

A woman with glasses, wearing a light blue shirt and striped pants, is sitting on a blue chair at a dark wooden desk in a home office. She is looking at a large computer monitor. The room has a wooden wall, a window with a view of mountains, and several potted plants. A laptop is open on the desk next to a white mug. A black lamp is on a small table to the right.

Working at Home

Tips for Maximizing Your Productivity



Introduction

- During this unpredictable time, many people are now sharing your workspace with your spouse, your kids and even your dog
- Hopefully we will give you some helpful links and tips to make the most of it
- If you have questions not answered here, feel free to call Lyn Nielsen at 631.428.4654 or lynn@desktopsolutions.com

Your Work Area

- If at all possible, assign each person a room with a door that can be closed
- This not only keeps extraneous noise to a minimum, but has the psychological benefit of helping you focus while you are in your 'office'
- In my case, my college age son is sleeping in my home office, so I am using my makeup table in my bedroom as a makeshift desk
- If you must work in a common area like the living room, consider ordering a [privacy screen](#) so you can separate yourself a little from the rest of the activity

Equipment

- If you need any hardware like a pc, printer or scanner, companies like [Xerox](#) are offering surprisingly inexpensive work-at-home packages to get you up and running quickly
- You can also order computers online on the following sites:
 - [Amazon.com](#)
 - [Overstock.com](#)
 - [TechBargains.com](#)
 - [eBay.com](#)
 - [NewEgg.com](#)
 - [BestBuy.com](#)
 - [TigerDirect.com](#)
- Order a [headset](#) that connects to your computer
- [Printer cables](#) might be helpful if your WiFi is being hogged by your video-gaming teen

Getting Set Up

- **Modem** – With more people sharing your internet connection, it might be time to swap your modem for a newer one. Check to see if your [local cable store](#) is open.
- **Wifi** - If you are using a work computer in your home for the first time, make sure it is connected to your home Wifi network. Check out this [article](#) about improving your Wifi.
- **VPN** - If you need to access files from a server at your office, consider asking your IT person to set you up with a VPN or 'Virtual Private Network'
- **Drivers** - If you are using a work computer with a home printer or scanner for the first time, you will probably have to install the correct 'driver' to use them. Simply type the model number + driver into Google and you should be able to download the version you need.
- **Thumb drives** - If you can't get your work pc to connect to your home devices, a portable thumb drive is a great way to transfer work from one PC to another
- **Headphones** - Have earbuds or a headset handy to block out extraneous noise

Office Applications

- Microsoft Office 365
- Chrome Remote Desktop
 - If you have to access files or applications on an office computer from home, this FREE tool will help get you in. The one caveat is that someone needs to be on the office computer to give you access.
 - Most companies use a version of Office 365 for Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook. If your company does not, they offer home subscriptions for \$9.95 per month
- Google Apps
 - Google offers free, online apps for creating documents, spreadsheets, presentations and forms

PDFs

- PDF or 'Portable Document Format' are files designed to be opened and read by any type of computer.
- Most people can read them but not everyone knows how to create them
- Free PDF Generators
 - [Smallpdf](#)
 - [PDF-XChange Editor](#)
 - [Formswift](#)
 - [PDFescape](#)
 - [Sejda](#)
- [Adobe Scan](#)
 - This handy tool allows you to use your phone camera to photograph documents and convert them into PDFs

Communication and Collaboration

○ Microsoft Teams

- For internal meetings especially, this tool is great for group chats, group voice calls and screen sharing.

○ Skype

- Skype is a free tool that also allows for online chat, voice calls and screen sharing. I find it useful for communicating with vendors that don't have use Microsoft Teams, particularly with overseas vendors

○ Slack

- This tool is great combination of communication and project management features. It has tools for classifying projects, organizing conversations and storing information and files in a searchable archive.

Online Meeting Software

- For calls with clients, online meeting tools are a great way to do make presentations, address technical support issues, do product demonstrations, and present proposals.
- [Zoom](#) offers free online meetings and is a breeze to use
- [Gotomeeting](#) is my personal favorite, as I like its ability to switch back and forth between presenters, draw on the screen, and record important meetings.
- **Webcams Warning** - I rarely use the webcam feature on any of these systems, as it slows them down tremendously. I also feel they are often jumpy and distract people from the meeting content. Also, some people are going to be working in sweats or pajamas, they will not appreciate having to go 'on camera' if it's not necessary.

Tips

- **Establish 'Work Rules' with family** – Make sure family members understand that when you are working, it is not okay to interrupt you unless it's an emergency.
- **Create an agenda** - Rambling meetings are one of most people's biggest pet peeves. Before you begin an online meeting, create a quick agenda of topics to cover. It will keep everyone focused.
- **A picture paints a thousand words** - The old saying is true. Showing someone a document or seeing someone else's screen can help improve understanding quickly.
- **Know when to pick up the phone** - While advanced technology is great, sometimes a simple phone call is the best way to communicate, especially if the discussion involves back and forth questions.

Tips

- Use either the **Call-in or Computer Audio tools, NOT BOTH** – Some people join a meeting using their computer but prefer to use the call-in feature for audio. If you use this option, make sure to select the proper settings so you don't cause an unpleasant echo in the meeting.
- **Know where the MUTE button is** – Whatever device or software you are using, assume you are going to be disturbed by a barking dog or a bored child. Know how to hit MUTE so others don't have to listen to your background noise.
- **Take regular 'Screen Breaks'** – Staring at screen all day can be very tiring. Make sure that you get up and stretch for a few minutes every couple of hours. A lunch break is also important, even if it's only moving to another room in your house to eat lunch.

Staying Focused

- For some people, the flexibility of working at home can also mean being distracted by kids home from school, household chores, and other day-to-day things that you don't have to worry about in your office. Try dividing up your day into a few different parts:
- **Part One – Responding, organizing and planning.** I spend the first couple of hours of every day time reading and responding to emails, making phone calls, having meetings, organizing tasks, and getting things in place to move to the next part of the day.
- **Part Two - Groove time.** This part of the day is supposed to be uninterrupted time to concentrate on whatever you are working on, without distractions like the answering the phone, checking email, having meetings or dealing with the kids. It can be as short or as long as necessary – whatever it takes to accomplish what you've set out to be done that day.
- **Part Three – Clean up, follow up meetings and planning.** I usually reserve a couple of hours toward the end of the day to respond to emails and calls that came in throughout the day, have more meetings if necessary, and organize tasks and materials for the next day.

Thank you for attending!

- Thanks for taking the time to attend our webinar
- If you enjoyed the presentation, please feel free to share a link to our [webinar page](#) on [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#)
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