



# A Guide to Working From Home

Ergonomics, How to Be Successful, and Setting Up a Home Office

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## How to successfully work from home?

As many of us are getting the hang of working from home (WFH), some are wondering how to make it the best experience possible. This document will offer suggestions on how to structure your day; what are the best scheduling tactics when working from home; what does an efficient home workspace look like, and how to maintain good ergonomic practices while working from home?

### The Basics

Working from home can be quite the adjustment. Suddenly work and home lives intersect, with the activities of each occurring in the same place. Here are a few basic ideas for making this time more successful that you can consider and implement what works best for you.

1. **Set office hours.** Set specific office hours and be sure to “leave” work on time, just like you would if you were at the office. For some, that might be starting work at 8 am and working until 4:30 pm, with a half-hour lunch break during the day. For others, that might be working from 7:30 am to 8:30 am, taking an hour break, and working again from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Whatever you decide, be sure to approve your schedule with your supervisor.
2. **Take short breaks.** When working from home you don’t have the normal distractions (water cooler, coworkers to chat with, etc.) a traditional office would have. Be sure to stand up, walk around, and stretch. This is good for you physically and mentally.
3. **Keep water close.** It’s easy to get in the zone and work for several hours becoming dehydrated. Keep your brain and body going by keeping water close by.
4. **To-do lists and daily priorities.** Start each day by establishing your to-do’s and the priorities for the day. This will help you stay focused and avoid the rabbit hole that is email or instant messaging apps.

### WFH Veteran Feedback

Kuali has an established work from home culture. Several employees shared their top tips for successfully working from home. Hopefully some of these may help you.

**Tony:** “Two things for successful working from home: 1. Have a good office chair. 2. Always have water nearby.”

**Jeff:** “My main tip is to set working time limits for yourself, like “never before 8am and never after 6pm. I’ve seen so many friends with WFH jobs who end up working from 9 in the morning



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'til 12 at night, just because "I'm here, so I feel like I should do it." You just have to force yourself to call it a day or else you'll lose it."

**Kaitlyn:** "Schedules and routines are a lifesaver. Also, keep water and quick snacks close by."

**Terri:** "When we're at the office we're used to getting up and walking around to get water, an answer to a question, or maybe something from the copy machine. But at home I find I might not move for hours at a time. Staring at the computer for so long isn't good for our eyes; we need to refocus occasionally. So I like to put my focus on something else every now and then. I look out the window at something, or a picture on the wall; something that is further away than my computer, for just a couple of minutes. This helps to reduce the stress on my eyes."

## What a home office should look like?

### Ergonomics While At Home

While we need to be efficient and productive at work, ergonomics is also important. The most critical reason for good ergonomic practices is to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injuries. When working in a business office, accommodating good ergonomic practices seems to be more easily implemented or already taken care of. The same ergonomic practices can be implemented in an at-home office, and it doesn't require fancy, specialized equipment or cumbersome amounts of effort.

We'll cover the basic elements of an at-home office and then discuss ways to implement ergonomic practices while you work from home. But first, let's talk about the one thing we can control no matter what office we're working in, our posture. Regardless of where we work and if we are sitting or standing, it is important to maintain a neutral position putting minimal strain on muscles. The images below are recommendations from OSHA regarding proper posture for sitting and standing.

**Upright Sitting**

*Upright sitting posture.* The user's torso and neck are approximately vertical and in-line, the thighs are approximately horizontal, and the lower legs are vertical.




Figure 1. Upright sitting posture

Figure 2. The user's torso and neck are approximately vertical and in-line, the thighs are approximately horizontal, and the lower legs are vertical.

**Standing**

*Standing posture.* The user's legs, torso, neck, and head are approximately in-line and vertical with feet slightly apart. The user may also elevate one foot on a rest while in this posture.




Figure 3. Standing posture

Figure 4. The user's legs, torso, neck, and head are approximately in-line and vertical with feet slightly apart.

  

**Declined Sitting**

*Declined sitting posture.* The user's thighs are inclined with the buttocks higher than the knee and the angle between the thighs and the torso is greater than 90 degrees. The torso is vertical or slightly reclined and the legs are vertical. This position should not inhibit the ability to easily reach the keyboard or view the monitor.




Figure 5. Declined sitting position

Figure 6. The user's thighs are inclined with the buttocks higher than the knee and the angle between the thighs and the torso is greater than 90 degrees. The torso is vertical or slightly reclined and the legs are vertical.

**Reclined Sitting**

*Reclined sitting posture.* The user's torso and neck are straight and recline between 105 and 120 degrees from the thighs.




Figure 7. Reclined sitting posture

Figure 8. The user's torso and neck are straight and recline between 105 and 120 degrees from the thighs.

[Images Source: OSHA](#)

## Home Office Setup

Similar to your dedicated work space in your traditional office, it's important that your home work space is conducive to productivity. A few items needed and things to consider when selecting a workspace at home include:

- Desk (or hard surface that functions as a desk)
- A comfortable chair
- A quiet, distraction-free workspace
- Optimal lighting, well-lit but not too bright that it causes a glare on your screens
- Space to keep additional items nearby to reduce the need for reaching

Not all of us are fortunate enough to have a dedicated space for a home office, and even with a dedicated space it's nice to have an occasional change of scenery. With that in mind, we're going to get creative with ergonomic home work spaces.

### Dining Table

- Make sure your wrists are not angled up or down, but in a neutral position.



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- If you are working from a tablet or laptop for more than a couple of hours, using an external keyboard may be helpful.
  - Try to keep your knees below your hips and feet touching the floor.

### Counter or Pub-style Table

- Raise your laptop or keyboard to elbow height using books, paper reams, etc.
- Use a footstool or footrest alternative to allow you to rest one foot periodically to help reduce pressure on your lower back

### Sofa or Armchair

- Use a pillow to reduce the depth of the seat. This should allow your feet to rest comfortably on the floor.
- It may be helpful to place a book or other hard surface under your laptop to help level out your work space. Be sure any added surface does not raise your keyboard or laptop above your elbow height.

Most importantly, regardless of where you decided to work at home, be sure to take frequent breaks throughout the day. Stretch, walk around, get a drink, and give your eyes a break from staring at a screen.

As you work from home, be sure you are aware of your surroundings and being cautious as you move about your new office space. Utilize the same caution moving about during your work day you would use in your traditional office.

Best of luck setting up your new home workspace and adjusting to working from home. We're all in this together and will get through it together!