The Ultimate Working From Home Guide[1]

Everything you need to work remotely—for an employer or yourself

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The work-from-home job force just got a big push from the current global coronavirus pandemic, but even before COVID-19 became a factor, increasing numbers of people have been saying goodbye to their onerous commute to work. Thanks to ever-evolving technologies like Skype, Facetime, Slack, Zoom, Google Hangouts, authenticator apps, and cloud computing—not to mention texting and email—it's no longer necessary to be in an office full-time to be a productive member of the team. In fact, many kinds of work can be done just as effectively, if not more so, from a home office.

As appealing as remote work is to employees, it wouldn't be such a strong trend if employers didn't also recognize benefits from their side of the desk. Companies with work-from-anywhere policies can boost employee productivity, reduce turnover, and lower organizational costs, according to a recent research at Harvard Business School.[1] [2] Telecommuting workers with very complex jobs who don't require a lot of collaboration or social support can perform better than their office-based counterparts, according to another study.[3] Also, in the event of a natural or manmade disaster, a distributed workforce is in a better position to keep operations running, even if some of the group goes offline.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- For employers, working from home can boost productivity, reduce turnover, and lower organizational costs, while employees enjoy perks like flexibility and the lack of a commute.
- To work effectively from home, you'll need to make sure you have the technology you require, a separate workspace, Internet service that meets your need, a workable schedule you can stick to, and ways to connect with others.
- Top fields for remote work include computers and IT, education and training, and healthcare; positions include customer service reps, virtual assistants, data entry and transcription, teachers, and more.

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[1] Excerpt. For full article, go to https://www.investopedia.com/personal-finance/work-from-home-guide/

- A variety of top firms, including Amazon, Dell, Humana, Kaplan, and Salesforce, offer remote work opportunities, but it's also important to be aware of scams.

How to Work Effectively From Home

Whether you're working remotely one day per week (or more) or full-time—by choice or because of a health scare or weather event—it's important to ensure that you are set up to be productive. This includes having a designated workspace with the right technology; ways of dealing with kids, pets, and other potential disruptions; and a schedule that allows for the social contact and stimulation that ordinarily comes from being in a workplace with others. Here are strategies and tips to be successful as a remote worker.

Know the ground rules
Does your employer require a nine-to-five schedule, or is there flexibility? Are you allowed to work on public Wi-Fi? Which tech tools might you need, such as Zoom for video conferencing, Slack or Microsoft Teams for group chats, or Trello for project management? If you work for someone else, it's important that your employer spells out the ground rules and ensures you have the appropriate equipment, such as a laptop, as well as network access, passcodes, and instructions for remote login, including two-factor authentication. Be sure to do trial runs and work out any problems that might impede your work. If you work for yourself, you may need many of the same tools.

Set up a functional workspace
Not everyone has a designated home office, but it's critical to have a private, quiet space for your work. If you can, separate your work area from your personal spaces and use it just for work, not for other activities.

Get the internet speed you need
If you have kids, their FaceTiming and Xbox habits may slow your connection and download speeds. Moving as close as you can to your Wi-Fi router can help (devices that are distant tend to draw on bandwidth), or you can consider switching to Ethernet. You'll likely need a dongle since laptops don't have Ethernet ports these days plus an Ethernet cable to connect your computer to your router. Wondering if your most-used website is down?
Check isitdownrightnow.com, which monitors key websites and services to see if they're working. [

Use phone apps
If your job involves making long distance and/or international calls, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp and Skype all let you call over the Internet across the globe

on the cheap. And if you and the person you're calling are on the same service, the call will be free.

Minimize distractions
If you have a barking dog or a jack-hammering worker outside your windows, consider investing in noise-cancelling headphones, such as Apple's AirPod Pros. And if the kids are home and you're without childcare (say, during the summer or a natural emergency), see if you and your spouse (or a neighbor in a similar situation) can take turns with care—which may mean you have to talk to your manager about working evening hours.

Plan extra social interactions
Some folks love the thought of working in solitude, but even the most introverted among us can start feeling a little claustrophobic after a few weeks at home, alone, staring at the same project for long hours. It can get lonely. Be ready for that, and try to schedule some connect-with-the-outside-world time, like a lunch date (even if you take it at 3 PM), a videochat with a friend, or an exercise class.

43%
Percentage of Americans in 2016 who worked remotely at least part of the time, up from 39% in 2012, according to Gallup's State of the American Workplace report.