Guide to Working From Home

General guidance, tips, and resources for employees during the COVID-19 outbreak

Office of Employee Development & Wellness
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As a global community working together to prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus, many of you are working from home for the first time, for a more sustained period than you have before, and (in some cases) with others at home with you.

We recognize that, for some of you, working from home is new and can feel difficult. With this guide, we have collected resources, guidance, and tips to help you stay healthy, engaged, and productive.

This guide is for you—to help you set up your workspace, stay connected to each other, and manage your time and well-being. For additional information and updates on working remotely during this time, you can also visit Harvard’s Work Remotely page.
Guide to Working From Home

Set up your workspace

Stay connected to each other

Manage your time and well-being
Set Up Your Workspace
Set-up Your Physical Workspace

Take the time to set up a workspace that is safe, comfortable, and allows you to work effectively.

Locate a safe and secure space
Find a safe space to work—good ventilation and ergonomics, proper lighting, and comfortable furniture are just a few things to consider. Whatever your circumstances are, do what you can to create an optimal work environment for yourself.

Minimize distraction and disruption
If possible, aim for a space with minimal distractions (noise or clutter) and disruptions. We realize this can be challenging with others home as well during this time.

Find a place for materials
Identify a ‘work base’ where your equipment and materials can remain undisturbed, even if you shift locations during the day.
Set-up Your Virtual Workspace

Continue to collaborate and be productive from wherever you might be working.

Use your best connection
A wired network connection is best, if possible. When using a wireless connection, consider your distance from the router and obstacles in between that can affect your connection quality.

Think secure, be secure
You can use many apps and sites with a standard internet connection. To securely access internal resources and work with confidential data, you might need to connect via VPN or remote desktop.

Use mobile when you need it
Installing the apps you need on your phone is a great alternative when your local internet is experiencing high usage that affects your connectivity.

Check out Harvard’s Telework Continuity Tool Kit for tips on how to sustain business continuity during times of disruption.
**Get Your Video Ready**

Using webcam can help to connect you with colleagues and clients when you are not together in person.

**Keep your video on**
It makes for more inclusive meetings and helps you to stay present and engaged. Seeing people’s facial expressions also helps to increase connection and understanding and minimizes the chance of you getting distracted.

**Check your surroundings**
If it helps you focus, use the ‘blur my background’ feature in Microsoft Teams to help minimize distractions and protect your privacy.

**Set-up your camera frame**
Point your camera so your eyes are about two-thirds up the screen and your face is visible. If you notice the lighting is off, consider placing a lamp behind your computer to ensure your face is well lit.

Video can sometimes strain limited bandwidth so consider turning your camera off if the connection is poor. Need additional resources for using Teams video? Learn more on the [Office support site](https://support.office.com).
Stay Connected to Each Other
Communicate

There are many ways to stay connected while working from home.

Communicate often
Make it a habit to connect frequently with your colleagues and stakeholders. Open a Teams channel for ongoing conversations. Consider sending a silly or uplifting e-card to a colleague as a way to brighten their day.

Make space for fun
Use a Teams channel dedicated to fun—share news, pictures, and stories. Try a GIF, sticker or emoji to express yourself. Schedule virtual coffee dates and happy hours with your team to socialize and stay connected.

Create a virtual ‘water cooler’
Make up for missing hallway talk or connecting in the kitchen or café by using chat messages or calling. Set yourself a reminder to check in with people regularly.

Send colleagues an e-card to let them know you’re thinking of them.
Channel conversations in Teams are a great way to keep the whole team in the know.
Watch the Quick Start Videos for a walk-through of Teams and use the Quick Start Guide to learn the Teams basics.
Collaborate

Don’t miss a beat by using technology to connect and collaborate regardless of location.

Ideate and iterate—real time
Share the content your audience needs to see with screen sharing, and work to edit in real time with coauthoring in Teams. If you need to brainstorm, use Whiteboard in Teams as a digital canvas for your ideas to come to life.

Switch to digital events
Keep your events on the books with Teams live events that allow you to broadcast video and meeting content to large online audiences. This can be used for anything from a team all-hands to external forums.

Organize a virtual ‘huddle’
Quick meetings are effective at getting everyone on the same page quickly. Schedule a quick call with your collaborators to get the same impact of a quick in-person connection.

Use the Microsoft Whiteboard app in Teams.
Watch a training on how to produce a Teams live event.
Lead Inclusive Online Meetings

As you move your meetings online, take these steps to make them productive and welcoming for everyone.

Be present and respectful
Limit work related multitasking during meetings. Turning on your video can show that you are paying attention and allow you to focus on the person or people on your call.

Pause for others to speak
Intentionally pause to ensure that everyone has the chance to share their thoughts and ideas. Use the chat box function to capture lots of ideas or perspectives quickly.

Build in time to connect
Build in time for people to connect during meetings to ensure that everyone feels like part of the team. Consider taking the first 5-10 minutes of a meeting to share highs and lows from the previous week, ask how each person is doing or invite everyone to respond to a fun prompt.

Make sure all meetings have a virtual “join” option to create an online conference room. Record meetings in Teams and share the recording link in chat so people can catch up later.
Think About Accessibility

Follow these simple tips to be inclusive of colleagues and clients with disabilities.

**Turn on live captions**

Turn on live captions in Microsoft Teams to get real-time captions during your call. If posting a video use Microsoft Stream to automatically add real-time captions and searchable transcript.

**Make sure your content is accessible**

Send materials ahead of your meeting and use Accessibility Checker to check your Microsoft 365 documents are inclusive to people with disabilities. Remember ~70% of disability is invisible; you never know who needs accessible content.

**Make Windows 10 easier to see**

Is your cursor hard to see, need to increase font size or need to distinguish colors easily? You can change all these and more in Windows 10 Ease of Access Center.

For more hints and tips on accessibility check out the Accessibility site. Visit the Live Captions site to learn how to use captions during your meetings or events. If you are a person with disability needing assistance with accessibility features, contact the Disability Answer Desk.
Manage Your Time and Wellbeing
Share Your Schedule and Signal Availability

Setting healthy boundaries, managing interruptions, and being clear about when you are available is an important part of managing your time when working from home.

Set expectations for availability
Your daily schedule or even the number of hours that you work may vary during the COVID-19 pandemic. Set expectations with your team (and those you live with) around your availability during the day and let team members know how to signal to you if they are reaching out about an urgent matter.

See what is important
With everybody working from home, you might see an increase in messages. Use the settings available in Teams and Outlook to customize notifications and prioritize conversations.

Set boundaries
It can be a challenge to switch ‘off’ from work when you don’t leave the office—or switch ‘on’ your workday when you don’t leave the house. If needed, set clear intentions about work time and home time to avoid burnout or being ‘always on’.

Manage notifications for Teams activities, channels, and on mobile. Set a status message in Teams and update your calendar to indicate if you are free or busy. Set quiet hours in Teams mobile to limit notifications to your work hours and turn Focus Assist on in Windows 10.
Take Care and Be Mindful

In challenging circumstances, we must remember to take a step back and focus on our health, wellness, and mindset.

**Take breaks regularly**
It can be difficult to remember to take breaks. Use your calendar to turn meals and breaks into appointments so you get regular reminders. Block time on your calendar for exercise and fresh air—or just time to step away from your workspace.

**Balance work and life**
We recognize that while working from home you may need to occasionally redirect your time and energy to your loved ones. Continue to access available support options, caregiver benefits, and leave, as needed, to find the balance you need.

**Check-in with yourself daily**
It’s important to check in with yourself and be mindful of how you are feeling. Anxiety, loneliness, and other feelings are perfectly normal, and we have resources to help you take care. Be sure to check in on others within your community.

Check out Harvard’s Coronavirus Workplace Policies site to stay up-to-date with the latest policies. Visit the HLC Managing Through Coronavirus or Harvard’s Coronavirus Health & Wellness sites to learn more about a variety of wellness resources and opportunities. For additional resources, visit Harvard’s Work/Life site or check out KGA’s (Harvard’s Employee Assistance Program vendor’s) COVID-19 resource page.
Learn and Grow

Carve out time on a regular basis to develop yourself personally and professionally.

Take a virtual workshop
Now is a perfect time to prioritize your learning and growth. Check-out some the exciting workshops that are being offered to Harvard employees. You can find workshops on communication, productivity, management, and more.

Develop new skills
Use this time to explore new areas of interest and skills. Whether that involves enhancing your public speaking skills, learning to code, or boosting your improvisational skills, use this time to learn and explore a new edge.

Participate in cultural activities
Carve out time to enjoy a variety of virtual cultural activities and performances including dance, theatre, museums, aquariums and more.

Visit the HLC Employee Development Resources, Programming Calendar and Harvie site to learn more about a variety of employee development opportunities. Log-in to the Harvard Training Portal to register for Harvard employee workshops. Sign-up to receive Outings + Innings emails to learn about all types of cultural events happening virtually. Want to take learn a new skill or discover a new area of interest, check our EdX and Coursera for a variety of free or low-cost course offerings.
Role of the Manager

Managers play a key role in the success of their teams, especially during times of uncertainty and change.

Lead by example
Model the work from home habits in this document. Be a positive example of the guidance, and make sure to reinforce inclusion. Check in with your employees, ask for perspectives, and identify any areas for improvement.

Support in new ways
Help each person create their best and most productive work from home environment. Understand any business continuity concerns of your team and support their efforts at working in new ways. Be curious and ask questions that empower employees to find their own solutions.

Have frequent check-ins
These are unusual times with unanticipated challenges and may require more frequent check-ins. Kids are out of school. Be sure to manage expectations, offer support, and take time to understand the unique needs of every employee.

Visit KGA’s Manager Resources page for a variety of resources on managing remote teams and supporting employees through periods of change and grief.