

# Working from home

## How to prepare...quickly!

I have never been a work from home person. First, my apartment was too small and noisy, and second, having little ones made it hard to get the space I needed. I like to be at work, to have my work routines and interacting with my colleagues in a work environment. That said, I am now working from home and incredibly grateful I can during this pandemic. I am happy to support social distancing -- work from home is safe and my employer supports it.

I very quickly realized that snuggling with my dog on the sofa, with my laptop on my lap, is not going to work longer term. My dining room table is too high, or are the chairs too low? The kitchen table is drafty and too close to the fridge. I also realize I should not be eating chips all day, and just because I have lots of coffee does not mean I should drink it.

After just a few days at home, I reached out to my colleague, and we started to compile a list based on his years of experience with modified work arrangements and creating successful temporary work sites. This has been successful in helping people get work completed, and in preventing undue stress on our bodies, wrists, eyes and backs.

### **Things to consider:**

**Get into a routine;** try to keep to your regular work routine as much as you can. Book your phone calls, review your planner. Keep yourself disciplined and organized. It is important to reach out to colleagues by phone to help replace those social connections and conversations.

**Get out of your pajamas,** it will help define the start of the day. Showering and changing into “work” clothes helps get you in the right frame of mind. Try to get the day going at your regular time and ensure you stop for breaks.

**Eat lunch.** Even being home alone, take the time to get a proper lunch and eat it. It will help avoid snacking or coffee binging. It will also break up the day and give you structure. If you have little ones at home, or excited pets who may not be used to your company, you may need a room with a closed door.

## Your workstation

When selecting a place to work, it is incredibly important to consider your posture and keyboard position, and try to take into consideration your sitting style.

- is your location well-lit?
- can your arms rest comfortably straight from your elbows?
- should your laptop be raised slightly?

First and foremost, avoid the temptation to sit or lay on the couch with your laptop. This may be fine for checking the latest hockey scores or stock quotes after dinner, but your body will definitely hate you for it over any length of time. Sitting at a table (no one said it has to be a desk) where you can rest your laptop on a hard surface is preferred in order to keep a neutral posture (head up, back straight) as much as possible.

No desktop computer? No problem. Although laptops and tablets are great for allowing you to type up that document while you're waiting at the airport terminal, their design really isn't ideal for prolonged, daily use. At the very least, try to use an external keyboard and mouse, which will give you more control over the positioning of your forearms and hands.

A good rule of thumb is to distance the monitor about an arm's length away from you, and the top of your monitor at or just slightly below your line of sight. If you need to raise the height, go ahead and use a monitor riser, or a few books will do just fine.

Find a chair that will allow you to have your elbows in line with the work surface. If that means sitting a bit higher than normal, causing your feet to dangle, use a stool or box to help provide support to your feet. Keeping your forearms parallel to the floor is key to reducing awkward postures and your body will thank you for it.

Bottom line, if you can achieve a setup that mimics something close to the gentleman below, working from home might not be so bad.

