

Work From Home? 8 Ways to Supercharge Your Productivity

Small changes to your environment and habits can radically increase how much you get done when working from your home office.

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LISTEN, READ AND LISTEN AGAIN

When it comes to setting up your home office, you probably have the basics down. Your chair is comfy, your computer setup ergonomically correct, and your iPad dock all ready to play your favorite tunes. You've probably even warned away the kids and made sure all your tech needs are taken care of.

But getting the most done when working remotely is also about the little things. Small tweaks to your environment and habits can have outsize impacts on your productivity. What are some of the tricks experts recommend you try? Here's a roundup:

Add Some Life

Study after study shows that seeing living things makes us more productive. There are many ways to incorporate this insight into your workspace, from the obvious, like adding a potted plant or two, to the often overlooked, like using unpainted wood, which seems to have similar positive effects. Other options include inviting your pet into your office (assuming she's not a barker or you don't have any calls to make), making sure you get plenty of natural light, or locating your chair so you can easily look out into the natural world.

Think Carefully About Color

Research shows that the color you choose for your office shouldn't simply coordinate with your furniture. The hue you select can have a powerful effect on your mood, so think carefully about what will suit the work you do here. Need to concentrate? Green might be a good bet. All shades of purple are reputed to boost creativity. The likes of red and orange are energizing but can be overwhelming for many.

Create a Faux Commute

Commuting is generally terrible, but that doesn't mean in small doses it isn't also useful. This in-between period helps us mentally prepare for the workday ahead. If you work from home, you miss this benefit, so fake it by creating some sort of simple morning ritual that you can do before you get down to business, to signal to your brain it's time to get serious.

Think About Lunch

When you're working from home, the siren song of the kitchen is a constant danger (both to your productivity and your waistline). Avoid being lured into bad decisions by hunger or boredom by thinking about food ahead of time--just like you would if you were working in a regular office. Either set aside something particular for lunch before heading to your office or mentally plan your midday meal, rather than aimlessly wandering into the kitchen whenever the mood strikes you.

Careful With That Thermostat

Temperature has a drastic effect on workplace productivity. Studies show that warmer is often better, so try not to skimp too much on the heating bill.

Keep the Door in View

It might sound like an airy-fairy principle of feng shui, but the idea that, if at all possible, you should keep your door within your field of vision actually makes a strange sort of evolutionary sense. With millions of years of instinct telling you it's a good idea to have an exit handy should danger approach and you need to make a break

for it, it's understandable that most of us feel slightly calmer when a way out is in our line of sight.

Give Your Eyes a Rest

You probably spend most of your workday staring at a screen. That can be plenty hard on your eyes, so make sure you set up your office so that when you do get a second to glance up, you have something more distant and more interesting to look at. If you're serious about reducing eyestrain, keep the 20-20-20 rule in mind: Every 20 minutes, stare at something roughly 20 yards away for around 20 seconds. Psychology says focus tends to wane after 20 minutes anyway, so following this rule also offers you a nice way to quickly recharge.

Leverage Stairs

This isn't an option for everyone, but if you can, set up your home office on a separate floor from your usual living space. This can help you create the mental space to do your best work as well as keep distractions to a minimum.