



BranchPattern

# 9 TIPS TO STAY PRODUCTIVE & CONNECTED WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

We understand that working from home can be a challenge, especially when you haven't done it very often. The following are 9 tips to help you stay focused, organized, connected and productive in your temporary home office.

## 1. Get your technology in order

If you have a portable laptop computer, make sure to take it home, and don't forget your charger. Also, take home your mouse and keyboard — anything that might make working on a laptop from home a little easier. Make sure you know how to use the connectivity software provided by your company and download any corresponding apps. If you have questions or need help, let your IT department hear about it.

Since most of your meetings, both internal and external, are now probably being held via video, make sure your speakers and microphone work. If you aren't sure, do a test with a co-worker before starting a meeting and finding out the hard way.

## 2. Manage expectations

It's wise to have a discussion with your boss about what can actually be accomplished from home. With school closures and concerns about putting kids in day care, those of you who have kids are faced with a challenge. Be flexible and transparent with your manager about how much work you might realistically be able to get done if you're balancing childcare.



- 1. **Get your technology in order**
- 2. **Manage expectations**
- 3. **Stick to your routine (and still get dressed)**
- 4. **Keep up the face time**
- 5. **Be proactive with your boss by scheduling one-on-one time**
- 6. **Even a small space needs work boundaries**
- 7. **After work, “go home” (even if you’re home)**
- 8. **Download apps that block out internet distractions**
- 9. **Working remote can be tough (Speak up if you’re struggling)**

Have on-going discussions with your manager about priorities and how tasks will get done, etc.

**3. Stick to your routine (and still get dressed)**

It’s easy to fall into a trap in the mornings when working from home, especially since you don’t have to worry about a morning commute, but it can help to act like you are going into the office. When working from home, do all the things you’d do to prepare for an office role: Set your alarm, make coffee, and wear nice clothes.

One of the perks of having a home office is that you might be the only one in the room. Hence, pajamas and casual wear tends to be the daily wardrobe of choice. However, there will be times where dressing the part of a working professional is still going to be necessary.

Just because you aren’t physically in the office, doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t look presentable. Remember, you will have video calls with clients and partners, so it’s important to look professional and be a good representative for your company. Since first impressions and professionalism are always important, you can demonstrate good home office etiquette by making sure you look presentable and alert during video calls. Also, be mindful of your body language and facial expressions. If you have an early morning video meeting, ensure you are fully awake before appearing on camera.

Although most video communication focuses on the upper half of your body, be mindful that your outfit appropriately covers your bottom half as well. You never know when you might have to stand up and walk away from your desk or workspace mid-video call.

Finally, don’t eat during video calls and limit distractions. There is nothing more distracting than someone chewing, gulping, and slurping during a conference call. And put your dog in the backyard if it’s going to whine or bark, etc.

**4. Keep up the face time**

The simple solution to this is to up your face time with peers and managers, even if you’re using technology to do that.

There is a big difference between being able to walk over to someone’s desk for a quick chat or question versus scheduling time for a call. Doing meetings and calls via your company’s connectivity software to stay connected and on point can help. You also have the option with a video call to share screens if there are questions. If there are opportunities to have face-to-face days while working remotely, take them — we all still need that human connection.

**5. Be proactive with your boss by scheduling one-on-one time**

When working from home, don’t feel like you’re bothering your managers by asking for time with them. It’s hard to read the room when you’re not in it, make sure you are



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encouraging managers to keep doing regularly scheduled one-on-ones.

Be even more proactive than you would be in the office. Schedule time on your manager’s calendar to catch up once a week or even if it’s a 15-minute call daily just to check in. You don’t want to be out of sight, out of mind when working remotely, and that’s why it’s important to keep both communication and rapport in motion. It also helps prevent things and questions from slipping through the cracks.

#### 6. Even a small space needs work boundaries

When people think about working from home, they often envision staying in their pajamas and being on their couch. While there are certainly moments where that can be the case, this can also lead to blurred lines of when the mind is supposed to be at ease versus active.

Try to create a space that is dedicated to work, just as your desk at the office would be. This can help determine where you can and cannot be productive. If you are working with limited space at home, even something as simple as a folding table and chair can make a world of difference in staying focused and productive.

#### 7. After work, “go home” *(even if you’re home)*

There is a real danger of working yourself to the point of fatigue and one way of transitioning from work life to home life is to change the atmosphere. When you stop working for the day, you can clear your desk, turn off your computer and ‘go home’ by

changing clothes and leaving your ‘office’ for the evening. Remember, having a work/life harmony is still important, even if you’re staying home.

#### 8. Download apps that block out internet distractions

The ‘Checky’ app, for instance, tracks how much time you’re spending on your phone, so you can become more aware of your habit of scrolling through Instagram when you should be working. The ‘Focus’ and ‘Freedom’ apps actually block certain websites (Facebook, Pinterest, etc.) for a designated amount of time so you can get work done. Sites like ‘Strict Workflow’ help you structure your time with the Pomodoro method (a time-management technique that has you divide your time into 25-minute sessions of deep focus with breaks in-between).

#### 9. Working remotely can be tough *(Speak up if you’re struggling)*

If you’re new to working remotely, it can take time to adjust. Working from home requires extreme focus, independence and reliability. If you’re feeling left out, or burned out, say something to your manager. It’s important to maintain consistent and transparent communication to let them know how you’re doing — both professionally and personally.

Best of luck to you. We will get through this period of transition together. If there is anything BranchPattern can do to help you with normalcy, certainty or connection, please reach out to us. We’re happy to help.