



**Government
of South Australia**

Office of the Commissioner
for Public Sector Employment

WORKING FROM HOME

Employee Guide

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Working from Home – Employee Guide

Remote or home working is not a new concept and you may work from home on a fairly regular basis but in most situations this will be a day or two a week. COVID-19 has presented a situation where employees may have to work from home for prolonged periods of time.

This Guide provides some practical steps you can take to ensure your safety, stay connected and manage your productivity whilst working remotely.

Look after yourself

Ensure that your work space is set up to be as comfortable as possible. It is important to be aware of your working environment to mitigate any potential risks. Portable devices are not conducive for long term work and can cause body stressing. Take appropriate precautions to help you avoid placing your body under needless stress.

This can include performing light stretches and moving at least every 30 minutes, using a workstation if available (if not available use a suitable table and chair), being mindful of your posture and make necessary adjustments. Remember you have a responsibility to look after your own health and safety while working at home.

The same ergonomic considerations should be given to your home working space as that in the office.

Ensure your keyboard is positioned directly in front of you at a comfortable position so your wrists remain flat whilst keying. Ensure your screen is directly in front of you and if possible at eye level. Try and avoid natural light falling onto your screen. Ensure you take regular breaks if doing extensivescreen work.

As per the pictures below, the first two images highlight poor postures with the potential for muscular strain. The third is the preferred posture to reduce the likelihood of muscular strain.



Maintain your routine and plan your day

Maintaining a routine is key. Get up at the same time, shower, dress (in your work clothes, even), and have breakfast (if you normally do that, too). These routines let your brain know it's getting ready for work. Maybe instead of a commute, do some exercise or listen to a professional podcast, and it will help your brain snap into work mode. Set a schedule for when you will start work, have a break and plan to finish work. For some people this may mean having the same start and end time each workday that you would normally have had in the office.

Set clear goals for your working day and week, and agree these with your manager. If it helps, break these goals down further into smaller goals for the morning and afternoon. Writing these goals or a 'to-do list down at the end of the day or first thing in the morning can be helpful to keep you on track.

Set yourself boundaries between what is 'home' and what is 'working' within your shared home/work zone to help maintain work/life balance. Know when your scheduled meetings are and make sure you prepare in plenty of time for them, including being comfortable with the technology being used for that meeting. Have a deliberate way to signal the end of the day, acknowledge what you have achieved and write your goal(s) for the next day.

Create a work space

Having the right mindset is important. But having the right space to work, if possible a separate space, is also key. If you don't have a designated workspace or office, see if you can create a place so you can have what you need at hand. Take 10 minutes to de-clutter or do whatever you need to do to create a healthy mental space for yourself.

Avoid isolation

Working from home can be lonely. Try and make sure that you talk to at least one other colleague each day. Schedule catch-ups or virtual coffee time with colleagues using Skype, Microsoft Teams or WebEx. Where possible use video as this will make you feel much more connected. Check in regularly with your manager and ask for regular one-on-one meetings so you can ensure you are on track.

Set ground rules with other household members

Set ground rules with other people in your home or who share your space. If you share a home with someone, there's a good chance they will also be working from home. Do your best to identify a designate spot for each individual, no matter how small, as separate as possible. Discuss your schedule so you can wherever possible schedule meetings etc at different times so you are not talking over each other.

If you have children who come home from school while you're still working, ensure where possible that they have clear rules about what they can and cannot do during the time you are still working. Discussing and agreeing upon these types of expectations with the people you live with in advance can reduce stress at home. Work together to identify what will make it easier on one another, for example, the use of signage and partitions, having suitable activities on hand for children when you require space to work, sharing household duties etc.

Avoid distractions

If you find yourself distracted by the number of jobs you notice around the house, capture these in a list and leave it for another time. You may also choose to do a chore during a formal break. If you are struggling to progress a task discuss it with your manager or work with a colleague to try and focus on a way forward.

Don't overwork

Try not to fall into the trap of working too much. It is easy to blur the boundaries of work and home time, particularly when there are critical deliverables. It is important to be self-disciplined in monitoring your workload and fatigue levels.

Make sure you log off and shut your computer at the end of a working day. Do not leave it on as you will be tempted to see if any emails have been sent.

Reach out if needed

Remember to keep up your self-care which is often ignored when adjusting to a new routine, during times of uncertainty and stress. Looking after your own wellbeing will help you to stay healthy and will enable you to look after the wellbeing of others. Working from home does not mean you are required to 'go it alone' – it is important you maintain contact with others. Teams is a great way to collaborate and interact for both work and non-work topics and to avoid social isolation. Share concerns, discuss problems, celebrate wins. It is important to share any concerns or issues with a peer, your manager or a colleague. This can help to bring perspective to a situation and also to keep work separate from home. Also remember to share your successes as it is more difficult to see achievements when working remotely.

Remember you can also contact and speak to Employee Assistance Program.