

Tips for Successful Teleworkers

Establish a consistent routine

- A crucial skill for telework is being able to flip that mental switch from personal time to work time without the physical cue of changing locations.
- One technique that can help is to establish a routine for yourself. Consider using some of the time you would normally spend commuting to bookend your workday. Make breakfast, take the dog for a walk, or go to the gym; anything that would help your body and mind know that it's almost time to get to work.
- Think about those first few tasks you do when you come into the office. Is it check your calendar? Or reply to emails you've received overnight? Try to do those things at the same time each day.

Dress for the office

- Consider creating a telework dress code for yourself. Many experienced teleworkers have found that this not only helps them prepare mentally to work but has saved them embarrassment during impromptu video chats.

Create a work-only space

- It is still a good idea to create a space for yourself that you use just for work. Something as simple as using a bookshelf as a room divider, or an area rug for your desk and office chair, can help to distinguish workspace from personal space.

Set clear expectations with family, friends and neighbors

- We all know that telework is not a substitute for childcare or elder care. However, it can be difficult for our family and friends to respect our work time when they know we are at home.
- It is important to set clear boundaries and expectations that working hours are dedicated to work and you are not available to attend to other responsibilities or social activities. Having clear boundaries from the start can help to avoid conflicts or misunderstandings down the road.

Don't forget to move

- When we are really focused on our work, we may forget to pay attention to our bodies. Without the prompts that the office environment gives us, like trips to the printer, popping into a coworker's office to ask a question, or a walk down to the conference room; we need to be more intentional about taking a chance to breathe and stretch.
- Consider setting a reminder. Just a few moments away from the screen to take a few deep breathes and get the blood flowing now and then can help you be healthier and more productive over the long term.

Join the conversation

- Do not put all the responsibility to include you in discussions on your coworkers and supervisors that are in the office. Be an active participant.
- Call in early to virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams, Skype or Cisco Systems meetings and engage the other participants in conversation.
- Use instant messages or pick up the phone to consult with your coworkers on work-related matters the way you would in the office.

- Volunteer to take on responsibilities when work assignments are being given out by management.
- Seek out development opportunities for yourself and share any resources you discover with your coworkers.

Partner with someone in the office

- Some experienced teleworkers have found it beneficial to form a partnership with an employee in the office. This relationship can be very informal, and sometimes it's as simple as having someone in the office to exchange messages or chat with on the phone to keep that social connection alive.
- Working from home can be an isolating experience for some, so it is important to have someone in the office you can connect with, both to stay on top of changes in the business, and to feel like part of the team.

Keep your status up-to-date

- Part of teleworking successfully is overcoming the perception that when you are not in the office, you are not working. This false perception can be reinforced if your status in Microsoft Teams, Outlook, Skype, or on shared calendars, is not current and accurate.
- Make sure that during your working hours your status indicates that you are available. Make sure you truly are available by answering the phone, responding promptly to messages, and participating in meetings.
- If you take leave, make sure that your out-of-office messages are on, your status in Microsoft Teams is updated, and your leave time is indicated on any shared calendars.
- Consider posting your schedule somewhere in the office, so that your team members know when they can expect to reach you.

- If some of your work requires that you not be distracted, consider setting up hours of availability and blocking off hours for performing specific assignments, so that your coworkers know it is because you are focused on work.

When you're done for the day; be done

- Many experienced teleworkers have at some point struggled with being able to shut down at the end of the day. It can be very tempting to just check one more email, or just make one more call, even well after your office hours are over.
- It is important to consciously maintain a work-life balance; not only for your health and wellbeing, but to maintain the quality of your work.
- Some teleworkers will set an alarm just before the end of working hours to signal that it is time to start wrapping up. If you are not required to be on call, silence your work phone and email notification sounds.
- If your home office is a separate room, close the door on your way out. Letting work creep into your personal hours can undo any benefits to quality of life that telework can afford.