

# GETTING THE BEST OUT OF WORKING FROM HOME

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For those of us fortunate to have the option of working from home, it's not without its own set of challenges; particularly when combined with the pressures of the lockdown.

To support you in transitioning to working at home, we've condensed much of the advice available online, to identify pragmatic ways for our staff to stay happy, healthy and productive in the process...

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## ∞ GET YOUR SET-UP RIGHT

This is surprisingly easy to overlook in present circumstances but taking the time to check that your workstation is set up for comfort and safety (even if it is the kitchen table) is vital.

Visit [Wellbeing, Safety and Health's tailored page](#) for detailed advice on getting set up as safely as possible.

Speak to your Line Manager if there is essential equipment you need to fulfill your role from home. With prior approval from your Head of School/Service (or nominee), currently, the University may reimburse small scale expenditure (up to £40) for vital equipment such as IT cabling, wireless USB devices, and headsets for staff working from home. Discuss these options fully with your Line Manager, and read more on the [University of Leeds Coronavirus Microsite](#).

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## ∞ THINK OUTSIDE THE WORK BOX

We appreciate that these are unprecedented times and that your situation may not be conducive to working a standard 9am to 5pm. Very few of us will be able to work exactly as we would from campus, and this may affect the times you can work and the pace you can work at – the important thing is to do the best we can given our individual circumstances.

If you need to flex your hours or work differently to accommodate family commitments / childcare, talk to your manager to agree a solution that works for everyone.

It's also worth remembering that others will be doing this – so don't feel pressure to respond straightaway if you get emails from colleagues when you're not working.

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## ∞ TAKE REGULAR BREAKS & GET AWAY FROM YOUR SCREEN

We all know regular breaks are important, but when working from home, it's easy to feel that you must be at your laptop 24/7. In these circumstances it's more important than ever that we take time away from screens and have those breaks.

If this doesn't come naturally, schedule times in your Outlook calendar and make sure you stick to them! Get out for a walk if you can, do some exercise or have a cuppa away from your computer.

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## ∞ REVIEW ANY REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The University is committed to making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff, and any adjustments you have in place may need to be reviewed in light of current circumstances.

You should talk to your line manager to discuss any alterations or additional adjustments you may need, raise any concerns you might have, and to consider how adjustments might work with any caring responsibilities you may have. You can find out more on our Equality and Inclusion webpages outlining [support for disabled staff](#).

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## ∞ A REMOTE TEAM IS STILL A TEAM – STAY IN TOUCH!

Now, more than ever, staying connected with colleagues is essential, not only to working effectively, but also in keeping up morale.

We have access to business messaging, calling and video meetings via MS Teams, in addition to email and standard phone calls. Agree as a team how you will communicate, and regularly review if it's working.

For those not yet confident in using MS Teams, further information is available on the [UoL IT Website](#) including links to resources such as free online [Microsoft Instructor-led training](#)

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ALL ABOUT WORK...Feel free to start a social chat/coffee break meeting to stay connected, just as you would if you were still at your desk.

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## ∞ ACCEPT THAT LIFE HAPPENS & THERE WILL BE INTERRUPTIONS

It can be challenging to hold a meeting online when your kids are in the background, but it happens. Accept that your domestic life WILL interrupt your working day – it's natural and we shouldn't hide it.

If your children (or the dog) interrupt your video call you could just introduce them to the team (and if they're particularly disruptive put the mic on mute!)

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## ∞ PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Our current circumstances are impacting almost every area of our lives. To help us to deal with these challenges, and to have the capacity to support others, it's more important than ever to look after our wellbeing.

Visit [SPA's online resources](#) on keeping active and healthy at home and the [Supporting your Mental Wellbeing page](#) for more advice and FAQs.

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## ∞ GET THE RIGHT INFORMATION FROM SOURCES YOU TRUST

It seems that every person, email and article is giving us more and more information on current events. It's easy to feel overwhelmed, to question what's true, and to check your messages constantly for fear of missing anything key.

There is a balance between staying informed and burning out, so limit the number of times you check the news, and rest assured that we are continually reviewing and updating relevant information and advice on the [coronavirus website](#).

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## ∞ AND FINALLY...KEEP WORK AND PLAY SEPARATE

This is important at the best of times but is especially challenging when on lockdown and restricted to your own home.

Whereas once you went out to a different space for work and came back home for downtime, this physical distinction is suddenly lacking. This calls for clear boundaries for your downtime, which won't depend on your physical surroundings, but will help protect your mental wellbeing.

Try to establish a routine for your day but be open to reviewing and changing it if it's not working.

Don't check your emails and messages 24/7, there's a time for work and a time for play, so make time for cooking, exercise, watching your favourite TV programmes or any other hobbies.

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## ∞ USEFUL RESOURCES

You can still contact your named HR Manager or Officer by email. If you don't get a response by the end of the following working day please contact the generic email [hr@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:hr@leeds.ac.uk) or telephone 0113 343 4146.

Please advise us about any sickness absence or self-isolation absence relating to Coronavirus/Covid 19 by using the HR Self Service system (ESS). You can view our guidance on [submitting coronavirus sickness absence which outlines what staff and managers need to do](#).

Absence not related to Covid-19 should continue to be reported in the normal way.

The University already has arrangements in place to help us support you during this time, and these, along with the answers to some of the questions you might be asking, can be found on the [University of Leeds Coronavirus website](#).

Other links you might find useful include:

- [NHS Advice on Coronavirus](#)
- [Government information on Coronavirus](#)