



## Working at Home: A Common Sense Guide to Well-Being and Success

**Moving your workspace from an office to the confines of your home can be a challenging effort on many levels. Finding a suitable location, organizing your workday for success and adjusting to your new routine and environment can present significant issues without adequate preparation and adaptation.**

Fortunately, it is not an impossible task, especially if you follow some basic practices. The following are common concepts that successful teleworkers and their associates use to ensure well-being and success when working from home.

**Remember: You need a place that will help your efforts work for you!**

### PHYSICAL LOCATION—FINDING A SPACE

- Select a space that can be permanent (somewhere you won't have to pack up after each workday). Be sure it has a comfortable year-round temperature, adequate noise levels and enough space for you, your equipment and files.
- Make sure you can maintain a degree of privacy in your space such as some place with a door.
- Ensure that the space you select won't disrupt your household.
- Make sure there is adequate electrical power available. Wall outlets should be accessible and sufficient in capacity so you don't need extension cords or multiple power strips.
- Ensure that your space has adequate cell phone and WiFi reception.
- If you use a printer, make sure you have enough space to set it up along with adequate power.
- Assess your workspace for an area to store files, office supplies and other items.
- Take a look at your office décor. Does it serve as an appropriate background for a Skype or FaceTime conversation?

### COMFORT, SAFETY AND HEALTH

- To prevent fatigue and musculoskeletal discomfort, do not use a couch, lounge chair, coffee table, snack table, bed or floor for work activities. These surfaces are not conducive to creating a stable and productive work environment.
- Select a chair and desk or worktable combination that is most similar to the combination at your office.
- Make sure you have enough room to spread-out. Your workspace should have enough surface area to comfortably contain your computer setup, cellphone, documents and, of course, your coffee mug.
- If possible, utilize a laptop computer docking station with an external keyboard and separate, adjustable monitor. If a docking station is not available, try to use at least one of these devices, and position it for optimal comfort.

- Avoid musculoskeletal and ergonomic issues by reviewing and following these guidelines:
  - ✓ Set the monitor to a comfortable position
  - ✓ Make sure the brightness levels on your monitor are appropriate, and that there is no glare from external light sources
  - ✓ Position the keyboard and mouse properly
  - ✓ Your chair should be adjustable. Position it to provide the correct height and distance from the desktop, and ensure that it supports your posture properly and comfortably.
  - ✓ Make sure your table or desk is at an appropriate height and can accommodate the required position of your keyboard/mouse and monitor.
- Use headphones with a microphone. This allows a comfortable and useable hands-free setup for phone conversations. Holding the phone to your ear can quickly cause musculoskeletal discomfort or other problems. Using the speakerphone option might work well for you, but oftentimes it is very difficult for the other person (or persons) to hear or understand what you are saying. It also makes having a private conversation impossible, especially if the rest of your household is at home.
- Good lighting in your workspace is vital—add more or adjust it if needed.
- Control physical workspace hazards:
  - ✓ Go wireless whenever possible (keyboard, mouse, monitor, etc.).
  - ✓ Safely bundle or move cords and cables away from walking and working areas.
  - ✓ Don't overload electrical outlets.
  - ✓ Make sure your desk, chair, files or other items do not block heating and air conditioning vents.
  - ✓ Fix floor trip/slip/fall hazards such as loose rugs or carpeting, worn or uneven surfaces or areas with poor lighting and visibility.
  - ✓ Don't try to use or modify furniture or other items for unintended or inappropriate uses (chairs, tables, desks, light fixtures, etc.).
  - ✓ If something is broken or damaged in any way (especially electrical items), do not use it!

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**COMPUTER WORKSTATION ERGONOMICS CHECKLIST**

- Use a computer workstation ergonomics checklist to determine the best and most comfortable setup for you. The Computer Workstation Ergonomics Self-Assessment Checklist prepared by Christian Brothers Risk Management Services using the National Institute of Health's recommendations is a good resource.

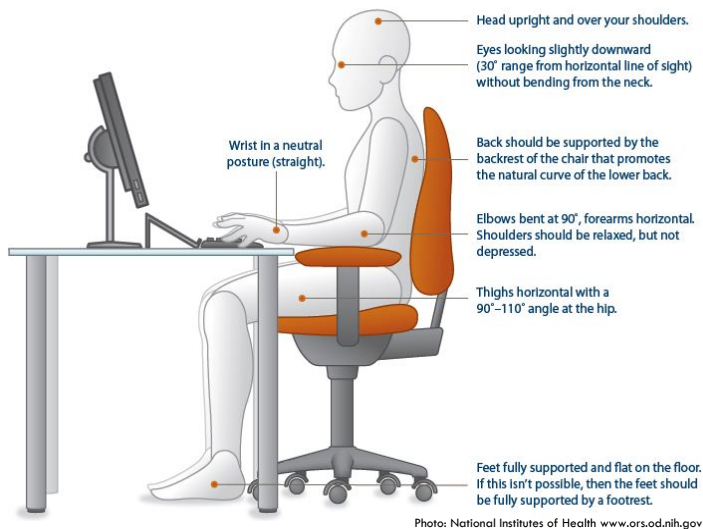


Photo: National Institutes of Health [www.ors.od.nih.gov](http://www.ors.od.nih.gov)

**CYBER SECURITY**

- Be aware and alert—your home’s cyber systems can be much more vulnerable to an attack than those at your office!
- Ensure that your home WiFi system and Internet connections are adequately secured with strong passwords and firewalls. Only allow authorized users to access your WiFi connection.
- Ensure that your business computer system has been approved and configured for home use, and has your company’s required security and firewall systems provided (including any routers related to your home WiFi system).
- Do not use your personal computers or other devices for business purposes, and do not use them as a back door to your company’s system, unless specifically authorized by your company.
- Do not use company computers or devices for personal use.
- Make sure you are familiar with and have acknowledged your company’s IT policies, procedures and requirements.
- Be aware that your home data speeds may slow down during times of business computer use—consider arranging to enhance your Internet data service capabilities.

**ORGANIZATION/MANAGEMENT**

- As much as possible, maintain the same work schedule you did while working in your office.
- Initially, it will take additional time and effort to get used to your new work situation, so be sure to account for this when planning and scheduling.
- Keep physical distractions out of your workspace such as the television, personal projects, etc.
- While working from home it is even more critical to maintain regular contact with your manager or your staff, especially to help adjust to a new routine and work system. Make sure regular meetings or calls are a top priority.

- As at the office, take regular breaks to stretch muscles and relieve eyestrain.
- Keep detailed records and receipts of any non-reimbursed/out-of-pocket expenses related to your at-home office. You may need this information for tax purposes.
- Get familiar with all of the communication technology available to you such as the use of webinar applications and instant messaging—know how and when to use it!
- Work with your IT department to ensure that you have access to company software, email and servers. Verify that your equipment is approved and compatible with requirements for security and functionality. Keep your company’s Help Desk number accessible in case of service disruptions or other issues.

**YOUR WELL-BEING**

- Be patient! It takes time to learn how to do something brand-new and different.
- Prioritize your tasks at the beginning of each workday and set goals for completion.
- Learn how to balance home and work life, as they now coexist in the same location.
- Dress for success. Find your best “home office uniform.” It could be business casual or shorts and a t-shirt. Be sure you are dressed appropriately to represent your organization when conducting webinars or Skyping with clients.
- We’re social creatures and need interaction with others. Keep in contact with others, both coworkers and friends. If there are no restrictions to movement outside of your home office, meet for lunch.
- Realize that you have to “put down the pen” at some point during the day. Establish separation between work and home life. This is a key point to consider with the other members of your household.

**Finally, remember that effective communication with management and your team is the most critical key to success!**

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Sources:  
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