get you motivated.

## Get mindful

Making time each day to practise mindfulness will help you cope with work, family and world stresses. You have to shut down your computer from time to time and this is the same for your mind. Meditate, write a gratitude journal or listen to relaxing music. Whatever works!



## Get working

Start work at the same time every day. It's important to keep to the same routines you would if you were in the office. By starting and finishing on time, your colleagues will know you are available and working. Don't let work creep into the rest of your life; stick to a routine.

# Home office set-up: create a space that's good for your mind, body and your job.

## Get your work space right!

Your home office space should be organised, clean and functional. Not everyone has a fully equipped home office but most people can carve out a space that is just for work. Keep these things in mind while organising your new work from home space.

- Don't work from bed. Avoid working from your bedroom all together. It's important to separate work and rest spaces; if not, you may have trouble going to sleep at the end of the day. Sleep is super important for emotional, mental and immune health, so keep work out of your sleeping space.
- If possible, set up your work area with natural light and fresh air. Access to daylight helps maintain your body's sleep-wake cycle, making it easier for you to stick to a good sleep schedule. Fresh air also helps boost mood so try to open a window or two.
- Get yourself a good pair of noise cancelling headphones. Everyone needs these, whether they are working from home or in the office. Being able to cut out distracting noise can boost your concentration and if you need to listen to music to boost your mood or focus, you won't annoy anyone else around you.
- Mind your posture. Working from home is not an excuse to ignore good ergonomics. Poor posture and slouching will have long-term effects on your back and overall health. Get the best chair you can afford, put your feet flat on the ground and make sure your knees are in line with your hips. Your body will thank you for it.



# How to deal with distractions and stay connected while working from home.



## Offline distractions

It's one thing to have to work from home but minding or home schooling kids at the same time is hard.

Come up with a signal to signify you're busy ... something funny like a traffic cone or toy hanging outside your office. If you don't have a dedicated office, perhaps wear a silly hat to signify that it's work time.

## Online distractions

There are so many discussions and breaking news at the moment, it can be hard to stay focused on work. Try to turn off notifications during work hours or use apps and plug-ins to avoid online distractions:

**RescueTime** ([rescuetime.com](https://rescuetime.com))

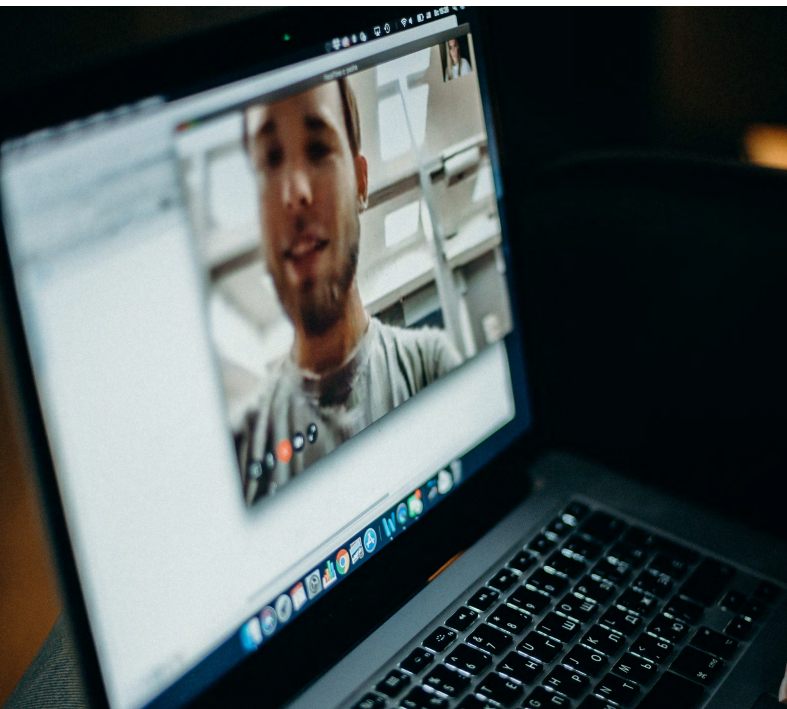
Tracks productivity and blocks distracting sites.  
Free Lite version.

**SelfControl** ([selfcontrolapp.com](https://selfcontrolapp.com))

Blacklists and sets timers for distracting sites.  
Free. macOS only.

**Mindful Browsing** ([mindfulbrowsing.org](https://mindfulbrowsing.org))

Interrupts mindless browsing.  
Free. Chrome only.



## Staying connected

Social distancing does not mean you have to become a recluse.

**Join virtual events and meetings:** use tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp and FaceTime to workshop and discuss projects. This can be more effective than writing long emails. Also, take part in live and pre-recorded webinars to up your skills.

**Online communities:** a lot of communities are moving to online forums. There are Facebook, WhatsApp and [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) events that you can use to learn new skills, network and ultimately broaden your work and social communities. Use these same tools to have face-to-face catch-ups with friends and family to stay connected.

# Manage your time: avoid procrastination and maximise productivity.

## Don't procrastinate

Procrastination is a habit you can break. The next time you find yourself avoiding work:

- Recognise that you're putting something off.
- Count down from 5 to 1 to distract from negative thoughts.
- Do one small task towards your goal.
- Repeat until your task is done.

## Prepare your day

Mapping out your day will allow you to avoid getting sidetracked. Get ahead and plan your day the night before. That way your mind won't run through to-do lists instead of sleeping. Write down what is important versus what is urgent. Keep a notebook next to your bed and write down any thoughts that may interrupt your sleep and then let them go.

## 1 - 3 - 5

Each morning, write down:

- **One** big mission you need to accomplish that day.
- **Three** medium-size tasks you must complete.
- **Five** small to-dos for the day.

This way you can prioritise your tasks and crossing them off your list gives you a sense of achievement.

## Set boundaries

Not having separation between home and work can leave you feeling **'switched on' all the time**. Let coworkers know your working hours and **stick to them**. Work creep is detrimental to your mental and emotional wellbeing. You need downtime to recharge and rest. It's okay to put off work until the next day, when you're refreshed.

## The 2-minute rule

If a task will take you less than 2 minutes to complete ... **DO IT IMMEDIATELY**.

If a task is likely to take more than 2 minutes, **add it to your schedule**.

This is a simple rule but it is very effective. It prevents your to-do list from becoming unmanageable, helps overcome procrastination, and reinforces good time management.

## Big stuff first

*"If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it First Thing in the Morning. And if it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the BIGGEST one first."* — Mark Twain.

What Mark Twain was trying to tell us was, do your biggest, most important and scary task at the beginning of your workday and nothing else that day will be as time-consuming or intimidating.

# How to manage your physical and mental health while working from home.



## Know your sleep type

Everyone's internal clock or circadian typology is different. We all have different patterns of sleep and productivity. It's important to know your type:

**Bears:** their cycle aligns with the sun. They tend to fall asleep easily and have peak productivity before noon.

**Lions:** early risers and early sleepers with peak productivity before noon.

**Wolves:** stay up late and tend to sleep in with peak productivity starting in the afternoon. Some can also be productive in the evening as well.

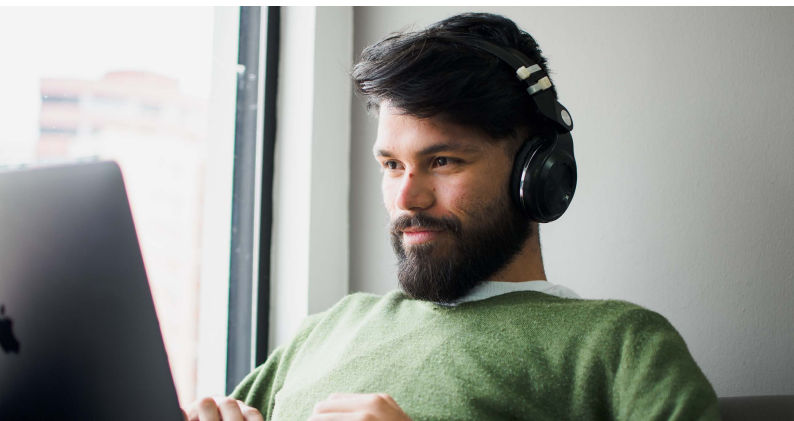
**Dolphins:** tend to be light sleepers and prone to insomnia with peak productivity between 10 am and 2 pm.

Find out more sleep types at: [thepowerofwhen.com](https://thepowerofwhen.com)

## Fitness and nutrition

When you're new to working from home, it's easy to forget your routine and either skip meals or snack all day. A fully stocked fridge can be hard to resist but in order to stay healthy, you need to have a well-balanced diet. Planning your meals in advance makes it easier to stick to a routine.

Stay active. Go for a walk (if allowed), get some fresh air and feel the sun on your skin while respecting social distancing recommendations. There are many benefits to exercising outdoors including increased Vitamin D (good for your immune health). If you need inspiration for indoor exercise routines, there are many free and paid resources online, offering exercise instruction to keep you active. Start with [youtube.com](https://youtube.com).



## Online coaching

Successful people have something in common, they recognise they need to improve all aspects of their lives and engage coaches and mentors to help them achieve this.

With so many changes in the way we live our lives, it might be helpful to ask for help and guidance from a trusted mentor or a paid coach.

# Practise good communication etiquette while chatting with colleagues.

## Visual clues

When you work from home, visual clues such as facial expressions and eye contact are either no longer available or harder to detect. This can lead to misunderstandings that can easily escalate, affecting your work relationships. Make a point of turning on your camera and communicating as clearly as possible.

## Communicate clearly

When not communicating face to face, make sure your intent is clear and leave nothing open to interpretation. Try to be very clear in your written and verbal communications.

Emojis can help convey emotion and intent when chatting with colleagues, but some can be misinterpreted so use them carefully.

## Engage in small talk

When you're physically in the office you make time to chat. It is important to continue to do this with your colleagues and clients while working remotely. This can help strengthen relationships, clear up misunderstandings and can make work more enjoyable. As you would do in the office, keep small talk brief and don't get too personal.

## Use all your tools

With so many tools at our disposal, make sure you know how to use them. Team communication tools like Microsoft Teams, Slack and Zoom can help you stay connected and up to date with projects and plans. If you need help getting to know technology that is new to you, ask a manager or search for an online tutorial.

## Look who's talking

When meeting online, it can be challenging to know who should be speaking. With delayed connections and many team members taking part in online meetings, it is very easy to talk over each other. Be mindful of who else is speaking and wait for a lull in the conversation. Don't forget, you can drop a text chat into video calls to get a point across.

## Set up a side chat

It's a good idea to keep social chat and work chat separate. If your company uses Microsoft Teams to share files and plan projects, you could set up a WhatsApp group to share jokes, memes and general chat. By having both options available, team members will feel more open about having a personal chat as it doesn't get mixed up with work.

# Make an effort to adjust to your new working conditions.



## Be kind to yourself

You may not be up to date on all of the tools and technology required for you to effectively work from home. Give yourself time to learn and permission to ask for assistance. It may come easy to some and not to others. Don't beat yourself up if you need a helping hand.

## Have a good laugh

With so many changes to the way we live and work, there will be increased stress and uncertainty. Make a point of having a good laugh.

Light relief is a key coping strategy that will benefit you personally, allowing you to continue working effectively. Go on, have a good LOL!

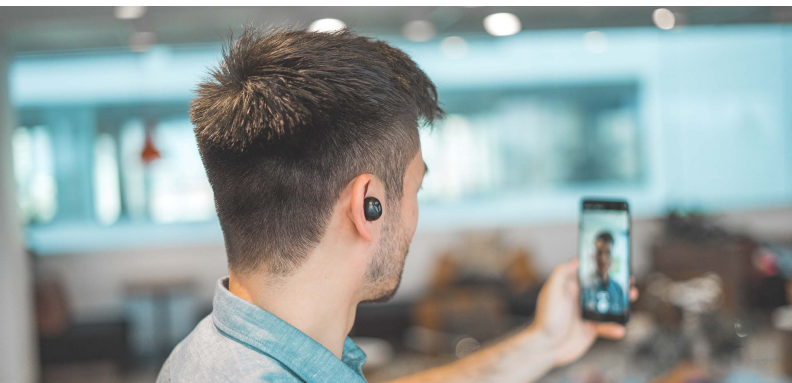


## All about family

Chances are your partner, parents, kids and even your pets are also having issues adjusting to your new schedule. It's an uncertain time for everyone and it's important to be there for each other. Make time to talk about the changes and what you can do to help each other.

## Be grateful

Be grateful for all you have. While working from home can be challenging, you have a job! When you plan your day, write down three things you're grateful for in your notebook. Focusing on what you are grateful for improves mental health, mood and productivity.



## At home, not alone

You're not alone in this new way of life. Chances are most, if not all, of your colleagues, friends and family are going through similar changes. Stay connected and reach out to your community for advice and assistance. **You are at home, but you're not alone.**