



Top ten tips for working from home

March 2020



Following the Government's recent advice during the outbreak of COVID-19, the HFMA has made arrangements to maximise the use of homeworking. As some HFMA staff are already permanent homeworkers, we have collated the following general tips that we feel may be helpful for anyone who will be spending time working from home over the next few months.

- 1. Have a dedicated workspace** This may not be possible, in which case make sure you pack your work stuff away at the end of the day – you don't want to spend your evenings looking at it!
- 2. Try and stick to the same daily structure** Start and finish work at the same times you would have done if you were in the office. At home it is easy to slip into working longer hours, but that may be required at the moment to deal with current pressures. Wear appropriate clothing so that you are prepared for video conferences at any time. Most video conferencing software has a blur function, so you can blur the background – but you can't blur yourself!
- 3. Make sure you take proper breaks and keep hydrated** If you were in the office and had back to back meetings you would ask for a five-minute comfort break. Somehow it doesn't quite work like that when you work from home. You can easily not leave your desk for a whole morning. It is okay, in fact it is a good idea, to leave your desk regularly. Also, do try and leave the house. You need to be sensible about COVID-19 but getting some fresh air and a bit of exercise before work and/or at lunchtime is good for you and in our experience helps to make you more productive.
- 4. Ask if you have any problems** IT departments will be under increased pressure to support homeworkers and keep vital systems operating. However, it is important that you can work as effectively as possible from home so ask for support as soon as you need it. Your first step may not necessarily be the IT department if the issue relates to a standard system. Other colleagues, or even family members who are also working from home, may be able to help. If

you cannot sort it yourself, the issue is specific to your systems or sensitive in nature then ask the IT department for help.

5. **Keep in regular touch with colleagues** Use the functionality of Teams/Skype to message, call or videoconference. Or consider sharing mobile or home numbers for the duration so you can make old fashioned phone calls. Make sure that you do speak to people and not just message or email. Working from home can be a bit lonely, but technology is your friend. Don't struggle in silence.
6. **Focus on outputs rather than the time spent in front of your computer** What really matters is that you get done what you need to get done, by the appropriate deadline. To-do lists and setting your own deadlines can be very helpful to keep you focused.
7. **Background music** This can help to replace the background noise of your usual office and reduce the feeling of being alone but do be aware when it becomes a distraction and turn it off.
8. **Discuss working arrangements with your family/ housemates** You'll need to work out ground rules that suit everyone. This will particularly be the case with young children (and pets) who will see you as 'fair game' if you are at home. If you can be in a separate room with the door shut, that helps them forget you are there (although a dog or cat can be good company). Our homes are not set up for everyone to work from them for an extended period of time – some rearranging of furniture and rooms may be required.
9. **Food** Plan your meals so that you don't end up grazing all day just because food is there. If you would normally make a lunch to take to work, then carry on with this routine so that it is ready when you want it. Do not keep the biscuits next to the kettle!
10. **Mobile phone and internet distractions** Turn your personal mobile off if it is not essential for school contact and so on. It is easy to get distracted at home. Alternatively, place it in a drawer with notifications on mute but with the ringtone still on – if it's important, they'll call.

