

# Working from home in the age of coronavirus

As many people find themselves continuing to work from home, here's how to make it all work.

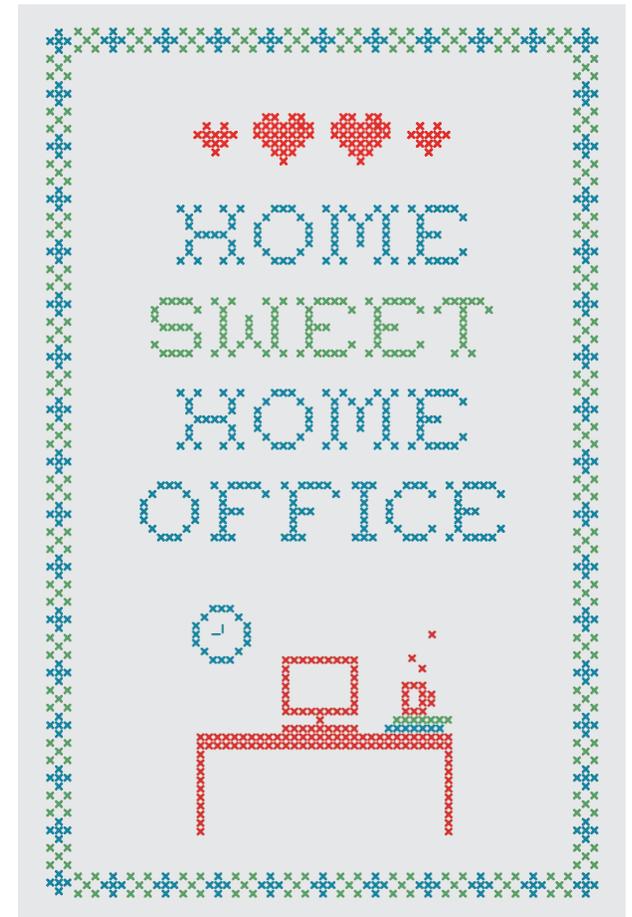


**W**orking from home might not have turned out to be the dream it once promised to be.

For one thing, it's no longer a choice for many of us. Instead of having the luxury to work from home when we need to, we're forced to work from home. Many businesses continue with cautious measures and require staff to work from home due to coronavirus.

For many of us, it's the first time we've had to work remotely, which is a challenge itself.

You might now also find yourself balancing additional family duties, caring for children or elderly relatives, with work commitments.



If you find yourself working from home for the first time, or under challenging circumstances, the following tips may help.



## Communicate clearly

This is new territory for everyone. Being open and clear with everyone — colleagues and family — is important.

- **Communicate** and let your family know when you need blocks of time uninterrupted. And let your colleagues and manager know when you'll be away from your work. Set expectations with everyone.
- **Prioritise** your work and make sure you agree priorities with your manager so you're working on the right things. Set clear goals so you know what you need to accomplish.
- **Schedule** your day and try to stick to it. This will be helpful for you and your family.
- **Plan** for your children to do their most engaging activities — and the ones that don't need supervision — when you need time to focus on work.

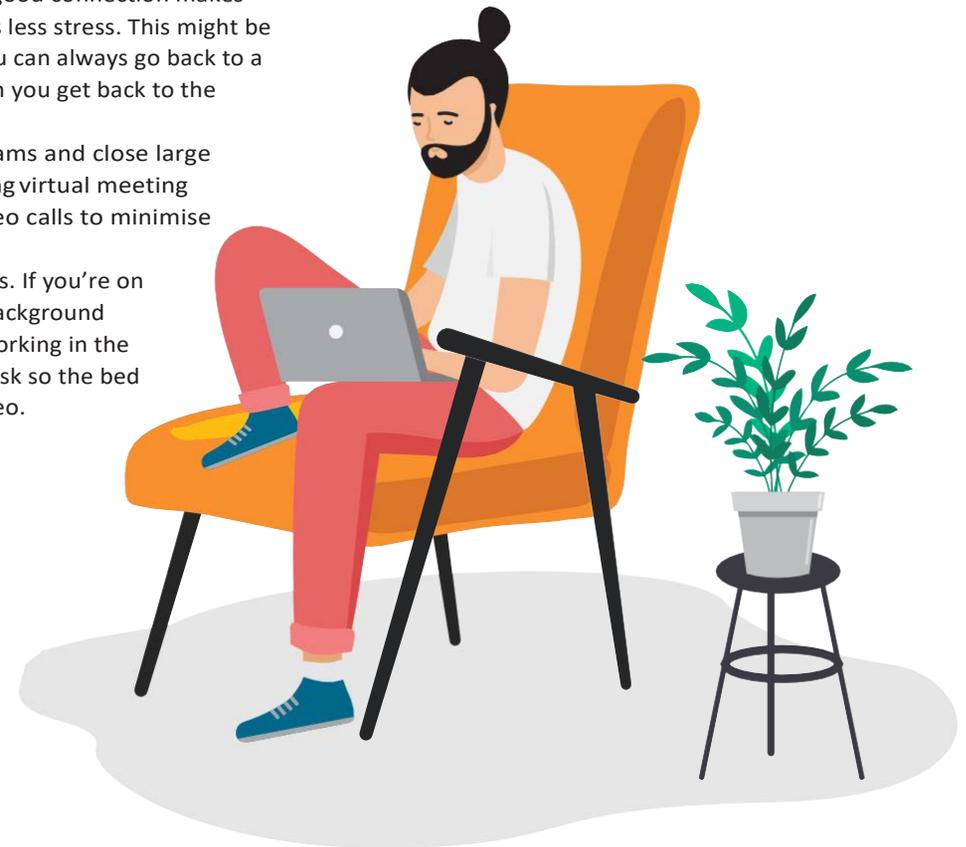
- **Separate** spaces, if you can — one for your “office” (preferably with a door you can close when you need to) and one for the children. This can help set boundaries and establish discipline for everyone.

## Work effectively

You still want to feel focused and productive, and you want to be engaged and professional with your colleagues. To that end:

- **Upgrade** your internet connection, especially if you have video calls. A good connection makes things easier and causes less stress. This might be more expensive, but you can always go back to a slower connection when you get back to the office.
- **Streamline** your programs and close large software and competing virtual meeting programs while on video calls to minimise glitches.
- **Check** your surroundings. If you're on video, try to keep the background uncluttered. If you're working in the bedroom, angle your desk so the bed doesn't show up on video.

- **Know** your audience. We've all seen that video where the toddler wanders into the room while Dad is on a high-stakes video call. There are times when it's perfectly fine for a child or pet to make an appearance (in fact, at times this can help build important personal relationships with close team members). But for all those other times, be sure to keep your office door securely closed. And keep in mind, the mute button is your friend!



## Maintain social connections

Having friends at work is important to your emotional health and overall wellbeing. Building and maintaining those relationships can be harder at a distance, so:

- **Get personal** to build connections with your colleagues. This might be one time when having your children and pets running around behind you on a video call is a good relationship builder.
- **Take a break** together by scheduling virtual coffee, or lunch, over video.
- **Create a virtual chat** room to catch up. When you're at home, you miss out on those casual encounters where you chat about work, TV shows, or something cool you're reading. Many workplaces have instant messaging programs, or you can create virtual catchups through common chat software like Microsoft Teams or Slack. Start a channel where you share links, observations, and personal stories.



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## Stay healthy

When it comes to health, you'll want to lean into the good things about remote work — the flexibility to take more time for yourself, do some at-home exercise, and eat healthy.

- **Set boundaries** between your work and life to avoid your workday bleeding into the rest of your life. Working from home doesn't mean you have to work all the time when you're at home.
- **Get up and move.** Without a commute to get you moving in the morning and the evening, it's too easy to be sedentary all day. Use what would have been your commute time to do some exercise or use your lunch break to work out.
- **Stay away** from the fridge. You want to get up from your desk regularly throughout the day...but not to walk to the kitchen every time. This is a case in which "out of sight, out of mind" is probably a good thing.
- **Give yourself a break.** Remember, you can't expect yourself to do any of this perfectly. When you do get overwhelmed, look for ways to cope with that, too.

