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Slide 1



## *Participant Guide*

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## Learning Objectives

1. Be clear on what's expected
2. Be transparent with your boss about constraints
3. Comply with your company's policies
4. Follow technology guidelines
5. Separate work and home
6. Support your mental and physical health
7. Stay connected
8. Be patient with yourself and empathetic with your colleagues

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## Working Remotely

What's different about working remotely?

Positive?

Challenging?

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## Working Remotely – What’s Different?

- Not commuting -- Yay!
- More able to focus? Less able?
- Creating a new routine, structure, and delineation between work/home
- Having a new designated workspace
- Not having colleagues physically present
- Having changes in responsibilities and priorities (for some)
- Experiencing technology issues

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## Be Clear on What’s Expected of You


*What’s expected of you and your team?*

- Responsibilities
- Priorities
- Procedural changes
- Accessibility
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Compliance

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### Be Transparent With Your Manager About Constraints

- Are there limitations due to your environment and/or circumstances, that may impact your work productivity?
- Explain your work environment configuration
- Be cautious about over-committing until you re-establish your standard level of productivity

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### Comply with Your Company's Policies

- Attendance
- Social media
- Confidentiality
- Data protection
- Employee code of conduct
- Anti-discrimination and harassment

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### Follow Technology Guidelines

- Ensure you have the required hardware
- Request necessary applications/software
- Get your company's instructions on how to connect to their network via Virtual Private Network (VPN)
- Determine if you have adequate bandwidth/speed
- Learn and follow your IT department's protocol
- Know your organization's technology support process
- Be proactive; anticipate challenges with new technology

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### Establish Your Workspace

- Have a designated workspace
- Organize your workspace before you start each day
- Use technology to block out noise and distractions
- Normalize your workspace with your colleagues
  - Acknowledge common challenges
- Set up an ergonomically correct workstation

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## Establish a Routine and A Schedule

*Have a consistent routine and a disciplined way of managing the day.*

- Have a consistent morning routine
- Start and end your workday at consistent times
- Commit to regular breaks each day (including lunch)
- Structure your time and have priorities for each day
- Maintain regular check-ins with your manager

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## Establish and Maintain Clear Boundaries


*With those in your household...*

Identify and communicate your needs and requirements

- Expectations regarding:
  - Noises and noise levels
  - Interruptions – when and under what circumstances
  - Your availability (schedule, breaks, lunch, etc.)
  - Shared workspace
- Create strong boundaries

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### Establish and Maintain Clear Boundaries

- Have clear delineations between work and home
- Stick to your set schedule (including breaks)
  - Communicate your schedule to colleagues
  - Let colleagues/managers know if you need to take an unexpected break from your workstation
- Turn off email and instant messaging notifications when you take a break
- Commit to only checking email and responding to texts when you're in your 'workspace' and according to your standard work functions and hours
- When your work-day is done, indicate you're 'away from the office' in your email and shut down your computer

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### Support Your Mental and Physical Health

- Eat a healthy diet
- Take breaks throughout the day
- Increase your level of exercise
- Maintain a normal sleep schedule
- Pursue healthy leisure activities
- Engage in active relaxation to reduce stress
- Reduce alcohol consumption
- *What else?*

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## Support Your Mental and Physical Health *cont.*

- Understand that the solitude of working exclusively from home can impact your mood/emotional state
  - Isolation and loneliness can be common issues
- If you are accustomed to a lot of contact and collaboration with others, make sure that continues
  - Our daily interactions can reinforce our sense of well-being and belonging
- Prioritize the need to maintain relationships
  - Especially if you are energized by them
  - This is critical not only to work performance, but to emotional and mental wellness

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## Stay Connected – Leverage Technology

*Determine how you will counteract feelings of loneliness or isolation and maintain health and productivity*

- Use instant messaging to check in with your teammates
  - “Watercooler” chats - group chats including everyone
  - Keep an open chatroom
- Use your video communication tools frequently (Zoom, Skype, etc.)
- Have ‘virtual coffee breaks’ or ‘virtual lunches’
  - Use video communications for ‘structured’ unstructured time

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### Stay Connected – *cont.*

- Consider using collaboration tools
  - Remove distance as a barrier between team members
  - Provide organization and efficiency
- Find the *right* tools to keep you and your team connected and working effectively
- Increase interactions
  - Communicate more rather than less
  - Missing a best friend? Maintain the friendship
  - If you start to feel lonely, consider setting up a support group of friends and colleagues

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### Be Patient and Empathetic with Your Colleagues


- Try to keep your assumptions in check
- Be responsive to requests
- Show sensitivity and understanding
- Ask for assistance when you need it

And...

- Be patient with yourself

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### Closing

- Appreciate the benefits that come with remote work
- Know that you are not alone
- Keep asking yourself:
  - How will I protect myself from feeling lonely or isolated and stay healthy and productive?
  - What tools and strategies help me to feel connected?
  - Which practices do I need to put in place?
- Ask for help if you need it
- Provide assistance when asked

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### Resources

Hotspot Connectivity:

- How to set up a Personal Hotspot on your iPhone or iPad  
<https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204023>
- Share a mobile connection by tethering or hotspot on Android  
<https://support.google.com/android/answer/9059108?hl=en>

Online:  
[www.members.MHN.com](http://www.members.MHN.com)

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## Handout A: Office ergonomics- Your how-to guide

A comfortable workspace can help you feel your best. Give your sitting work area a makeover with this visual guide to office ergonomics.

If you sit behind a desk for hours at a time, you're not doomed to a career of neck and back pain or sore wrists and fingers. Proper office ergonomics — including correct chair height, adequate equipment spacing and good desk posture — can help you and your joints stay comfortable at work.

Ready to give your workspace a makeover? Get started making your sitting workstation comfortable with this visual guide to sitting workstation ergonomics.



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### Chair

Choose a chair that supports your spinal curves. Adjust the height of your chair so that your feet rest flat on the floor or on a footrest and your thighs are parallel to the floor. Adjust armrests so your arms gently rest on them with your shoulders relaxed.

### Key objects

Keep key objects — such as your telephone, stapler or printed materials — close to your body to minimize reaching. Stand up to reach anything that can't be comfortably reached while sitting.

### Keyboard and mouse

Place your mouse within easy reach and on the same surface as your keyboard. While typing or using your mouse, keep your wrists straight, your upper arms close to your body, and your hands at or slightly below the level of your elbows. Use keyboard shortcuts to reduce extended mouse

use. If possible, adjust the sensitivity of the mouse so you can use a light touch to operate it. Alternate the hand you use to operate the mouse by moving the mouse to the other side of your keyboard.

### Telephone

If you frequently talk on the phone and type or write at the same time, place your phone on speaker or use a headset rather than cradling the phone between your head and neck.

### Footrest

If your chair is too high for you to rest your feet flat on the floor — or the height of your desk requires you to raise the height of your chair — use a footrest. If a footrest is not available, try using a small stool or a stack of sturdy books instead.

### Desk

Under the desk, make sure there's clearance for your knees, thighs and feet. If the desk is too low and can't be adjusted, place sturdy boards or blocks under the desk legs. If the desk is too high and can't be adjusted, raise your chair. Use a footrest to support your feet as needed. If your desk has a hard edge, pad the edge or use a wrist rest. Don't store items under your desk.

### Monitor

Place the monitor directly in front of you, about an arm's length away. The top of the screen should be at or slightly below eye level. The monitor should be directly behind your keyboard. If you wear bifocals, lower the monitor an additional 1 to 2 inches for more comfortable viewing. Place your monitor so that the brightest light source is to the side.

**Source:** [www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/office-ergonomics/art-20046169](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/office-ergonomics/art-20046169)

## **Handout B: How to Communicate Better When You Work Remotely**

Communication between colleagues should always be crystal clear, but especially so when you telecommute. With the absence of body language, facial cues, and, well, an office, thoughts and messages with the best of intentions can potentially have the worst of outcomes. Be productive—and keep the lines of communication open—with these tips.

### **Think before you send.**

You might be in a rush to send an e-mail before your child gets off the bus. Or maybe you had a tiff with your spouse and now have to communicate with your boss. You may not even realize it, but your curt tone and short reply could be perceived incorrectly by your recipient. So even though it's an extra step, reread your e-mails to make sure you are getting your point across in a professional, yet personable way.

### **Be professional.**

When you work remotely, there might be days on end when you don't speak to another person during work hours. Without that human interaction, your social skills may begin to slide. Always remember to keep it professional when speaking with your colleagues or your boss to help maintain your social finesse. After all, flexible work is still professional work.

### **Be positive.**

Sure, your boss wants you to tell him your honest opinion of his latest idea to boost sales. But even if you think a person's idea is poor at best, don't say it directly during the Skype meeting—or worse, write about it in an e-mail and CC the company. Instead, spotlight the positives of your boss' plan and then offer alternatives. That way, you're seen as a positive force within the company.

### **Reach out.**

You've read (and reread) your boss' e-mail four times but you still can't figure out what he wants—or why he sounds so annoyed. Don't assume the worst, though, and shoot back a frustrated (and terse) response. Pick up the phone and speak with your boss. Ask for clarification of the e-mail—when he begins explaining, you'll be able to discern if he was upset or not and why. Then rectify the issue right away, to diffuse a potentially tense situation in the future.

### **Listen closely.**

Often, miscommunication happens when people are not listening to each other. Avoid mixed messages by practicing active listening, which is to listen and then repeat what the other person just said. For example, if your boss needs you to tweak a report, you can say, "Okay, I can fix the report. Would you like me to add this information to the report instead?" That way, you are acknowledging your boss' needs and getting all the info you need to perform your job well.

Good communication is the cornerstone for any successful company. When you have a virtual job, keeping the lines of communication open, honest, and professional will help to ensure your success.

**Source:** [www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/how-to-communicate-better-when-you-work-at-home/](http://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/how-to-communicate-better-when-you-work-at-home/)