



STAYING PRODUCTIVE WHILE WORKING FROM HOME



Working from home has become the new normal for most workers in Canada since the COVID-19 pandemic began and forced employers to rethink their working strategy. Working from home (WFH) is not a new concept but might be a new way of working for many of us.

Research has shown that WFH has positive effects on the worker such as Increased Productivity, Better Performance and Fewer distractions

WFH has its unique challenges but can be overcome by making a few modifications to how we typically conduct work. WFH has many positive aspects and can actually be more productive than working in a cubicle or office. Optimize your work from home experience by following these important tips.

CREATE A ROUTINE

When we work from an office, we follow a routine which usually follows something like this: wake up in the morning, get ready and travel to work, work for 8 hours with a lunch break and two short breaks in the day, and then we go home once we are done with work. When working from home, there is no such routine because your office may just be two steps away and you no longer have to rush to catch public transit. So how do we create a similar routine to ensure that we are not falling behind on work?

Here are some tips to create a successful routine:

- Wake up and go to sleep at the same time every day.
- Do your regular morning routine which may include making a cup of coffee, changing out of sleeping attire and your routine personal hygiene tasks.
- Have a designated “office” where you go to once you complete your morning routine.
- Take lunch and a coffee/tea break at similar times each day.
- Work for a designated amount of time (such as from 9am – 5pm) each day, and then make sure to plug off from all work related devices and put them out of sight. This ensures you are separating work from your personal life as much as possible.
- Have video calls with fellow colleagues at least once a day to prevent negative effects of isolation.
- Create a daily or weekly to-do list and break down work into smaller tasks or action items to set personal deadlines.

AVOID DISTRACTIONS

Working from home also poses the challenge of working in the company of kids, family members or pets. So it becomes challenging to focus on work while also struggling with distractions from those around you. In your normal office, you will not encounter the same unexpected demands from family as you would when working from home. Similarly, you may become the recipient of calls from family and friends during your designated work hours.

It may be tricky to avoid distractions when at home, but you can start off with some simple tips:

- Use headphones or a headset for your work meetings.
- Use signals or visual cues to inform family you may be in a meeting such as using headphones, having an “in a meeting” post card, etc.
- Create a schedule for the kids and/or chores so that you don’t get interrupted when working.
- Take short breaks so that you don’t lose focus while working.
- Silence your personal phone and limit time spent on social media.

SEPARATE OFFICE SPACE

When working from home, there is temptation to work from the couch, the bed or any other place in your home which does not constitute an ergonomically set up work station. Find a comfortable and separate spot which you can call your “office” and work only from there. This helps in eliminating distractions, brings focus and also brings the feel of being in an office. You can also set an ergonomic workstation if you have the supplies which includes an ergonomic desk with the appropriate height, and an ergonomic chair. Focusing on doing your work following ergonomic best practices helps to prevent the risk of association back pain, shoulder pain, and other muscle aches that may arise due to



working from home for long hours. You can use a quick guide developed by PSHSA on setting up your [home work station](#). If a perfect ergonomically set up work station is not possible, try your best to use household items to prevent the risk for musculoskeletal disorders such as using books to bring your monitor to the appropriate height. Nevertheless, having a designated area as your office helps create the mindset that you are at work and improves your focus. Ensure that you take short breaks every 20-30 minutes to stretch or walk. By simply changing positions, you can relieve muscle tension and improve blood circulation.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Working from home gives us time and space to focus better in the comfort of our own home. Unfortunately, it can also lead to feelings of loneliness and social isolation when you are working alone with no colleagues around you to share thoughts or ideas. To prevent this isolation from creeping in, try to have multiple conversations in the form of video calls or phone calls with colleagues and frequent check-ins with your supervisor to create as much of a normal communication pattern as possible. Video calls are more helpful than regular phone calls because it lets you see the other person and creates more of a deeper connection with your team mates as you discuss your work but also how you are adjusting to working from home. It is key to communicate with your supervisor regularly to discuss work progress but also to discuss how the adjustment to working from home is going so that any work accommodations can be provided on a timely basis.

REFERENCES

<https://www.pshsa.ca/blog/tips-for-setting-up-your-home-office>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2020/03/14/9-tips-to-be-productive-when-working-at-home-during-covid-19/#147527a75a38>

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/347479>

<https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/15259-working-from-home-more-productive.html>

© Public Services Health and Safety Association