

How to Set Up a More Productive Remote Workspace



Introduction

Remote work is one of the most coveted benefits for today's employees. A 2018 study by [IWG](#) uncovered that more than two-thirds of people around the world work away from the office at least once every week. And a [study from OwlLabs](#) revealed that remote employees are happier than their peers, and more likely to stick around. In fact, according to *The New York Times*, employees working off-site for even three to four days each week feel more engaged with their teams. But for those new to setting up a home office, the process can be overwhelming. Worse yet, without the proper setup, remote workers can sabotage their own success. From equipment to layouts and ways to block out background noise and distractions, setting up the perfect home office is about more than just having a laptop and internet connection ready to go. We asked remote workers to share their best advice for setting up an optimal remote workspace, and this eBook will share some of the most valuable tips.

Could your home office use a facelift? Curious to hear how some of the world's most successful entrepreneurs have organized their offices? Keep reading!





Step One: Invest in Reliable High-Spend Internet

If you're setting up a remote office for the first time, it goes without saying that reliable Internet is essential. But if you're wondering whether to splurge for the premium package or go for the bare minimum, most work-from-home pros recommend investing in the best available option. Why? When you work remotely, video connectivity is crucial for both productivity and presence. There's nothing more frustrating than struggling through a weak connection during a video meeting. Investing in proper bandwidth means you'll have one less worry. How fast is fast enough? Technology expert Burton Kelso, who also happens to work remotely, offers up this advice.

"You need to strive to have Internet speeds at all for 10 Mb per second download and 100 Mb per second upload minimum," he says." For optimum speeds, look for Internet services that offer at least 50 Mb per second download. Remember, most remote applications require access to the cloud or access to someone's computer."

And if you want the option to be mobile, don't forget to invest in the technology that will boost your WiFi availability." Good WiFi is a must. I invested in a router I could add roaming sim cards into for my van. At my home, I located my office in the room nearest the WiFi box for the strongest signal," says Keara O'Connor-Allen, Founder and Coach at Break Free from the 9 to 5.



Max out your WiFi. Opt for the highest package. You can expense this, and there is nothing worse than a bad internet connection when you are trying to get work done.

Kate Bourque,

An [independent brand and web designer](#)

Step Two: Invest in the Right Home Office Equipment

Once you've got your Internet up and running, it's time to start shopping for all the other equipment you'll need to be productive. Some of the basics: a desk, chair, proper cords, and monitors. We asked several remote work veterans to share their must-have office gadgets. Before you make your shopping list, check out their tips:

Invest in at least two monitors.

"This will save you a ton of time, allowing you to get more done in less time."

-[Jeff Moriarty](#), Marketing Consultant

Get a desk with storage.

"This is especially helpful if your desk is in a common space i.e., the living room. That way, you can put notebooks and other items away at the end of the day so that at least it's out of sight out of mind, and you're not constantly reminded of work."

-[Jeff Moriarty](#), Marketing Consultant

Set up proper cable management.

"I have an extension cord that also has a USB hookup, and I love it."

-Kate Bourque, [an independent brand and web designer](#) in Ottawa, Canada.





Consider buying a full-size keyboard, mouse, and printer.

“If your company gives you only a corporate laptop, you might also want to get a full-sized keyboard, a big monitor, and a full-size mouse to make daily usage more comfortable. If you print, copy or scan very often, you probably want to get a multi-function printer that does all that. Some might want to have a coffeemaker or a hot water pot for tea.”

-Gloria Metrick, Owner, [GeoMetrick Enterprises](#)

“Mise en place” is a French expression for “putting in place.”

“It’s what chefs do to prepare their workspace. You need to make a place for yourself. Your local barista is going to get tired of seeing you hunched over your laptop. Big monitors, pens and paper, corkboard for graphics, maybe a green screen – all of these can help. IRS Publication 587 details how to [deduct expenses](#) for a home office where you can be effective working. Consider two 28-inch monitors, so you can easily switch between your communication and work applications.”

-Michael Risse, Co-founder and VP/CMO of [Seeq](#)

Make sure you have comfortable seating.

“For me, the best configuration has been a convertible sitting/standing desk, so I have the option to stand later in the afternoon when I’m sick of sitting. I also have

two office chairs: a comfy plush manager’s chair, and an ergonomic kneeling chair. I swap between the two, depending on how my back and posture feel. In total, all three pieces cost me \$350, and between them, I have multiple configurations for how to spend time working most comfortably.”

-Grace Everitt, President of [Grace Marketing Group™](#)

Pay attention to your lighting.

“Lighting does so much for our mood and, of course, is personal to each of us. Some like working with natural light, others with a particular type of desk lamp. Find what works for you and invest in the option.”

-Emily Lyman, Founder & President, [Branch & Bramble](#)

Consider airflow.

“When working at home, it’s all too easy to focus on minor distractions, and, suddenly, if you’re too hot or too cold, it can seriously impact your workflow.” Consider where you’re setting up your home office and if you need a standing fan, window fan, heater, etc. to make it comfortable enough that you won’t let the temp distract you.”

-Emily Lyman, Founder & President, [Branch & Bramble](#)

Have all your equipment ready?

Now it’s time to put it all in place, which brings us to **Step Three**.

Step Three: Set Up a Dedicated Space (or Spaces)

You've got high-speed Internet and WiFi-enabled, and you've got the perfect chair, desk, and lighting ready for use. Now the question remains—where should it all go? If you ask anyone who's worked remotely to share their top tip for productive work, most will agree that setting up a dedicated workspace is critical. Does that mean an office? A tucked-away nook? A basement? Or a variety of spaces? You decide! For Keara O'Connor-Allen, having a few different "work zones" has worked well.

"I suggest having a couple of zones if you can afford the space. I have a desk where I do the majority of my work but also a reading seat in a window where I can go and do research, read business books or sit and do some thinking," says O'Connor-Allen, Founder and Coach of [Break Free from the 9 to 5](#)." Having a couple spaces helps me focus on reading or thinking and planning rather than seeing notifications from my email pop up at my desk!"

The bottom line: make sure you have space (or spaces) that encourage focus. If you can set them apart from the areas where you usually eat or relax, that's a best practice.

"This probably goes without saying, but the freedom of working from home makes it tempting to plop onto the bed or on the couch with your laptop in your lap," says Jen Petty, VP/Director of Marketing of [Petty Details, LLC](#)." I find that I get body aches and pains and don't get as much





accomplished when I do that. I have a desk that is organized and neat, and a nice office chair is a MUST. My Tempurpedic office chair has been my favorite chair so far.”

As you’re setting up your office, make sure to design it in a way that reflects your personality. The more interesting and inviting, the more you’ll enjoy using it. And surrounding yourself with sources of inspiration can boost creativity and productivity.

“Whether it’s a motivational quote, a favorite photo or book, or post-it notes that motivate you, keep a few positive reinforcements close to your desk. This will help you overcome moments of doubt or lack of creativity,” says Trivinia Barber, Founder & CEO of [PriorityVA](#).

For Edith Muthoni, Chief Editor at [Learnbonds.com](#), designing an inspiring workspace meant bringing outdoor elements inside and redesigning with comfort in mind.

“I redesigned and redecorated my office to allow in more light, and went green by introducing plants. I also created more room (for the legs and general working area), de-cluttered, and moved my office further away from the TV and dining areas,” she says.” I am also spending regularly on office-friendly air fresheners with a calming scent.”

For Grace Everitt, president of [Grace Marketing Group™](#), designing a space that sparks joy is key to her productivity; and she advises her clients to think the same way. One of the best parts of remote work is freedom, and that includes having the freedom to design your own office. Use that to your advantage, she says.

“You work from home! You have complete freedom to make this space whatever you want it to be, unbound by a company or HR’s specifications. Play music. Adorn the walls with your favorite prints. Add snazzy lighting effects, or place flowers on your desk. This is YOUR space, and you’re going to be spending a lot of time in it—so make it a place you are joyful to be.”

Having an inviting, enjoyable space to work is essential, but one word of caution: make sure that space isn’t too distracting. Maintaining focus while working remotely can be a challenge, particularly for those who are new to remote work. This brings us to step four in the home office setup process.

Step Four: Minimize Distractions

It's impossible to eliminate all distractions from the workday—they're part of office life whether you work remotely or in-company headquarters. However, there are a few things you can do to minimize distractions and set yourself up for better productivity.

Kate Broque says de-cluttering helps her stay focused.

"When you work from home, you have to block out distractions. For me, that can mean keeping the window closed to avoid noisy construction, or tidying first thing every morning so that I'm not distracted by a messy space."

For many other remote employees, like Gloria Metrick, Owner of [GeoMetrick Enterprises](#), cutting down on background noise is key to a successful workday. She says that setting up your home office in a room with a door helps. So does using a good-quality headset with a built-in microphone.

Have pets at home? While they can be great companions, they can also become big distractions without boundaries in place.

"Keep the pets out. I found that I was wasting a ton of time playing with my cats when I first started working at home. Now I keep the door shut and can focus much more," says Marketing Consultant [Jeff Moriarty](#).

And when you work remotely, it's not only important to set boundaries with your furry friends. Sometimes, humans in your life need rules, too.





Those unfamiliar with remote work often misunderstand what life is like for work at home employees. If you have friends and relatives who expect you to run errands for them during the workday, you'll need to be clear about what's acceptable and unacceptable.

"Most folks don't get the 'remote office thing.' After ten years, our parents still think we sit around and play on the computer all day," says Jen Petty, VP and Director of Marketing at [Petty Details, LLC](#). "That mindset can derail you. Make sure those potential distractions understand that you are WORKING and aren't available at a moment's notice to help move furniture or sit around and chat."

With holidays upon us, distractions often ramp up in the form of house guests. Paul Davis, the owner of Paul Davis Solutions, LLC, has found that in those special circumstances, it sometimes makes the most sense to get out of the house and work for a day or two.

"If your family is home for the holidays, how will you find the space to speak quietly? A good resource could be a local coworking space that has rooms for rent," he says.

Following these tips will help you cut down on distractions, but for many remote employees, some form of diversion is a good thing. All work and no play doesn't always make you more effective or more productive, which brings us to step five.

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Paul Davis,
Founder of Paul Davis Solutions, LCC

Step Five: On the Flipside, Set Aside Time and Space for Distractions

Work from home employees often feel pressured to work extra hours and even skip breaks. Mark Webster, Co-Founder of [Authority Hacker](#) knows this pressure all too well and advises remote employees to step away from their desks from time to time.

“The reality is, if you were in a traditional office, a good hour or so of your day would be spent catching up with colleagues, enjoying the occasional trip to the coffee machine, or engaging in some watercooler talk,” he says. “However, working remotely means you miss out on this. That’s why I like to set aside some guilt-free distraction time each day.”

What does distraction time look like for Webster?

Some days he’ll head to the park for a walk, other days he’ll run mid-day errands. In both cases, he finds the time away from the office allows him to clear his mind, breaking up an otherwise mundane day.

“Don’t feel guilty about this! It’s a human need and one that will make you far more productive in the long run,” Webster says.

Cody Zucker, CPA turned Real Estate Investor at [We Buy Jersey Shore Houses LLC](#), says breaking up his day with human interaction is helpful.

“Grab coffee or tea out in the real world. People need physical interaction—this is a quick and easy method to reduce the loneliness that comes from working all the time remotely,” he says.





For Lori Lite of [Actualize Consulting](#), having wellness prompts on hand helps her shift out of work mode when she needs a break. She keeps [Zendoway Cubes](#) on hand for decorating and inspiration.

Finally, though this may sound counterproductive, don't be afraid to spend some time on social media. Connecting with colleagues or peers in virtual social settings is a great way to combat the isolation of remote work.

"Make sure your digital network is firing. LinkedIn or Facebook groups will help you build relationships and ensure you stay connected without having to be face to face," says Tracey Munn, Owner and Digital Data Specialist at Munn Digital.

As you're thinking through the best way to design your office, don't forget to consider how you'll appear on video. This brings us to our sixth and final step.



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Mark Webster,
Co-Founder of Authority Hacker

Step Six: Be Mindful of How You Present Yourself During Videoconferences

As videoconferences become the norm for businesses across the globe, remote employees need to consider how they might use video to connect with their colleagues. Video offers a powerful outlet for connection, helping remote employees feel more connected to their in-office peers and helping teams work more efficiently. But despite the growing prevalence of video technology, many employees still feel nervous about camera-on meetings. One reason? They don't have a space that's well-equipped for video meetings.

Julia Joy of [Z Group PR](#) has spent the last ten years working remotely, and she's noticed this trend.

"I have worked remotely full-time for about half of my 20+ year career, and I like to remind people that video conferencing is the norm now, so it helps to build your professional brand when you have a distraction-free, professional background during your conference calls," she says. "If rearranging your room to show only you at your desk is not an option, then an inexpensive room screen can create a more professional visual backdrop."

And for those in more creative professions, it's also important to consider whether you might need multiple setups to support different video use cases.





“Consider your background—especially if you do video calls, says Keara O’Connor-Allen.” I have my back to a wall and have some plants behind me, as I do a lot of video calls and also recording for Instagram/Facebook videos. I have been sure there isn’t lots of harsh light behind me, which would affect these.”

Last, but not least, dress for the part. It’s worth it to take 15 extra minutes every morning to change out of your pajamas and brush your hair. The little bit of extra effort will boost your confidence the next time an unexpected video meeting invitation lands on your calendar. During a recent [#ICMIChat Twitter chat](#), [Erica Mancuso](#) and [Becky Roemen](#) shared their thoughts on the use of video in the workplace, and they agreed.

“I just started a new gig that is 100% work from home. I can’t imagine being successful in this role without being able to connect via videoconference,” said Mancuso.

Roemen’s reply?

“My colleagues would tell you, I’m a huge proponent of video ON! Even without makeup, or with a baseball cap on, allow your coworkers to build a relationship with you instead of just your voice!”

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Erica Mancuso



Bringing It All Together

Working remotely is a privilege and a perk that will only grow in prevalence in the years to come. If you've been tasked with working remotely, setting up your home office in an effective way increases your likelihood of success. Gone are the days when a successful career required an in-office presence.

Thanks to the proliferation of video and collaboration tools like 8x8 Video Meetings, succeeding as a remote worker is easier than ever. And with 8x8, you can schedule, start, or join audio and HD video conferencing from any device or room with no friction.

Make it Simple. Two Clicks and You're In. Sign up for your free 8x8 Video Meetings account today: <https://8x8.vc/>



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