

Work & Money

PRODUCTIVITY PRIMER

How to stay on track when you're working from home

Whether it's an occasional event or your routine, working from home can be tricky. Lines blur, and it's easy to feel as if you're on both clocks 24/7. Austin, Texas-based career expert Holly Reisem Hanna offers strategies.



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REINDENTIFY YOURSELF. IF YOU WORK AT HOME ALL THE TIME, ONCE A WEEK, SCHEDULE IN-PERSON MEETINGS, GRAB LUNCH WITH A COLLEAGUE, OR INITIATE GROUP VIDEOCONFERENCE CALLS. (TRY GOOGLE HANGOUTS OR SKYPE.) "IT'S THE CURE FOR FEELING DISCONNECTED FROM OFFICE LIFE," SAYS HANNA. ALSO CONSIDER CO-OFFICE SPACES. MANY CAN BE RENTED BY THE HOUR. (VISIT SHAREDESK.NET FOR LOCATIONS.) "IT'S A GREAT CHANGE OF SCENERY, AND IT ALLOWS YOU TO MEET OTHER PEOPLE WHO WORK FROM HOME," SAYS HANNA. "MANY OFFER FREE COFFEE, PRINTERS, WIFI—ALL THOSE OFFICE GOODIES."



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GO TOWARD THE LIGHT. Work where you feel most energized. Typically this will be in the room with the most natural light and the nicest view, says Hanna, who tends to work in her kitchen for these very reasons. Some spots feel stagnant, and "you want to be in a space that gives you positive energy and flow," she says. Pinpoint your peak productivity times, then schedule high-energy periods for the bigger challenges.

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WALK OFF THE JOB. A daily stroll gets you out of your busy slippers and in a better state of mind. Designate a set time as you'll be more likely to stick to the routine. Consider a Fitbit bracelet (fitbit.com), which can be programmed to vibrate and remind you to get moving. It will track your steps, so you'll be inspired to walk a little more each day. Avoid the blues will need you mid-trail? Move files to cloud-based storage, like Google Drive, Dropbox, or Moby, and you can access info on the go via your smartphone.

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KEEP AWAY FROM THE SWEEPER. If you're tempted to throw in a load of laundry when you should be filling out TPS reports, work for 90 minutes, then allow for five-minute housework breaks. The way you can set a timer to tackle some chores, then get back to work. Along the same lines, treat doctor visits and other appointments as if you were in the office. Do first thing in the morning or at the end of the day.

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THINK LIKE AN I.E. PERSON. There's no summoning jobs from the 14th floor when your computer goes on the fritz, so bookmark troubleshooting pages and jot numbers to call for complicated fixes. While you're at it, set up your own supply closet—a shelf for chargers, paper, toner—so you're not running around the house like a madwoman every time you need a Post-it. If you can, swap your desktop for a laptop, which you can tuck in a drawer when you're off duty. This helps you say hah-bye to the weekday.