

HR TOOLKIT

Flexible Workplaces

Provided by: Combined



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Introduction

What is workplace flexibility?

Technological advances and flexibility in the workplace have redefined the workday for many organizations and their employees. Having a flexible working environment means that your organization defines “work” differently and, as a result, new guidelines are established for when, where and how employees get tasks done. This also means that results are not gauged by how much face time employees put in at the office. Instead, their work is reviewed based on its quality and if it is completed.

Why is workplace flexibility important?

As baby boomers retire and younger generations enter the workforce, employers have to adapt more to their workforces’ needs. Some employers are finding that workers may not like a traditional schedule, elder care responsibilities require greater flexibility and parents insist that they have more time with their families. For employees, flexibility makes it easier to manage work and family obligations. It allows individuals to engage in their roles as a professional, parent, school board member, coach, avid exerciser or homemaker all at the same time.

Many companies have had a lot of success implementing flexible arrangements in the workplace. For companies with employees who are no longer forced to come to the office and do not have set work hours, turnover has declined and employee engagement has increased. Retaining employees who are happy and productive is not only good for employee morale, but also for your bottom line. Turnover can be extremely expensive for employers when lost productivity and replacement costs are taken into account. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, it costs, on average, six to nine months’ salary to replace a salaried employee. Companies have also received the following benefits from offering a flexible working environment:



This toolkit serves as an introductory resource to flexible workplaces. It provides an in-depth summary of the prominent types of workplace flexibility, offers implementation suggestions and provides best practices for operating a flexible workplace.

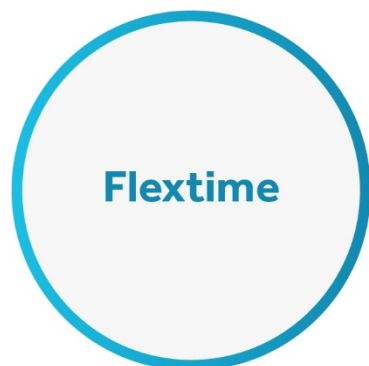
Types of Workplace Flexibility Options

There are many types of flexible working arrangements being implemented across the nation, which include:

- Part-time employment (reduced work hours)
- Flexible scheduling (employees are available within core hours during the day, but may vary the times they arrive in the morning and leave in the afternoon)
- Telecommuting (working from a remote location)
- Compressed workweeks (working a full schedule in fewer than five days)
- Summer hours (reducing work hours during summer months)
- Telecommuting (working entirely through an electronic system without a formal work schedule or location)
- Unlimited paid time off (PTO)
- Hoteling (employees share a workspace because they are only in the office for a portion of the week)

Employers may offer these options on an as-needed basis or as part of formal programs for all employees. Employers can also create a workplace that is entirely flexible with no defined work schedule (known as a results-only work environment). Most employers tend to land somewhere in the middle and have formal yet flexible arrangements.

This toolkit focuses on the following three types of flexible workplace options:



Flextime

Flextime is a flexible schedule option in which employers allow employees to customize their schedule within a certain range of hours. Since employers aren't legally required to offer employees flextime, it's usually at the employer's discretion to decide if they will offer flextime and how flextime will be structured at their organization. Listed below are three ways organizations commonly structure flextime.

Example #1: Flextime with Core Hours	Example #2: Flextime with Daily Hour Maximum Limits	Example #3: Flextime with no Restrictions
<p>In this format, employees must work 40 hours per week and be present between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. daily.</p>	<p>In this format, employees must work 40 hours per week and no more than 9 hours per day.</p>	<p>In this format, employees must work 40 hours per week on their own terms.</p>

Benefits of Offering Flextime

Providing flextime as a scheduling option for employees has many benefits. Arguably, the most important and attractive benefit of flextime is work-life balance. Employees may have all sorts of conflicts in their personal lives that don't allow for a typical 9-to-5 day, such as dropping off or picking up children from school, going to doctor's appointments, running errands or working a second job. Flextime also lets employees avoid driving to and home from work during rush hour. For employees with long commutes, any effort to avoid sitting in traffic is welcome.

Giving employees flextime allows them to schedule their lives around work without sacrificing work productivity. When employees are free to get their personal objectives accomplished, while still working full time, they are free to focus on doing the job at hand, rather than worrying about their personal lives and how they'll get everywhere on time.

Flextime Considerations

It's also important to create a written flextime policy that employees and managers must follow. Flextime can be offered to anyone, but it must not discriminate. While flextime is a good option for the overwhelming majority of positions, it can be difficult to offer flextime to customer-focused positions. This is especially true when they're expected to be at the office during certain hours to operate phones and respond to customer emails. Employers can limit flextime to certain situations. The best place to spell out a policy like this is in your employee handbook. Remember, all arrangements must comply with the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division laws.

Unlimited PTO Banks

A basic unlimited PTO policy is similar to a normal PTO policy except employees are not given an allotted number of days off. Employees can take as many vacation, sick and mental health days as they need, as long as they are meeting their performance goals. This type of policy does not mean an employee can take unplanned time off, except for sick days or similar emergencies. A manager must still approve PTO requests and your company's established work schedule or flextime benefits can remain the same as with traditional PTO.

"Unlimited" PTO Explained

Studies show that, for the most part, **employees with unlimited PTO frequently end up taking about the same amount of time off as employees who have an allotted amount of PTO.**

In some cases, employees who have unlimited PTO benefits actually have to be encouraged to take more time off. **When unlimited PTO is offered, some employees may be afraid to take "too much," detracting from the goal of giving employees the guilt-free time off** needed to take care of personal or family matters, relax on vacation or recover at home when sick.

Benefits of Offering Unlimited PTO Banks

Unlimited PTO can provide the following advantages to both the employer and employees if carefully considered and implemented:

- Unlimited time off fosters a sense of trust in employees and encourages a culture of responsibility.
- Offering unlimited PTO can serve as an attractive benefit when recruiting top job candidates.
- Unlimited PTO reduces the likelihood that employees will come to work when sick and spread their germs around the office because they are hoarding their time off for a vacation later in the year.

Unlimited PTO Considerations

An unlimited PTO policy is not right for every company. An unlimited PTO policy works best when the company culture already operates on a goal-oriented basis. Make sure you have an established review process to track performance and goals before implementing unlimited PTO. Sometimes, this arrangement can cause employees to not use PTO, so managers should do their best to monitor PTO usage to avoid employee burnout.

In addition, to reduce abuse of the system and minimize the impact on the rest of the team, PTO should be approved in advance by the manager, with the exception of calling in sick or for an emergency. Ensure that all unlimited PTO guidelines and procedures are written and stored in your employee handbook.

Telecommuting

In an age when more and more positions require duties to be carried out almost exclusively on computers, and where the internet can instantly connect anyone anywhere, many employers are offering the option of telecommuting. Telecommuting allows employees to work from home or another alternate location and communicate with their employers electronically. Workers are connected to employers and company servers via the internet and are able to communicate regularly in real time using email, instant messaging, webcams and conference calls. Telecommuting can range from working exclusively from a home office to only working at home a few hours every week.

In 2017, **3.9 million U.S. employees worked from home at least 50% of the time.** Comparatively, only 1.8 million U.S. employees did so in 2005.

Source: 2017 State of Telecommuting in the U.S. Employee Workforce Report, Global Workplace Analytics

Benefits of Offering Telecommuting

Telecommuting can be a great option for employers and employees alike. Benefits of telecommuting include the following:

- **Improved work-life balance.** Telecommuting makes it easier for employees to balance work and life, especially for those with many commitments.
- **Increased employer flexibility.** Telecommuting gives employers the option to hire from across the country without worrying about relocating workers to a central location. Employers can also more readily hire part-time, semi-retired, disabled or homebound workers.
- **Healthier employees.** Telecommuting relieves the stress caused by commuting and other issues related to the workplace or being away from home. Telecommuters eat healthier and exercise more than their office-bound counterparts, and are less likely to get sick from contagious germs.
- **Increased productivity.** While it's easy to imagine workers shirking their duties at home more readily than in the office, numerous studies show that workers who telecommute are 15 to 55% more productive. Two-thirds of employers report increased productivity among their telecommuters.

Telecommuting Considerations

Telecommuting is not the right fit for every company, but it has a decades-old record of being positive for many organizations. If you allow employees to telecommute, make sure you institute an established program to minimize the risks. Decide on what types of positions in your company will be open to allow telecommuting, and detail what is expected of employees when it comes to productivity and time usage. Also, be sure to institute security procedures that will keep sensitive company information safe at home offices. Having guidelines in place will help you reap the benefits of telecommuting without letting it disrupt your business or lead to increased liabilities and costs.

Best Practices for Implementing Flexible Workplace Policies

Developing a program to make your workplace more flexible is fairly simple and requires minimal or no resources.

- Create a link between flexibility and your organization's goals. Determine how existing and future flexibility plans will align with your current and future company goals.**
- Look at your current flexible work schedule offerings—who is eligible, how the program is used, how the program is administered, and what is expected of management and employees.**
- Determine how flexible you want to be. You will need to balance corporate guidelines, individual needs and management desires.**
- Enlist management personnel to promote and administer flexible working arrangements. These people should have the proper training and tools.**
- Communicate with your employees about flexible arrangements as part of your total benefits offerings.**
- Create clear-cut flexible work policies to ensure that everyone is on the same page about guidelines, expectations and procedures.**
- Link flexible arrangements to your business results by creating a measurement system that gauges that connection.**

Flexible Workplaces Key Statistics

- 1. The number of employees who quit their job because it lacked flexible work options has nearly doubled in the past three years.** According to a study of more than 5,000 U.S. professionals, 32% of respondents quit their job due to a lack of flexibility in 2017, which is a 15% increase from 2014.
- 2. The ability to work remotely is a top perk employees would change jobs for.** According to a Gallup poll, 35% of employees said they would leave their current job for one that allowed them to work remotely.
- 3. One-third of millennials will stay at a company with a flexible workplace for more than five years.** A lot has been said about millennials, but one thing that most studies can agree upon is that they are more likely to job hop than their older co-workers. One way to retain this generation, which will make up more than half of the U.S. workforce by 2020, is to offer flexible work options. According to the 2017 Deloitte Millennial Survey, 33% of millennials surveyed said they would stay more than five years at a company that offered ample flexibility.
- 4. Flextime is a popular offering among U.S. employers already.** In the 2017 Deloitte Millennial Survey, 69% of respondents said their employer offers flextime.
- 5. Older generations would remain in or re-enter the U.S. workforce if they had flexible workplace options.** According to a National Institute on Aging study, 60% of retirees would be willing to return to work if they were offered flexible scheduling. What's more? Twenty percent of retirees would be willing to take a 20% pay cut to receive a flexible schedule.

Summary

Many U.S. employers are realizing the value that offering flexible work options has on their organization. Employees are, too, which is why it's no surprise that it's one of the top three things they look for when searching for a job. While workplace flexibility isn't feasible for every organization, it may be worth it for your organization to consider implementing flexibility.

Remember, workplace flexibility can be a powerful tool for your company in terms of employee engagement, retention and recruiting. Flexible schedules don't only provide employees with job satisfaction, better health, increased work-life balance and less stress, they also benefit employers. Through higher productivity levels, decreased turnover and reduced absenteeism, employers are able to retain qualified employees and save money as well.

Workplace flexibility is a trend that won't be going away anytime soon. For more information on workplace flexibility or for supplemental resources, please contact Combined.

Appendix

Sample Policies

This section of the appendix includes a handful of sample policies. These policies are also available as stand-alone documents. Contact Combined to access these versions.

Workplace Flexibility Scorecard

Use this scorecard to evaluate how flexible your organization is.

Flexible Work Arrangements Employee Communication Flyer

Use this Know Your Benefits article to explain your flexible office offerings to employees. Please customize to meet your organization's needs prior to sending out.

Employee Work from Home Guide

Use this guide to outline your company's telecommuting (or work from home) policy and expectations, and educate your employees on best practices for working from home. Please note that this guide requires extensive customization to reflect your organization's policies on telecommuting. This guide is available as a stand-alone document. Please contact Combined for more information.

Flextime Policy

Standard working hours are from [insert hour] to [insert hour], Monday through Friday. A [insert amount of time] lunch period is taken at any hour, which is mutually agreeable between the employee and supervisor.

Flextime is an option available to improve departmental efficiency and morale. Flextime may not be appropriate for all departments or all positions. It is each manager's responsibility to manage the program so that it will serve the business requirements of the department. The basic principles of flextime are:

- Manager approval is necessary for any department to participate in flextime.
- The work commitments of the department must be able to be met effectively and efficiently without compromising service to internal or external customers.
- Each employee must recognize his or her responsibilities to the company and to colleagues.
- Each employee that uses flextime must work cooperatively to ensure that no problems arise with regard to internal or external service.
- Employees utilizing flextime should establish "standard" hours (i.e., 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day) and should not vary hours significantly from day to day, week to week or month to month.

Employees will work a consistent schedule using the following guidelines:

- Shifts must be completed between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.; start and end times are subject to approval.
- Employees must take either a one-hour or a half-hour unpaid lunch period. Lunch should normally be taken between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., and should be mutually agreed upon between the employee and his or her supervisor.

Employees cannot work through their lunch period to make up time unless prior supervisor approval is obtained. Such occurrences should be infrequent.

At each manager's discretion, summer hours may be offered to a department, regardless of whether or not flextime is offered. When using summer hours, employees work four nine-hour days and one four-hour day, however, variations to this schedule may occur with management approval. It is each manager's responsibility to manage the program in such a way that there is appropriate departmental coverage at all times.

As with flextime, summer hours may not be appropriate for all departments or all positions. Based on business needs, summer hours can be discontinued at any time.

Paid Time Off Policy

believes that employees should have opportunities to enjoy time away from work to help balance their lives. For this reason, we provide a paid time off (PTO) program to all full-time (if applicable: and part-time) employees.

PTO provides employees the freedom to decide how to use their personal time off. believes this program offers more generous time off with pay than traditional vacation, sick and personal time packages. Employees can use their PTO days in a number of different ways, for example:

- As vacation
- For personal business
- For periods of illness
- For doctor or dental appointments
- For personal emergencies
- For family emergencies
- In the event of severe weather or adverse driving conditions

PTO does not replace the Company holiday schedule. We will continue to have compensated holidays each year.

Eligibility for PTO

All full-time (if applicable: and part-time) employees are eligible to earn PTO on a [pick one: weekly/monthly] basis. Full-time employees earn PTO by working at least [insert # of hours] hours per week (if applicable: while part-time employees earn PTO by working at least (insert # of hours) hours per week).

PTO Accrual

Employees accrue PTO hours after [insert # of months] months of employment. After that point, full-time employees will accrue PTO hours each pay period. Accrued PTO is available for immediate use. (If applicable: Part-time employees will accrue PTO hours at a rate of 50% of full-time employees.) Employee PTO is capped at [insert # of hours] hours.

Employee PTO Accrual Table

Date of Hire	Eligibility Date	Hours Accrued	Maximum Accrual Hours for [insert year]

Maximum PTO Accrual

As mentioned above, employee PTO is capped at [insert # of hours] hours. Therefore, would like to remind employees to use their PTO before reaching their maximum accrual, so additional PTO accrual time is not lost.

Use and Management of PTO

encourages employees to use their PTO responsibly and, whenever possible, to schedule time for vacations or personal leave appointments in advance. Every time-off request will be evaluated and subject to approval depending on staffing needs at the time. understands there may be occasions, such as a sudden illness, when you may not be able to give sufficient advance notice. In those situations, be sure to inform your supervisor as soon as possible.

PTO also includes time off for unexpected emergencies or illness. Do not use PTO to cover time missed from work due to tardiness, except in the case of severe weather.

Types of Non-PTO Leave

Situations that require time off such as jury duty, bereavement and workers' compensation will not be charged against your accrued PTO. *Note: See separate policies on those topics to address these situations.*

PTO Tracking

has an automated PTO tracking system to keep a record of your accrued PTO balance. The amount of PTO accrued, used and available will be itemized on your paycheck stub each month for your records.

List of Paid Company Holidays

- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

NOTE: Employers should review applicable local and state laws regarding paid sick leave. If an employer wants their PTO policy to comply with a paid sick leave law, the policy must generally meet the minimum requirements for accrual and usage, as provided under the applicable paid sick leave law.

Telecommuting Policy

Purpose

This policy establishes the guidelines will use to select and manage those employees approved to telecommute.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees authorized to work remotely as a primary job function. It does not include those who are temporarily allowed by their managers to work from home or other location on an irregular basis due to extenuating circumstances.

POLICY GUIDELINES

Definitions

Telecommuting is defined as working from a home or other off-site location using electronic communications, such as the internet, to connect with the primary place of employment.

Criteria for Selection

always strives to provide equal opportunities to all employees when it comes to working situations. However, telecommuting is not conducive to every employee and position. Keeping this in mind, will review all reasonable employee requests to telecommute using the following criteria:

- Is the employee a good candidate for telecommuting?
 - Dependable
 - Flexible
 - Proven performance
 - No record of disciplinary action
 - Comprehensive knowledge of position

- Can the duties of the position be successfully fulfilled through telecommuting?
 - Measurable work activities
 - Little need for face-to-face interaction with co-workers
 - Clearly established goals and objectives
 - Duties can be performed alone
 - Equipment needed is limited and can be easily stored at the off-site location

Note: The management of reserves the right to deny or revoke telecommuting privileges at their own discretion.

Responsibilities

Position requirements and responsibilities will not change due to telecommuting. Workers face the same expectations in relation to professionalism, work output and customer service, regardless of where the work is being performed. The amount of time an employee is expected to work in a given week will not change, although the exact scheduling of allotted hours will be left up to the discretion of the employee's direct supervisor(s). If an employee's physical presence is required at 's primary work location, he or she is expected to report once given adequate notice.

Contact with Primary Location

Employees approved for telecommuting are responsible for maintaining regular contact with their supervisor(s). The supervisor(s) will act as the employee's primary contact at . Both the employee and his or her supervisor(s) are expected to work together to keep each other informed of any developments that occur during the workday.

Employees must have approval from their supervisor(s) to:

- Alter their defined work schedules.
- Move company equipment to a new location.
- Transfer primary off-site operations to a new location.

Off-site Work Areas

has a legal responsibility to provide liability and workers' compensation coverage to its employees. Such legal responsibilities extend only to authorized, off-site work locations during scheduled work time. is responsible only for injuries, illnesses and damages that result directly from official job duties. also accepts no responsibility for employees' personal property.

As could foreseeably be held responsible for an injury befalling an employee in their off-site work area, reserves the right to inspect off-site locations for safety concerns. Such an inspection will always be planned in advance for a time convenient for both the inspector and the employee.

If employees have domestic responsibilities they must attend to during scheduled working hours, they are expected to do so in a reasonable manner that will still allow them to successfully fulfill their job duties.

Off-site Security

While positions that regularly deal with highly sensitive information may not be ideal candidates, under certain circumstances such employees may be allowed to telecommute. In these situations, it is up to the employee to enforce a rigorous standard for ensuring the security of all sensitive information entrusted to them. Failure to do so will result in loss of telecommuting privileges.

Expenses

Working primarily off-site could result in expenses not directly addressed by this policy. If such expenses are necessary for their official duties as prescribed, will reimburse the employees. However, since reimbursement is subject to management approval and is not guaranteed, potential expenditures should always be approved prior to the transaction being made.

Equipment

Employees approved for telecommuting will be supplied by with the equipment required to perform their duties. It must be kept in mind that:

- All equipment purchased by remains the property of . All equipment is to be returned in a timely fashion should the employee cease telecommuting operations for any reason.
- Hardware is only to be modified or serviced by parties approved by .
- Software provided by is to be used only for its intended purpose and should not be duplicated without consent.
- Any equipment provided by for off-site use is intended for legitimate business use only.
- All hardware and software should be secured against unauthorized access.

WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY SCORECARD

Many companies have had a lot of success implementing flexible arrangements in the workplace. For some companies with employees who experience flexibility, turnover has declined and employee engagement has increased. Retaining employees who are happy and productive is not only good for employee morale, but also for your bottom line. Use this scorecard to evaluate how flexible your organization is.

Instructions: Begin by answering the questions below. Each response will be given a numerical value depending on the answer. After completing the questions, total your score using the scale at the bottom of the page.

Yes: 1 point | **No:** 0 points | **Unsure:** 0 points

QUESTIONS	YES	NO	UNSURE	SCORE
1. Do you want to offer a flexible workplace to your workforce?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Do you offer a flextime policy that aligns with your company's goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Do you offer a telecommuting policy that aligns with your company's goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Do you offer an unlimited PTO policy that aligns with industry standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Do you have an alternate scheduling policy that aligns with your company's goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Do you offer resources or programs to full- or part-time employees who are also caregivers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Do you communicate your flexible scheduling options to your employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Does your culture support workplace flexibility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
TOTAL SCORE				

Please contact Combined for more information on or resources for workplace flexibility.

Highly flexible. 6-8

Flexible. 3-6

Not flexible. 0-2

KNOW YOUR BENEFITS.



Flexible Work Arrangements, Designed for You

At , we recognize that the typical 9-to-5 workday can make it difficult for you to manage your work and personal obligations. That's where our flexible work arrangements come in. These policies are designed to help you achieve a work-life balance, which we believe is extremely important.

(Note: The policies outlined below are samples. Please customize to reflect your company's rules.)

Flextime Policy

Flextime is a flexible schedule option in which you can create your own schedule within a certain range of hours. We hope that flextime allows you to schedule your life around work to meet your outside commitments, without sacrificing your productivity.

At , you must work 40 hours per week and be present between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Outside of those core hours, you

may come in and leave as early or late as you'd like. As always, please communicate your plans with your direct manager.

Unlimited PTO Policy

Our unlimited paid time off (PTO) policy is similar to a normal PTO policy, besides the fact that you're not given a certain number of days off. As long as you're meeting performance goals and completing your work, you can take as many days off as you need, provided that your requests are approved by your manager. Sick days and emergencies are an exception.

At , we recognize that the typical 9-to-5 workday can make it difficult for you to manage your work and personal obligations. That's where our flexible work arrangements come in.

Telecommuting Policy

Our telecommuting policy allows you to work from home or another alternate location and communicate with your co-workers and us electronically. We hope that this arrangement provides you with the flexibility you need to manage your personal life and still get your work completed. Requests to work from home should be approved by your manager.

For More Information

We are happy to offer these flexible work arrangements to our employees, and hope that you enjoy them as much as your co-workers do. If you have any questions about these policies, or if you would like more guidance, please contact your direct manager or HR.



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EMPLOYEE WORK FROM HOME GUIDE

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EMPLOYEE WORK FROM HOME GUIDE | INTRODUCTION

In an age when more and more positions require duties to be carried out almost exclusively on computers, and where the internet can instantly connect anyone anywhere, many employers, including , are offering the option of telecommuting. Telecommuting allows employees to work from home or another alternate location and communicate with their employers electronically.

[Insert customized text or delete altogether: trusts its employees and recognizes the value and benefits of telecommuting. Because of all the variables that can affect the success or failure of telecommuting, requests to work from home will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and approval is up to the discretion of the manager or supervisor. If a work from home request is approved, employees must work out the hours during which they will be online with their manager. Please review the following:

- *Manager Sign Off*
- *Telecommuting Policy Review/Signature*
- *Cyber Security Considerations*
- *Actual Telecommuting Agreement*
- *Home Office Safety Considerations]*

In addition to housing all of 's policies and guidelines regarding telecommuting, this Work From Home Guide provides you with tips and self-evaluation methods to help you remain engaged and stay on track with your work.

For any questions regarding 's telecommuting policy, please contact HR.



1. SET A DESIGNATED WORK AREA.

Though this may seem trivial, choosing a spot in your home that is designated for working from home is an important step you can take to set yourself up for success. Choose a spot that you can work from every day that you are working from home. This could be a spare bedroom that you've turned into a home office, a desk located in the corner of the living room or even the dining room table. However, you should try to stay away from working in your bed or on the couch, as these areas are associated with relaxation in your brain, which could negatively impact your productivity.

Make sure your workspace functions efficiently for you and your work style. Treat your home work area as you would an office cubicle. Make your workspace a place you enjoy going to each day, an area where you can focus and do your best work.





2. PLAN AND TEST COMMUNICATIONS.

To ensure that you aren't left out of the loop, make sure to schedule regular meetings and communications with your team, supervisors and managers. It can be easy to feel disconnected with what's going on in the office, so remaining engaged with your co-workers is key. Communications can include the following:



VIRTUAL
MEETINGS



PHONE CALLS



INSTANT
MESSAGING

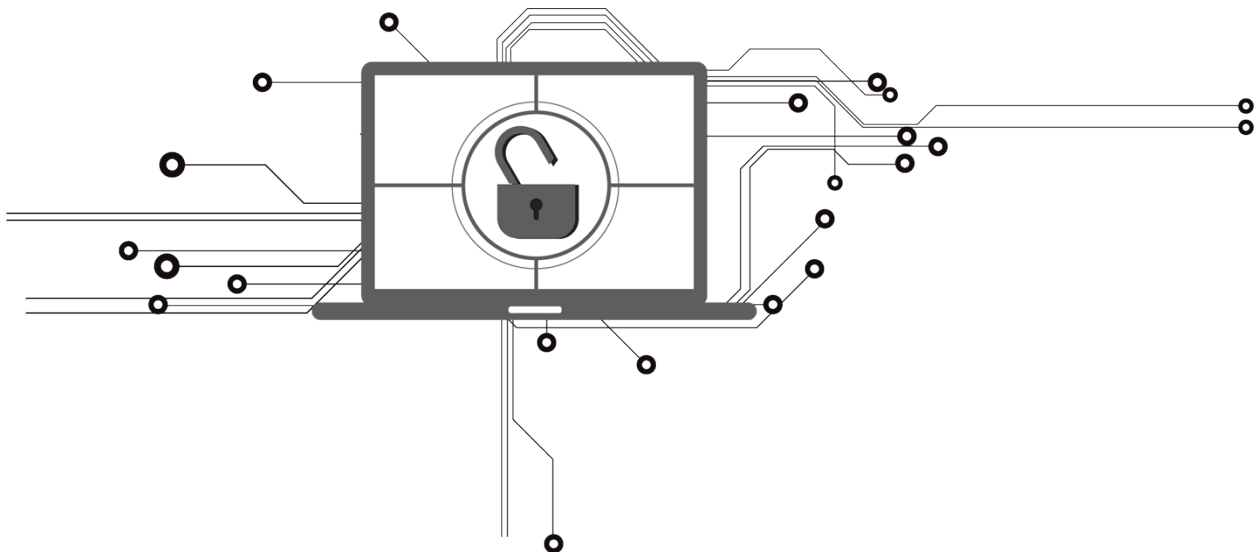


REGULAR
EMAILS

Of course, make sure that your communication method of choice functions properly before you consistently telecommute.

3. MAKE SURE YOUR NETWORK AND WORK PROGRAMS ARE PROTECTED.

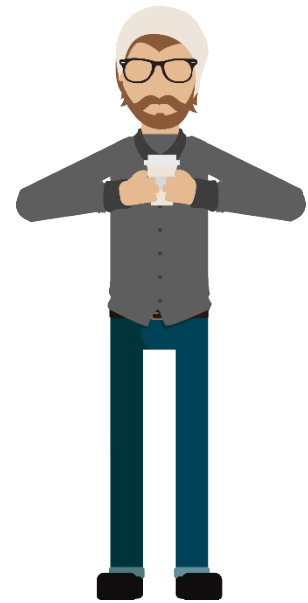
Telecommuting introduces another set of potential cyber security risks. Make sure you speak with your manager about cyber security and strategies you can use for mitigating the risk of a cyber attack while you are working from your home.





4. DRESS LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO WORK IN THE OFFICE.

The way you dress has been proven to affect you psychologically. This means that although it may sound like a great idea to work from home in your pajamas, in reality, it isn't. While you do not need to dress up in business formal attire if you are working from home, you should take the time to shower, brush your teeth and get ready for the day. Aim to dress in casual—not sloppy—attire.



5. AVOID DISTRACTIONS AND STAY ON TASK.

One big challenge of telecommuting is accountability. Without co-workers or managers nearby, it's easy to become distracted and fall behind on work. Remember that working from home is a privilege, and that it will become apparent if you are not putting the same effort into your work at home as you did in the office.

Stay focused on work throughout the day to maintain consistent productivity. Avoid online distractions as well. Limit the time spent on email, social media and websites unrelated to work. Set a timer on your phone or computer if necessary.





6. EVALUATE YOURSELF PERIODICALLY.

To ensure that telecommuting is working for you, be sure to conduct self-assessments periodically. Things to include in your assessment could include the following:

- What is working as far as your hours?
- What are you accomplishing in the office versus out of the office?
- Are you meeting all of your deadlines?
- Are you feeling connected with your co-workers?



7. REMEMBER TO TAKE BREAKS WHEN YOU NEED TO.

Just like you are encouraged to take breaks while you're in the office, remember to allow yourself time throughout the day for quick breaks. If you need a short break to gather your thoughts, try walking around the house or down the street, stretching, or making a snack or meal.

If you need to take a longer break or socialize, plan time in your schedule for this. A major advantage of working from home is having flexibility. Before you take an hour or two out of your day, though, make sure to communicate and check with your manager so that you remain compliant with 's policies.



8. BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF.

Telecommuting is not a viable option for every employee. If you find that working from home is negatively impacting your productivity or making you feel disconnected from your team and your work, speak to your manager.

