



HOW TO WORK

**FROM
HOME**



A blueprint for employees

Memory





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**“What we learn in the next few months
could help shape a future of work that
might have been inevitable, with or without
a once-in-a-century public health crisis.”**

— *The Atlantic*



While many businesses believe the future of work is remote, few could have expected that future to materialize so soon.

The ongoing fight to contain COVID-19 has forced businesses to change their work models overnight, sending millions of employees into indefinite home working. Many have never worked remotely before, and those with experience are unlikely to be prepared for the pace and scale of change.

Companies will quickly need to figure out new ways to communicate, collaborate, build community and stay productive. But as businesses scramble to shore up their futures, many employees will need to fill in those blanks for themselves.





Remote working. Virtual working. Telecommuting. Home working.

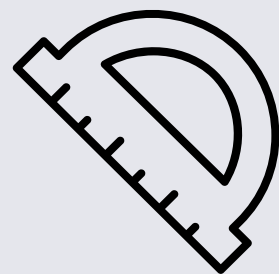
Whatever you call it, the premise is the same: swapping a physically fixed office space for a distributed virtual one. Here at [Memory](#), we've been doing it since 2014, successfully scaling a global team across 12 time zones.

So we know that building a remote culture takes time, and that in its absence improvising structure will largely fall to employees. To get you through the anxious early stages, we've pulled together some of our biggest remote work learnings.

Whether you've tried it before or are going in blind, here's a blueprint for how to work from home — with insights, advice and ideas from those who already do.

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For some, flexible working is more important than a pay rise.

The future of work

Remote working hasn't just crawled out of the woodwork with Coronavirus. In fact, with 52% of the global workforce already working from home at least once a week before the virus struck, remote working is far more normal than we may think.

Here's a rundown of what was happening pre-Coronavirus:

- Working from home had grown 115% in the US since 2005
- 61% of global companies had some sort of remote work policy
- 16% of US companies were fully remote
- 80% of US workers wanted to work from home part-time
- Flexible work made employers significantly more interesting for 68% of millennial job seekers
- 71% of remote workers were happy with their job, compared to just 55% of on-site workers
- 90% of teleworkers wanted to continue some form of remote work for the rest of their careers

Far from being an experiment or passing fad, remote working is an established work model that's here to stay. For many companies, it's already become the norm — including us! Luckily for you, that means there's already a brimming bank of global knowledge to help you transition to home working. Question is, *where do you start?*

Challenges

Before jumping into methods, it's worth addressing what you'll be up against. Advice around remote working tends to be heavily rose-tinted — especially since it's written by those who have actively chosen to work from home, and have had the time to make the transition comfortable.

So let's be straight. As a home worker, you are now solely responsible for your time — how you spend it, structure it, protect and balance it. That flexibility is refreshing, and a huge reason why people are attracted to remote work. But equally, having a big mass of unstructured time can quickly become overwhelming. You need to stay vigilant about how your new set-up affects your wellbeing, as much as team collaboration.

As you set new structures, keep these remote work challenges in mind:

- There are no physical boundaries between “work” and “leisure”
- Your work is not always immediately visible to others
- Nothing will signal the end of your day
- You may feel the need to respond to messages immediately
- Others will make entitlements on your time
- You may feel lonely or disconnected from your peers
- You will likely be a lot less active
- You may find it difficult to disconnect fully from work
- You will receive a lot of distracting notifications
- It can be hard to judge if you are using your time effectively
- You will likely work more intensely, with fewer breaks and longer hours



The remote toolkit



The remote toolkit

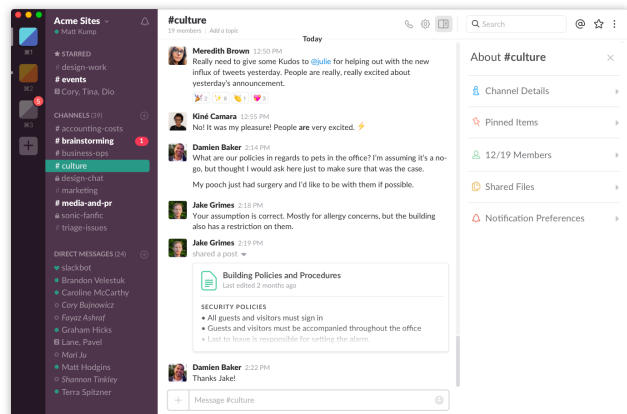
Successful home working requires more than a good Wi-Fi connection. You're going to need a few staple digital tools to keep daily collaboration coordinated and transparent. These will provide you with secure remote access to the files, assets and services needed to do your job.

Chances are, you've already been working with a lot of them for a while. Most businesses have unwittingly adopted virtual working tools, including cloud-based file sharing platforms and video conferencing apps. While there are a ton of tools out there to suit your specific niche, these are the core home working tools you can't do without.



Slack

This instant messenger will soon become the main site of daily communication across your company – whether in global threads or private chats. It's ideal for solving small blockers, sharing quick updates and staying in the loop. Slack allows business-wide conversations to stay accessible and searchable, even when working asynchronously. We recommend setting up publicly visible channels for each team and project, so discussion remains visible. Just make sure to set boundaries for how you use it, since Slack pings can quickly derail your focus.





Zoom

As a light-weight alternative to Skype, Zoom acts as your main technology for heftier group discussions, problem solving and check-ins. We use it for strategy and brainstorming meetings, weekly team check-ins, one-to-ones and presentations. It's really easy to invite people to calls and screen share, making it ideal for demos. While it's unlikely you'll need to host huge meetings, it can support up to 500 video participants! You'll want to get a webcam to get the most out of it, since video calls are a great way to make remote communication more personal and human.



Basecamp

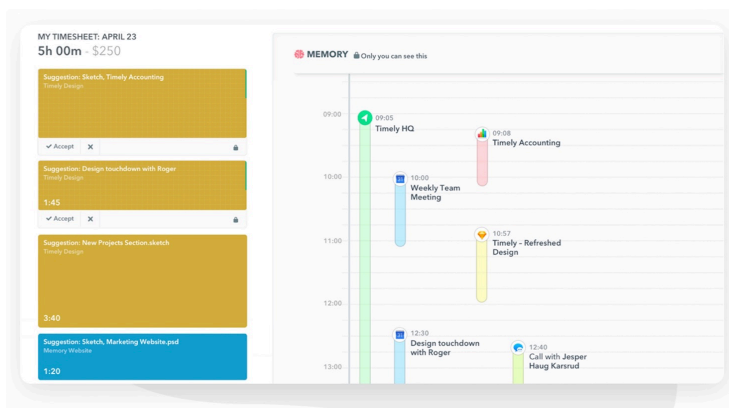
Billed as a project management tool, Basecamp helps you neatly centralize communication around company-wide projects. Think of it as your asynchronous communication hub, where you can link important company docs and create rich project posts, as well as assign to-do tasks to different teams or individuals. Message boards help you keep project discussions transparent, and automatic updates ensure that you stay up to date with any new comments and changes. You can set up custom automatic reminders too, prompting people to share regular feedback or ideas.





Timely

Time tracking provides home workers with essential structure, visibility and transparency — but only if it's actually accurate. As one of the few apps that captures your work automatically, Timely is a no-brainer for those who want to track and share their work with minimal effort. From



your private timeline, you can see everything you do in a day — from time spent in different apps, to the duration of specific tasks. These insights are super useful for managing personal productivity and creating better schedules. Just seeing your daily logged total helps you work to your capacity and document any overtime.



Dropbox

When you're working remotely from home, you need a secure cloud-based platform for accessing and sharing work. Dropbox lets you keep your company knowledge base in one place as a single platform for secure content management, workflow and collaboration. Powerful search and a clean UI highlighting recently accessed documents help you quickly pinpoint specific files. Its Paper feature also allows you to securely edit, share and comment on documents from the same space, avoiding the need to use another separate tool like Google Docs.



Tuple

For those who want more than a generic screen sharing tool, check out Tuple. This innovative new app gives mouse and keyboard control to both parties, and you can start pairing in just one click. The handy screen annotation feature means you can highlight or draw directly on your pair's screen when navigating, and with crisp audio and 5K visual quality, no detail gets lost.



Airtable

Part spreadsheet, part database, you can use Airtable to organize your work however you want – whether it's to plan editorial calendars or project management. It's perfect for centralizing and indexing tasks, and here at Memory we use it to collect and prioritize feature pitches for our products. Because changes are instantly synced across all devices, remote collaboration, storage and organization becomes seamless.



1Password

Working in a distributed team often means sharing access to the same tools. But even when you do get full accounts of your own, you'll need to create a ton of different cryptic passwords for them. 1Password keeps basic remote access simple by providing a secure way to store and share global account log-ins. It's great for keeping tools accessible to everyone, so no one has to hunt down the person who first set up an account to ask for log-in details.



***“Stay safe; get everyone to enable
two-factor authentication on all
their work tools.”***

— Trupti



How it works

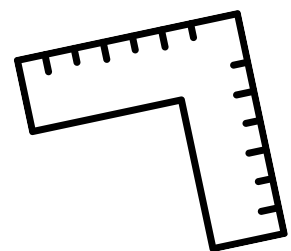


Communication

Proactive, intentional communication lies at the heart of remote success. Without the visual cues and fluidity that comes with working in the same room, team interaction needs to be highly descriptive, structured and explicit. While that may sound daunting, it can actually foster a more considerate and effective working environment. Here's a brief overview of what remote-first communication looks like.

Asynchronous communication

Every workplace uses a blend of synchronous and asynchronous communication. Synchronous is what happens in real-time (think video calls, instant messenger and in-person chat), and asynchronous is what occurs intermittently (think email, Slack, project management tools, in-app comments). When working from home, asynchronous should become your staple. By documenting everything, it keeps communication transparent. You can read through message threads and catch up on updates at your own pace, without interrupting your work to respond immediately.



To give you an idea, here's how we balance sync and async:

- Synchronous communication is reserved for complex or nuanced conversations (problem solving, critical feedback), emergency situations, one-to-ones, kick-offs and all-hands meetings
- Video meetings are always planned ahead and recorded so people can review them asynchronously
- We set availability hours for checking our inboxes and Slack messages, so others know when to expect a response
- We use [Dewo](#) to automatically mute notifications and update our Slack status when we're deep in the middle of something
- We “work out loud”, broadcasting our progress, blockers, expectations and requests

Working out loud

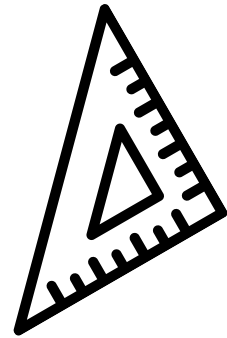
In order for async to work, every communication should be clear and self-contained — detailing all relevant information, actions and requirements. You'll effectively need to start narrating your work into digital tools so your progress and queries stay visible. It feels a bit intense, but this over-communication keeps things clear and efficient. Approach communication like you're speaking to someone in another time zone: you need to provide all the right context so they don't have to work on assumptions or request more information the following day.

Staying aligned

Without having common guidelines on how to communicate, messages can easily get lost, become disruptive or duplicate effort. Everyone needs to understand where to post and look for different bits of information, as well as feel included in discussions. Here are a few basic communication ground rules:

- Clarify the purpose of different communication tools and how you will use them
- Keep all your internal team communication in public team Slack channels to maintain visibility between departments
- Create a global “announcements” Slack thread for broadcasting company-wide news
- Be considerate with your digital volume — try and group queries into one message, provide links to any resources you mention, qualify the urgency of requests and avoid using multiple channels for the same message.
- Set rules for using @channel and @here on Slack (e.g. for urgent communications or company-wide messages)
- Use your Slack status to indicate your availability (including if you are off sick)

Collaboration



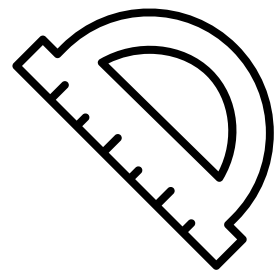
Unlike office-based working, where team collaboration develops organically across new projects, remote work requires an explicit conversation on how to work together. This is especially important in light of the new digital toolbox you've been handed — without syncing and clarifying the purpose of each tool or how they work together, information can quickly get lost.

These are the main rules of engagement your team should establish first:

- How and when you will check in with each other each week
- The best hours to contact each other with non-urgent requests
- What to do if you're blocked or have an urgent request
- How you will flag your availability or unavailability to others
- What tools you will use to document and align your work
- How you will use different communication channels
- How you will share work that impacts others
- Where you can see and update progress against team goals
- How to broadcast achievements with the rest of the company
- Where you can all provide ongoing feedback

Defining these protocols helps keep everyone on the same page, so work stays visible and communication doesn't get lost. It also helps set expectations around when people can and can't be disturbed. Everyone needs to realize that you won't always be immediately available to each other — and no one is constantly entitled to another's time.

It's unlikely you'll get these right first time round, so create space to regularly reflect on challenges as a team. We recommend having least one weekly video team meeting to quickly align on what you're all doing, where you're blocked, what you've finished and where process could be improved.



Self-management

Transitioning to teleworking isn't as simple as just taking your laptop home. Without immediate management or tangible boundaries to your work, you will need to become your own boss — creating the right structures, environment and routines to stay productive, happy and healthy.

Boundaries

When work moves into your home, you need to set up boundaries to keep professional and personal time separate. Research shows that remote employees work longer hours and take fewer breaks, and 1 in 5 find switching off after work to be their greatest challenge — a sure route to burnout. Remote work also introduces new demands on your time, which you need to actively control. Setting these simple boundaries around your work can help:

- Have set daily working hours — knowing exactly when your work day ends
- Schedule regular breaks and avoid working intensely for more than 90 minutes at a time
- Set availability hours for checking your inbox and responding to messages
- Use a shutdown ritual to help disconnect from work
- Resist the urge to check messages outside work hours
- Use anti-distraction apps when you need to lock focus

“Don’t fill breaks with new stresses or passive interactions. Go for a walk or do something completely unrelated to work.”

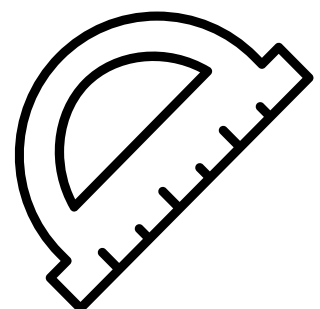
— Mathias



Structure

Home working requires a lot of self-motivation and discipline. With no one around, you need to regulate your own performance to stay on-track, focused and productive. But this offers you unique opportunity to organize work according to your individual needs and rhythms. Here are a few structures and approaches you might want to try to stay focused and accountable:

- Have a loose plan for what you want to achieve each week
- Keep a prioritised to-do list for each day
- Start the day with your hardest, most important tasks
- At the end of each day, sketch out tasks for the next
- Protect time for regular deep work in your public calendar
- Keep track of your daily working hours, adjusting your schedule to counterbalance any overtime
- Try time blocking to keep effort proportional to task value
- Prepare work before moving to a new workplace, allowing for a sketchy internet connection
- Before clocking off, check your schedule to ensure you're ready for any morning meetings



Environment

Your home comes with its own set of distractions, especially if you're sharing it with other home workers or children. It can also engender a surprisingly sedentary lifestyle, as few things require you to ever get out of your seat. As a private space where you relax, you'll want to set up your home environment to easily tap into work mode. Here are just a few simple ways to do so:

- Have a fixed workspace (ideally with a door if you're a parent)
- Create a comfortable set-up — get an ergonomic chair and consider external monitors
- Invest in a good pair of headphones with a built-in microphone
- Stock up on healthy snacks
- Get (or fashion) a standing desk, take active breaks and commit to a fitness routine

Adaptability

While home working seems to operate around defined structure, it also requires great adaptability. You have to be flexible to compensate for breaks in communication, blockers, time zones, changes of plan and disconnection. The [breakdown of “mutual knowledge”](#) can seriously limit remote collaboration – that's a lack of contextual information, fair distribution, comprehension, access to information and regular contact. So use your initiative to overcome any temporary visibility issues, problem solving what you can or moving on to another high-priority task. It's all about navigating the limitations of each situation and adapting quickly to change.



“If possible, have a specific room for working. It aids focus and helps to keep work and family time separate.”

— Pawel

Community

Home working can be extremely isolating, and remote workers tend to develop poorer relationships with colleagues. Without of face-to-face communication, emotional context can also get lost, making it harder to read each other. So you're going to need to build a strong virtual team community — for both work and play.

Feedback

Maintaining two-way open dialogue is an essential place to start. Aside from weekly team meetings, set up regular one-to-one meetings with your manager to feed back on how you're doing. Pair calling can also be a great way to stimulate valuable conversation. Simply set up a short call with different team members each month to discuss new ways of working and opportunities for collaboration. It's a great way to catch up with people you might not necessarily work with day-to-day. All of these check-ins really benefit from richer, real-time media, like video conferencing and voice calls.

Self-advocacy

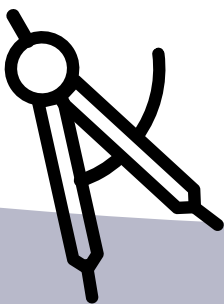
It may feel weird, but you're going to need to regularly blow your own horn. That means spelling out the progress you've made and broadcasting your achievements. Without this, people won't know what you've worked on or what impact you've made in the past week. A short weekly Basecamp update detailing what you've done, what blocked you and what's next is great for this, but it's also good to have a mechanism just for celebrating milestones. At Memory, we have a dedicated Slack channel for sharing weekly "wins" each Friday — no matter how small.

Virtual socializing

As a home worker, it can feel like you shouldn't be communicating about anything other than work. But this pressure can quickly breed cultural isolation and disconnect. Personal interactions are hugely important, so be proactive about working them into your day.

Remember: bonding is part of the job. Here are a few ways to stay connected, human and sane:

- Create casual non-work-related spaces — like dedicated Slack channels for sharing news, discussing hobbies, swapping playlists and recipes, posting inspiration or just venting
- Hold virtual lunches, coffee breaks and movie nights via video
- Take a virtual tour of your colleagues' home offices
- Have remote competitions — like office fitness challenges and our annual Memoryvision song contest
- Maintain a rotating social events calendar to protect space for [virtual team building](#)
- Host virtual dance parties on Fridays and paydays



***“We have a scheduled virtual
“fruit break” at 14:30 every day
that anyone can join.”***

— Maxime





Insider tips



Try not to work from the kitchen table; you'll be constantly clearing away and setting up your gear. — **Kris**

Try using mental segues to disconnect from work. I keep a “mock commute”, starting and ending each day with a 15-minute walk. — **Anahita**



Never feel guilty about taking breaks; they are an important part of managing your energy and necessary for your work. — **Marius**

If you're struggling to concentrate or just want to contain your breaks, try using [Freedom](#) — it lets you temporarily block entire social platforms and websites. — **Nicolay**





If I've completed a task that affects other people, I make sure to post in Slack to ensure they are aware of any critical updates. — **Layal**

You'll get chat notifications at all times of the day. Resist the urge to read them if you're outside your work hours. — **Miltos**



Mute notifications across your devices and try leaving your phone in another room if you still find it too distracting. — **Abi**

You don't have to "dress for the office" to do good work. Wear whatever you're comfortable in – if that's pyjamas, great. If not, who really cares. — **Emily**



Memory

At Memory, we know “remote” works. Our 45-strong team is made up of people from 20 different countries, half of whom work from home on a permanent basis.



Timely



Dewo

We believe the future of work is one that celebrates difference, diversity and trust — and we strive to build these qualities into every one of our own AI-powered work tools.

memory.ai