

Ten working from home tips to help you stay productive during the UK Covid-19 lockdown

1. Walk to work

It is likely that your home 'office' is only a very few steps away from your kitchen, living room or bedroom which means almost no transition time between family life and work life. So try walking to work – with your work bag in your hand try a few laps around the garden or maybe two or three times up and down the stairs!



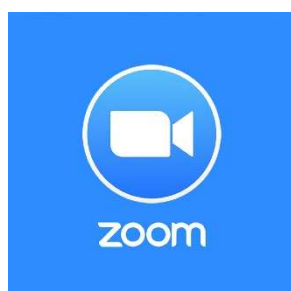
2. Get dressed

Apparently one of the advantages of working from home is that you can finish that important assignment in your pyjamas, or your workout gear. Not sure about that!

You should get dressed – it puts you in the right frame of mind. That is not saying that you should wear a three piece suit to sit in your dining room but put some proper clothes on! You don't want to have to rush round frantically getting dressed when the boss calls for a Zoom, or Hangouts video call!

3. Learn by doing

Zoom, Hangouts, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Messenger, Free Conference Call – these may all be new to you but suddenly they are at the forefront of home working and allow you to keep in touch with your team rather than just by email or one to one phone calls. You may not know how to use them, but someone in your team will help



4. Make a new routine

When you establish a routine to your work days, you can focus on doing the work, not on how you're going to do the work. Keep in contact with the others members of your team so that they know you are ok especially if you are alone at home.

Try not to drink more cups of tea or coffee than you would normally do as too much caffeine can affect your concentration levels.



5. Get off the computer.

For a lot of jobs it is a requirement to spend a lot of time on a computer and that is no different when working from home. Much of our work has to be done on our laptops and there's no way round it.

But apart from the display screen health & safety rules laid down by your company, you shouldn't spend all day with your eyes glued to a screen anyway, and if you have children at home, you shouldn't spend all day holed up in your office by yourself either.

Try to find device-free ways to do your work. Rough things out on paper, brainstorm ideas on sketch pads instead. We may work online, but that doesn't mean **ALWAYS** being in front of your machine, try to work offline for at least part of the day.

6. Eat.

When you're in the middle of a project, it's easy to keep working instead of taking a time out to tend to your body's needs. But what's good for the body is good for the brain. You must take time out to eat in order to sustain you for the rest of the day. You won't work as well if you are hungry.

Try to eat away from your computer, use meal times as part of your offline activity – see tip number 5 above. Try to have a bit of variety in your meals don't let food boredom creep into your day.

7. You're sitting more than you realise.

Because your home office is just ten or so steps from your kitchen, living room or dining room it is easy to sit at the computer all day, then sit at the table for dinner, then sit on the sofa to read or watch TV at night. All that sitting is not good for you – it can cause havoc with your back and neck!



Take time to get your 'permitted exercise' and go for a walk, run or cycle. Take a break and walk up and down stairs (if you have any) or walk round the garden or do some yoga or whatever floats your boat – just don't sit all day long!

8. Build hard stops into your day.

If this is your first experience of working from home then be wary of the 'call to work' – it will be there all the time and it is, believe it or not, very tempting to just go and do another five minutes. You **DON'T** necessarily have to work regular hours and you will do what fits in with other commitments such as home educating etc. But **DO** build hard stops into your day. Otherwise it's easy to be always working, or thinking about work.



9. Take advantage.

Working from home has its challenges, certainly. But it also has some serious perks. Take advantage of them! Work outside in your garden or back yard on a beautiful day, take a short walk to mull over a problem, load up your desk with your favourite plants (if you can find space), put dinner in the oven while taking a call, work with your dog curled up at your feet. These pockets of joy are there for the taking. Look for them.



10. Take care.

If you've been working from home for a while, even if it has been one day a week like I have, these are unprecedented and difficult times. If you're having a hard time focusing, if you're working at a slower pace than usual, if your attention span is suffering, or if your typical routine has been thrown off, understand that all these things are normal.

Don't forget the fundamentals: brush your teeth, eat healthy food, move your body, and be gentle with yourself. Some days will be very productive and others not so much, but as long as what needs doing gets done then that's okay.

We're all trying to do our best in these strange times. We may not feel like we've reached a 'new normal' and I am not sure we will ever return to the old normal (whatever that was), but if we take simple steps to look after ourselves and care for those around us, we will feel a little bit better each day.