

Tips on how to cope with working from home

We've all had to adapt very quickly to new ways of working in a very short time. For many people and businesses, this has meant working from home or remotely – possibly for the very first time. Working from home or remotely can be very challenging and isolating. Sometimes our attention wanders, or we miss people.

A structured day can be a good way to address this:



Designate a place to work that is as free of distractions as you can make it.

Set a routine for working at home - it's important to get up and get started, to take regular breaks including a lunch break, and to finish working and turn off at an appropriate time.

No matter how tempting, avoid working in your pyjamas all day. This is likely a big change already so try not to lose all your daily routines at once.

Consider keeping a journal, incorporating gratitude practice. Ask:

What was I grateful for today?

What was I challenged by today?

Try and set clear tasks for the day, three major decisions or activities is a good day's work, but keep an eye on ongoing tasks too. You won't always get as much done at home, but you might get loads done. One great tip we heard of was to have a WEB list to help to prioritise:

W what you **WANT** to achieve

E what you **EXPECT** to achieve

B what you had **BETTER** achieve that day.

Plan some time during the day to go outside and get some natural light or do some exercise outside if it is safe to do so and within guidelines on social distancing.

Use your diary to clearly say to others when you are working and when you are available to speak.



Consider keeping a journal

Then in a week or so you will start to get insights into things you can improve in this working pattern. Soon you'll get to know when you do your best focused work, or need the most input. At home that might be different to the office. You could combine this with a paper bullet journal or planner to keep thoughts, tasks and achievement in the same place.

When you are done for the day, pack away your work things or leave your work area at the end of the day.



If you are home-schooling or looking after children whilst trying to work, have a conversation with work about those realities. Try and set up a routine whereby you have distinct times for working and for helping with school time.

Dividing your attention may leave both things suffering and being there for children offering undivided attention at these uncertain times is very important.

You may have more time on your hands whilst working from home, you may be feeling bored due to not going out. It is easy to spend time on-line shopping. Be mindful of your spending habits whilst at home. Keep track of your expenditure and ensure you stick to your monthly budget.

Whilst working from home you may find that you're eating more, ensure that you have healthy snacks available and try to set yourself a snack limit each day.

It's important to stay connected, try and use video calls whenever you can, there's no substitute for seeing another person's face. If video conferencing is a step too far, you can do WhatsApp video for basic video calls with close colleagues. If you'd normally check in with colleagues in person in the office, check in with them virtually instead, whether by video, call or email.



Create social opportunities with colleagues, use WhatsApp to share pics of your workstations, pets or children, have a virtual lunch with your colleagues.

Tips for managers on supporting teams who are working remotely

Supporting teams who are working remotely can be a challenge for managers. Here are our top tips for managers on how to keep teams engaged whilst working remotely:

Be as **open as possible** and trust people to do what is expected of them.

Keep an eye on people's **output and less on the time** they're working – especially if they have children or others to care for. Suggest flexible hours if possible. When we're working remotely, it's easier than ever for our home and working lives to mix. Some people may do their best work after 7pm when children are in bed, while others may need to split their days with family stuff. It's the results that count, so don't clockwatch.



Recognising stress or a lack of engagement early is vital. **Get to know each team member** so you can spot when there is a change.

When you see each other pretty much every day, a change in people's appearance or moods are more obvious. When working remotely, be aware of how they speak on the phone, the tone of their emails and keep an eye on performance. And where appropriate, use video tools for meetings to help gauge how they look and their mood.

Communicate clearly and honestly

Hold regular team meetings, but also call staff individually – even if it's just a catch up. And remember, these can be tough times for many people, so talk about how they're doing – not just work.

Promote training and development opportunities to keep up interest and motivation.

Workloads may fluctuate during this period.

Encourage your team members to think about their personal development during quieter times and look out for relevant webinars or on-line courses.

Don't forget the importance of recognition and thanks.



We might expect a thank you after delivering a hefty piece of work, but those little everyday, face-to-face thank yous following a good day's work or doing something quickly can get overlooked when we're not in the workplace.

Ensure staff liaise amongst themselves – peer-to-peer interaction without a manager is essential.

Your teams are very likely to have a close rapport or bond, so encourage them to get together on a call or video. It's good for morale!

Act as a role model for positive health and wellbeing.

If you're sending emails at 11pm, your people may think they're expected to do the same. Make sure they know it's ok to knock off when they're supposed to and lead by example.

Remind people of the importance of taking breaks. Remember the **40:20 rule**, 40 minutes sitting, 10 minutes standing plus 10 minutes moving and/or stretching.



It's easy to get stuck at our desks, so encourage your teams to step away from their work to stretch their legs. And if people really can't spare the time, there are plenty of desk exercises they can do to help stay healthy. Some examples of these can be found below.

Tips on setting up your home workspace

Whilst working from home it can be tempting to work from the sofa or even in bed! Whilst this may seem idyllic it can lead to numerous ergonomic problems further down the line. Where possible, having a separate work area is recommended. Somewhere you can set up a proper chair, desk and equipment.

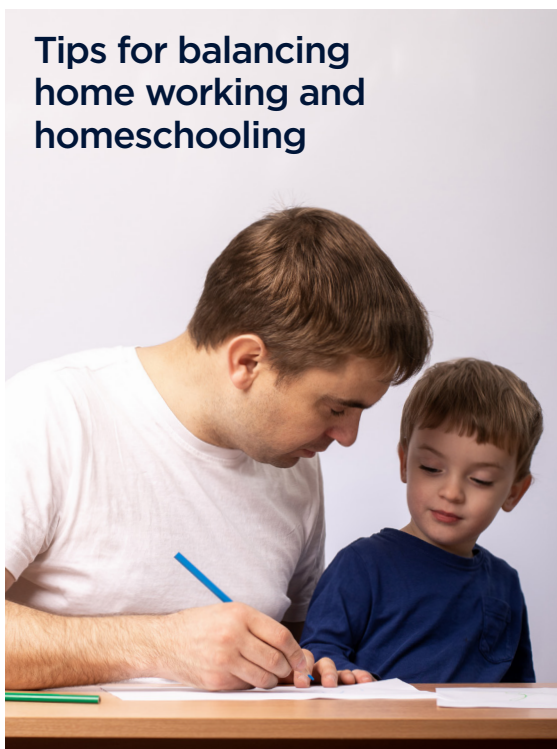
Whilst working from home temporarily it is unlikely that you will have had an individual workstation assessment but you should still do your best to achieve a reasonable posture whilst working from home. These few simple steps can help you create a more comfortable and healthier work space:

- Reduce overall strain by adjusting your computer monitor so that it is parallel to your face and tilted toward your eye line. Make sure that the top of your screen is in-line with your eyebrows. This stops you from dropping your neck or slouching over to view the screen. Then all you need to do is put your arms straight out in front of you. Your screen should be an arm's length away with your fingers able to touch the screen. If necessary you can raise your monitor using books. This is only possible if you're using a separate keyboard and monitor. If using a laptop then it is recommended that you use a laptop stand to raise it to eye height and then use a separate wireless keyboard.
- Make the most of your chair's adjustment features. The seat should be tilted forward slightly, and feet should be able to comfortably sit flat on the floor. If you don't have an adjustable chair (you may just be sitting on a dining chair) then you could use a cushion to angle your pelvis forward for a slightly better posture. Or use a cushion or rolled up towel to support your lower back. If your feet don't touch the floor then you could try resting them on a box.
- Consider the lighting, where possible place your equipment at right angles to the window to avoid the glare of the sunlight. If the room is dark then use a lamp to avoid eye strain.



You may find this HSE video helpful

Tips for balancing home working and homeschooling



Working from home for many of us is something we are not used to and may find challenging. Many parents are facing the additional challenge of also trying to home school their children during this period. This is causing stress and anxiety for many parents.

Accepting that you may not be as productive as normal, because these aren't normal times will help. Try to focus on what you can accomplish within the next 24 hours and let go of what you cannot accomplish right now. Mindfulness practices may help you to stay focused on the present.

Accept that there will be interruptions. They are inevitable. It can help to start each day explaining to your child in an age appropriate way what your work commitments are for that day and what's expected of them. It can also help to be open and honest with the people you are working with about the challenges you are facing at home and that you may not be as responsive as normal.

If you find that you are struggling to cope with balancing home schooling and working from home you may find our [guide on looking after your own mental health](#) helpful.

Desk Exercises

Whether working from home or the office, taking 5-10 minutes out of your day for these simple but effective desk exercises can make for a healthier and less stressful day.

Lower Limbs

TOE TAPPING

Seated upright in your chair, gently tap your toes on the floor alternating between each foot.

GLUTEAL SQUEEZE

To start toning, simply squeeze your buttocks together and hold for 5-10 seconds.

LEG RAISES

While seated, straighten one or both legs and hold in place for 5 seconds. Lower the leg(s) back to the ground without letting the feet touch the floor. Repeat (alternating legs if raising them separately) for 15 reps.

CALF RISES

Stand up from your chair and place feet hip width apart. Slowly move up onto your tip toes and slowly back to the ground. Repeat up to 15 times.

WALL SQUATS

Standing with your back against the wall, bend the knees and slide your back down the wall until the thighs are parallel to the floor. Sit and hold for 30-60 seconds.



Upper Limbs and Neck

PRAY

Sitting upright place the palms of your hands together in front of your body to make a pray position. Ensure your elbows are at 90 degrees and in front of the body. Slowly move the hands downwards and feel a stretch under the wrist. Hold for 10 seconds then release. Reverse pray: place back of your hands together and move the hands upwards.

HANDSHAKE

Sitting up and with feet flat on the floor, clasp hands together as if giving yourself a handshake (with one thumb pointing to the floor and the other pointing to the ceiling). Then pull! Resist the motion of both arms (you should definitely feel this in those biceps). Hold for 10 seconds or more, release, and repeat.

SHOULDER SHRUG

Simply raise both shoulders up toward the ears, hold for 5 seconds, then relax. Repeat for 15 reps.

HELLO

Using a hairband or elastic band, place the band around the fingers and stretch out the band using the strength of your fingers. Open your hand as wide as possible against the resistance to wave 'Hello'.

DOUBLE CHIN

Sitting upright in your chair, pull your head backwards to create a 'double chin'. This is activating your deep flexor muscles in the neck and promotes correct posture. You may sit at your desk all day with your chin poked forward which promotes bad posture and leads to hunchback posture. Repeat this motion slowly up to 15 times and repeat during the day. It may assist in changing your postural habits.

ISOMETRIC NECK

Sitting upright in your chair, place your hand over your forehead. Push against your hand with your head and use your hand to resist this push. You are creating an isometric contraction of your neck muscles which will promote blood flow and prevent stiffness from when sitting for prolonged periods. You can do the same movement by placing your hand at the back of your head and repeating the resistance movement. Hold the contraction for 5-10 seconds before releasing.



SHOULDER SQUEEZE

the shoulder blades are pinched together. Pretend you're holding a pencil between the shoulder blades (or try it for real!). Hold for 5-10 seconds, release. Repeat for 15 reps.

CORE STRENGTHENING

Sitting upright, place your fingers on the front of your hip bones. Move your fingers in towards your belly button by 2cm and down towards your groin by 2cm. You should be placed above your core muscles. Contract these muscles by drawing your belly button into the spine. You should feel the muscle tighten under your fingers. Start to hold this contraction for 15 seconds but keep breathing normally. Don't let the tightening feeling loosen when breathing normally. This is a tricky exercise and takes time to build the strength of the muscle and reduce pressure on the spinal discs.

Back and Core

SPINAL STRETCH

Place your hands behind your neck to open out your chest. Slowly lean backwards to create a curve in the middle of your spine. Hold the stretch for 5-10 seconds before returning to an upright position. *This is only possible with a short-backed chair.

CHAIR TWIST

Sit sideways on the chair with the back of the chair on the right or left. Rotate your upper body to hold the back of the chair for 10 seconds. Try to keep your legs and hips facing forward. Repeat on the other side.

PELVIC ROTATION

Sit slightly forward in your chair with your feet flat on the floor and hip width apart. Place your hands on your thighs. Rotate your upper body to the right and move your left hand down the left thigh. Hold the end range of movement for 5 seconds before returning to the start front facing position. Repeat the same turning to the left and moving the right hand down the right thigh.

For more information about the products and services available from Police Mutual:

Call us 01543 441630
Visit policemutual.co.uk

We're open from
9am - 5pm Mon - Fri

Police Mutual Assurance Society Limited, trading as Police Mutual, is an incorporated friendly society. PMHC Limited, trading as Police Mutual, is registered in England & Wales No. 03018474. Registered office: Alexandra House, Queen Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6QS. For your security, all telephone calls are recorded and may be monitored

Police
Mutual

PMCOVID6 05/20