

Remote work do's and don'ts

Laura Tobias Prezado¹,
Ana Lucia Sobriera Fernandes²

1 Brinova Bioquimica LDA

2 Medpace, Inc.

doi: 10.56012/WHDD2438

Correspondence:

Laura Tobias Prezado

lauratobiasprezado@gmail.com

With the COVID pandemic, remote work is now part of our daily lives. It provides more flexibility to manage our jobs and the needs of our homelife, among other perks, but like a beautiful rose, it has thorns. Setting boundaries between home and work, staying productive, and feeling connected to colleagues, are just some of the challenges employers and employees have encountered.

While many medical writers worked remotely before COVID, it is now the “new normal” for many of us. Benefits have included eliminating commuting time and expense, and the cost of office apparel, lunches out, and other expenses. Of course, what's been lost has been the socialization, comraderie, and sense of teamwork that some people only feel when talking to colleagues face-to-face.

Over these 2 years, we've all learned a thing or two about making this set-up succeed. Below, we share some knowledge, the “do's and don'ts”, if you will, of working at home for both employees and employers. Remote work, as we all know, is a situation that is clearly here to stay.

We hope these tips are helpful to you as we navigate this stay-at-home world.



For employees:

- First, get dressed every morning! It can help get you in the mindset of being “at the office” and ready to work.
- Establish a routine! Make time to have your morning rituals, whether it's having a cup of coffee, going to the gym, or doing yoga.
- If you can, establish a home office, a room (or spot) set aside just for work. It can help maintain a work-life balance.
- Organise your day by creating a to-do list of your daily tasks – keep it realistic!
- Use bright stationary, it can brighten your day.
- Have 15 minute breaks in the morning and the afternoon; it will increase your attention span in the long run.
- Be mindful of your visual health: invest in a large screen monitor if possible.
- Use your lunch break wisely as you would at the office, for a true break from your labour. Eating in front of your computer can become a bad habit!
- Obtain a quality office chair with lumbar support.
- Keep your personal phone in airplane mode to avoid distractions.
- If possible, have a computer for work and another for your personal life. Keep your work laptop in its designated “workspace”, so you don't see work emails at 10 P.M.
- Try to stick to a work schedule, to avoid overwork.
- Don't isolate yourself; have in-person conversations with colleagues or friends on a regular basis.
- If your boss holds a coffee break via Zoom, go for it! It's an important way to get to know your colleagues, and your boss.
- Talk to your peers about topics other than work, as you would in the office. Life goes on, and we are social creatures.
- Coordinate both your personal and your work life – make time for your family and friends. They are more important than ever!



References

1. Wang B, Liu Y, Qian J, et al. Achieving effective remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic: A work design perspective. *Appl Psychol.* 2020;70(1):16–59.
2. Yang L, Holtz D, Jaffe, et al. The effects of remote work on collaboration among information workers. *Nat Hum Behav.* 2022;6(1):43-54.
3. Emanuel N, Harrington E. “Working” remotely? Selection, treatment, and the market provision of remote work. 2020.
4. Sandoval-Reyes J, Idrovo-Carlier S, Duque-Oliva EJ. Remote work, work stress, and work–life during pandemic times: A Latin America situation. *Int J Environ Res Public Health.* 2021;18:7069. doi:10.3390/ijerph18137069
5. Rysavy MDT, Michalak R. Working from home: How we managed our team remotely with technology. *J Libr Adm.* 2020;60(5):532-42.
6. Howe LC, Whins A, Menges JI. How to (actually) save time when you're working remotely. *Harvard Business Journal.* 2020. Available from: <https://hbr.org/2020/08/how-to-actually-save-time-when-youre-working-remotely>

Author information



Laura Prezado has a bachelor's degree in biotechnology and a master's degree in biomedical medicine. She worked in the neurodegenerative field while doing her master's thesis and now works in the microbiology and chemistry field in a biochemical company.

Ana Fernandes is a former hospital pharmacy technician who decided it was about time for a career change. She is now a home-based clinical research associate. She has also studied Pharmaceutical Law and clinical trials monitoring.



For employers:

- Don't expect employees to work more than typical because of the “privilege” of working at home.
- Take the lead in establishing a daily schedule to avoid feelings of exploitation and exhaustion. Establish fixed working hour and mandatory breaks (for example, a lunch hour) to promote a healthy work environment.
- Maintain a record of your employees' work hours, and make sure that they are not overwhelmed and overworked.
- Supply your employees with the proper tools for remote work, be they computers, the proper online platforms, and/or a printer if needed.
- When possible, provide your employee with a budget to create a home office.
- Schedule one-on-one, weekly meetings with your team members to gauge the challenges/difficulties they may be having.
- During the week, arrange remote coffee breaks, get to know your team, and provide them space to know each other.
- Keep up to date on how to create a better environment for your workers – read articles and other sources of information.
- Support your employees and hear their needs.
- Be aware of any abuse that may take place via online forms of conversation, from WhatsApp to Google Meets, Microsoft teams, and Zoom.
- Don't forget about professional development: provide activities like work training or online presentations on different topics.
- If you see that your employee is struggling while working from home, if possible, provide them the opportunity to work from a co-workspace, with all the amenities.
- Don't text or send emails to your employees after working hours – they might feel obliged to respond.
- Listen to your employees' needs, but please, don't forget your own. Being an employer is challenging and stressful.