

LEARNING MADE EASY



# Working From Home

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



Create a space for a healthy work-life balance

Stay connected with Slack, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams

Maintain productivity and stay healthy and sane

**Tara Powers, MS, et al.**

CEO, Powers Resource Center

Author of *Virtual Teams For Dummies*



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by Tara Powers, MS, et al.

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**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## Working From Home For Dummies®

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# Introduction

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In today's modern global economy, working from home is no longer a novelty. Organizations around the world are embracing the advantages of letting employees work outside the office, and the results are eye-opening: Managers save money and resources and have access to talent outside their zip codes, while employees enjoy greater job opportunities, productivity, independence, and satisfaction. Remote work really can be sustainable for professionals who want flexibility.

Whether you're new to having a home office or you've been working outside an office for years, *Working From Home For Dummies* can help you prepare for working virtually — and thriving.

## About This Book

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*Working From Home For Dummies* helps you acquire and cultivate some of the most important attributes needed for remote work. Here, you get pointers on setting up a home workspace; strengthening important skills like managing your time, establishing routines, and setting boundaries; and using your manners in virtual team meetings. You find help with three popular work-at-home technology programs: Slack, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams. You also get tips for managing a virtual team and balancing your time between your work and your personal life, even when both take place at home.

In this book, sidebars (shaded boxes of text) provide an in-depth look at particular topics. You may find them interesting and illuminating, but they aren't crucial to understanding the rest of this book. Feel free to read them or skip them.

You can also pass over the text marked with the Technical Stuff icon (see the later section, "Icons Used in This Book"). The text accompanied by this icon gives some technical, informative details about working from home, but you can still get the most important information you need without reading it.

Whenever we quote prices in this book, they're listed in U.S. dollars. When in doubt about a price, check the company's website for the latest information.

One last note: Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and you want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

## Foolish Assumptions

You may have picked up this book for one or more of the following reasons:

- » You're new to working from home, and you need guidance on setting up a workspace, developing skills for success, and figuring out new technology.
- » You've been working at home for months or years, but you still want some new tips to boost your productivity, computer skills, and work-life balance.
- » You're managing employees who work from home, and you need help transitioning from an old-school setup to a virtual team.

## Icons Used in This Book

Handy icons appear in this book's margins. Here's what they mean.



REMEMBER

When you see text highlighted by this icon, stash it in your brain, whether you're new to working from home or a pro.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

The text marked with this icon may not be crucial to your success in working from home, but you may still find it enlightening.



TIP

This icon denotes a piece of advice that may make working from home easier.



WARNING

Pay attention to this icon. The guidance can prevent work-at-home headaches.

# Beyond the Book

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In addition to the material in the print or digital book you're reading right now, *Working From Home For Dummies* comes with other great content available online. To get the Cheat Sheet, simply go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and type **Working From Home For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

# Where to Go from Here

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You may not need to read every chapter of this book to build your confidence as you start (or continue) working from home, so feel free to jump around. If you're looking for a particular topic — such as how to work with different technology platforms or how to manage employees virtually — check out the table of contents or the index to guide you in the right direction. But if you're a work-at-home newbie, start with Part 1, which details how to set up your workspace, the most important skills and behaviors you need for remote work, and useful virtual team meeting etiquette. Good luck, and welcome to the world of working from home!



# 1

## **Getting Started with Working From Home**

## **IN THIS PART . . .**

Set up your workspace in the right spot and with the right gear.

Develop skills and behaviors to ensure success, such as establishing goals and priorities, managing your time effectively, and boosting your productivity and motivation.

Follow virtual meeting etiquette, from checking your background to minimizing noise and more.



- » Finding the perfect place for your home office
- » Equipping your home office
- » Imposing order on the chaos of working from home
- » Personalizing your workspace

## Chapter **1**

# Setting Up Your Workspace

**W**orking from home brings both benefits and challenges. Initially, it may seem like the ability to work from home is the most important option for any job you're considering. Given that you can save hours of time not commuting, walk your dog whenever you want, and stay in sweatpants all day if you feel like it, working from home can feel like a dream come true.

However, many professionals quickly find that working from home is frustrating, distracting, and uncomfortable if they don't have a designated workspace and proper setup that allows them to be productive, available, and efficient in their home environment.

The bottom line is that productive work can happen in a variety of home workspaces. You don't need to build an addition to your house for the perfect executive-level home office suite. Instead, some tried-and-true best practices can yield a functional and comfortable workspace. *Hint:* It's not your bed or the living room sofa.

This chapter walks you through all the factors to consider when setting up your home office, including picking the best location for your office, ensuring you have all the right equipment, and keeping your workspace organized, ergonomically friendly, and pleasant.

# Choosing the Right Spot in Your Home

The first order of business when working from home is setting up a workspace that's as functional and comfortable as possible, even if you have limited space. If you work from home, whether you're an entrepreneur, a freelancer, or a remote team member, you need to have a dedicated space to get work done.

Home offices are as individual and varied as the people who work in them. They come in all sizes, shapes, colors, degrees of privacy, and ability to control noise and interruptions. What works for some can be completely nonfunctional for others.

If you're fortunate enough to have a dedicated office space in your home, good for you! But if your home office is in your basement without natural light and with terrible Wi-Fi reception, you may need to rethink where to work each day. In the following sections, I walk you through the top factors to consider when choosing the perfect spot for your home office.

## Picking the best room

When you're finding a place for your home office, you'll want to consider factors such as location, lighting, the amount of space, and the level of privacy.



REMEMBER

A separate room in your home is not required to get work done. So, as you read through the following sections, consider all your options to find the spot in your home that meets your needs, whether that's a spare bedroom or a corner of your living room.

When you're choosing a place for your home office, consider the following factors:

» **Location:** Consider the type of work you do and the equipment you need. If you're a graphic designer, you may require a design table, along with a desk for your computer. If you're a consultant, you'll most likely need space for filing cabinets, shelves for books, and possibly a seating area to meet with clients.



TIP

Try to find a space in your home that provides some quiet and privacy (for example, when you're having an important meeting). Ideally, your home office will have a door so you can block out distractions and noise, have phone and video calls, and effectively separate your work space from your home space. If you don't have a separate room to dedicate to your home office, try to find a place that's removed enough from the main living space that you can get some quiet when you need it (maybe by asking your housemates to go in another room for short periods of time).



REMEMBER

Whether you have a door or not, choosing a dedicated location to get work done will set a boundary for housemates, letting them know that when you're there, you're working and you may not be available.

- » **Light:** There are many reasons to consider lighting in the early stages of your workspace planning. Having enough light is necessary to reduce eye strain, headaches, drowsiness, fatigue, and depression.

Whenever possible, try to get light from natural light sources (sunlight streaming through a window) as opposed to artificial ones (a lamp). The benefits of natural light include alertness and an overall sense of well-being. And where there's natural light, there is likely to be a view of the outdoors. Turning away from your computer every few minutes and looking outside can create a moment of mindfulness and peace. This simple strategy can affect your overall productivity and motivation. It doesn't take much natural light to fill a small space and elevate your mood.

Even if your workspace gets plenty of natural light during the day, you'll need to add a light source to have enough light for winter months and evenings. Be sure to keep supplemental lighting indirect, and avoid working under the direct glare of overhead lights. Use lampshades to soften and diffuse the light.

Floor lamps can provide a lot of light but also take up coveted space in small areas and can make it feel cramped. Consider hanging pendant lights to keep the light source off the ground and free up valuable space.

- » **Wi-Fi:** Having access to a strong, reliable Internet connection is essential for home-based workers. Before you settle on your workspace, make sure you can get online and stay online consistently throughout your workday.

Choosing a space that's close to your router can help provide a stronger Wi-Fi connection.

- » **Electrical outlets:** You need power outlets near your workspace to plug in a computer, printer, lighting, phone charger, and potentially a router or a wireless booster. Consider whether you'll be doing a lot of video calls and test out a mock call in potential workspace areas of your house to see how it looks. A plain wall that isn't too distracting is a good backdrop, and proper lighting will make the video quality better, too.



REMEMBER



TIP



TIP



REMEMBER

Don't worry if your workspace isn't ideal. You don't need a soundproof home office. Ask yourself the following questions before randomly choosing your workspace. You don't want to set up shop in one area of the home only to have to move to another spot if it's not working for you.

- » What is the regular work that you'll be doing and how much space do you need to spread out?

- » Where is your router? If you can't set up your workspace near your router, can you get a booster if your router isn't close by?
- » Will you need some type of room divider to separate your workspace from your personal space?
- » Where is the natural light best in your home?
- » Are there enough electrical outlets for all your gadgets and a surge protector?
- » Is the workspace quiet or can it be if necessary?
- » Is there enough room for necessary equipment like a computer, printer, storage, shelves, chair, desk, monitor, and/or paper shredder?
- » Is the background acceptable for video calls and meetings with clients?

## Creating an effective layout

Your home office may need to fit into a small or unique space or even share space with another room in your house, like a living room, dining room, or bedroom. This can absolutely work for you! By getting creative with space, form, and function, you can create an optimal home office space that is effective and allows you to be productive during the workday.

### Using the space you have

When space is limited, you'll have to get creative when figuring out where your designated workspace will be. If you're using your living room or bedroom for this dual purpose, consider putting your desk behind your couch and adding a throw rug under the desk to create an area that's at least visually separate from the rest of the room. If you're using your bedroom, a room divider can help to keep your personal space, well, personal.



TIP

Try using an entire wall in a room for your workspace. That strategy can create a clear, organized area for work without distracting from the rest of the room. Consider adding shelving on both sides of the wall for your office equipment and storage.

Don't overlook those nooks and odd corners in your house that are currently being used as decorative space. If you follow the flow of the room, you can keep it pleasing to the eye and easily fit your workspace there.



TIP

If you like to visualize how you can move around your furniture to make a space in your home for an office, several online design tools can help you get creative and determine what will work best:

- » **Planner5D:** [www.planner5d.com](http://www.planner5d.com)
- » **RoomSketcher:** [www.roomsketcher.com](http://www.roomsketcher.com)
- » **Roomstyler 3D Home Planner:** [www.roomstyler.com/3dplanner](http://www.roomstyler.com/3dplanner)

## Applying the principles of feng shui

The Chinese philosophy of feng shui is a practice of arranging your living space and working environment to achieve harmony and balance with the natural world. The Chinese words *feng* and *shui* translate to mean “wind” and “water,” respectively. Feng shui offers smart guidelines to consider when setting up your workspace at home:

- » Try to create as much division as possible between your workspace and your bedroom.
- » Eliminate all unnecessary clutter.
- » Incorporate natural elements like wood and plants, or even a small desktop water fountain if you have the space.
- » Position your desk in a strong position (not up against a wall, preferably looking out a window or door).
- » Focus on function. Do you need space for taking notes, spreading out, and to see monitors clearly?
- » Make sure you have fresh air circulating.
- » Position your desk near a window so that you have natural light.
- » Decorate in ways that motivate you and remind you of your goals.

## Getting All the Equipment You Need

After you’ve picked the perfect spot for your workspace, it’s time to set up your new home office with all the furniture, equipment, and supplies you need to be productive. Start by thinking about the kind of work you’ll be doing. Do you need space to spread out materials or papers? Do you need a desk that’s big enough for multiple monitors? Do you need a printer and scanner? How many hours a day will you be in your home office? What type of technology will you be using to connect with clients or team members?

Answering these questions will help you determine the basic equipment you’ll need to get started working from home.

# Desk and chair

Whatever type of work you'll be doing, start by picking out your most important items first: a desk and chair. As with most office supplies, the options are endless. So, keep in mind two things: form and function.

## Deciding on a desk

Here are several options to choose from when finding a desk for your home office:

- » **Writing desk:** If all you need is a place to write, you can opt for something straightforward and simple, maybe even a simple table. No bells or whistles, just a flat horizontal surface that can be a blank canvas for what you need it to be.
- » **Floating desk:** A floating desk is built into the wall, so it doesn't take up unnecessary space with bulky legs or other pieces that can overwhelm a room. Floating desks can be great for small offices and can even be installed to fold down when not in use. They're great for saving space and keeping your floor space open and clutter-free.
- » **Computer desk:** A computer desk has all the space for technological devices like computer towers, monitors, and all the cables and hookups so your devices work as efficiently as possible. Most computer desks are built with computer keyboard trays or laptop trays that slide away when in not in use.
- » **Corner desk:** Corner desks use less foot space and keep the main part of the room open for other uses.
- » **Executive desk:** An executive desk is often a large piece of furniture, with plenty of desktop space, lots of drawers, and shelf space for books, a printer, files, and decor.
- » **Standing desk:** If your line of work doesn't require a lot of time sitting at a computer, or you just prefer to stand to do your work, a standing desk can be a great choice. Some standing desks are convertible and can easily switch between a standing position and a desktop sitting position.

## Chair

A good office chair will greatly increase your productivity and define your office as a professional workspace. Take the time to get a chair that is both comfortable and stylish, something you'll want to spend hours in. If you don't love your office chair, you'll never sit at your desk.