

WORKING IN A HOME OFFICE



Working from home has its advantages and disadvantages. Working in a home office and maintaining work-life balance requires preparation and regular evaluation of your work practices. If you are not careful, your home office can take over your life. By following a few guidelines, you can avoid burnout as you take advantage of working at home.

Setting Up a Home Office

It is important to set up the home office properly in the beginning. A poor work environment will only harm productivity. So, make sure that you are comfortable and have all of the tools that you need to do your job well.

The Set Up:

- **Location:** Choose a separate room or a location that is out of the way. This will help prevent distractions and create a professional work environment. You also need to make sure that it is well lit.
- **Equipment:** Make sure that your equipment is functional and that you have everything you need.
- **Clear out the office:** Remove items from the office that are not work related. It is not a storage shed.
- **Organize:** Organize supplies so that they are accessible, easy to use, and functional.
- **Make it a workspace:** Limit the office use for work. It is not a play area.

Setting Boundaries

It is difficult to establish boundaries in a home office; people do not view a home the same way they see the work office. Because you do not have company policies to prevent distractions, you need to create your own boundaries. You can base these boundaries on the rules and boundaries of your old workplace. For example, do not take personal calls while you are working. Just like other boundaries, expect people to challenge them. You must stick to your boundaries, however, in order to be effective at your job and keep your work life in balance.

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Dealing with Distractions

It is easy to become distracted while working from home. There is no one to supervise, and your family can easily forget that you are working. Fortunately, a few safeguards will help you avoid distractions.

Avoiding Distractions:

- **Limit access:** Ask your family to stay out of the office while you are working. Family, children especially, can be very distracting.
- **Use a timer:** Schedule breaks for activities like social networking. Do not constantly surf the internet.
- **Turn off the television:** Even if you need a television for work, it does not have to be on all the time. Turn it off to avoid distractions.
- **Set aside time to talk on the phone:** You cannot allow yourself to be distracted by every phone call.

Make a Schedule and Stick to It

Working from home gives you the chance to create your own schedule, but you do need to create it. If not, you will have trouble accomplishing tasks on time. Most people find a schedule that sets tasks for each hour helpful, but you may use any format or time block you like.

Example:

- 8:00 am – Breakfast
- 8:30 am – Return emails
- 9:00 am – Call clients
- 10:00 am – Research

No matter how you create your schedule, you must stick with it. It is too easy ignoring your schedule when no one is monitoring your performance.