



# HOME WORKING TIPS



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:

12KJ-R6CB-KNKX



1

## Warm up

1. Are you or have you ever been a **remote worker**?
2. Which of these **distractions** do/would you experience most often when working at home?
  - a. family members and pets
  - b. social media
  - c. phone calls or e-mails from coworkers or managers

2

## Before you read

Read the introduction to this article written by a psychologist and define the words in bold.

### THE CONVERSATION

If you've been asked to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic, you might be quite happy about it at first. Think of the benefits such as saving on commuting time and expenses and being in a comfortable environment.

But the home environment has numerous **distractions** that can make it easy to **procrastinate** and not get your work done. Whether you're new to working from home or are a long-time remote worker who struggles with **productivity**, these strategies can help you reduce procrastination and stay productive.

What do you think are the five pieces of advice the writer of the article will give to remote workers who struggle with **procrastination** and want to increase their **productivity**?



## 3

**Read for main idea**

Read the article and compare the writer's advice with the predictions you made in the last exercise.

**1. Set up a clear work schedule**

The home environment lacks the structure of a work environment where there are timed breaks and clear start and finish times. Creating a schedule can add that missing structure, reducing the procrastination that tends to take place.

So make a plan for your work that has clear and realistic goals that you can expect to achieve within a given time frame. If your goal is to write a ten-page report, break that task down into more manageable steps that are less overwhelming. Start by doing background research and then prepare an outline. When writing, set a goal to write a specific number of pages a day. \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> ...

However you organize your work-at-home schedule, try to include reasonable breaks. Plan in time for meals as well as short breaks to refresh your mind. But be careful: short breaks checking personal email or social media can turn into procrastinating in the form of cyberloafing or cyberslacking if you don't limit your break time.

**2. Tackle uncertainty**

If you're struggling to start or finish a task, it may be because you're unsure about what needs to be done to complete your work. When you're working at home, it can be harder to get quick answers from coworkers and managers to reduce this uncertainty. People tend to procrastinate on tasks that are unclear or confusing. This is because such tasks can create feelings of uncertainty that are unpleasant, leading to self-doubt and self-criticism.

\_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> ... We don't always know what we don't know, so you may have to start the task before you realize that you're missing important information or instructions.

Identifying feelings of uncertainty is the first step towards taking action to get the information you need. Having a list of key people you can contact for

quick support can also help in case you find yourself being paralyzed by uncertainty.

**3. Reduce real and virtual distractions**

Working at home means dealing with potential distractions. \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> ... But remote working can also involve being online and having access to digital temptations.

Some people are good at turning a blind eye to these distractions and can stay focused on their work. But if you have work to do that is boring or stressful, then watching funny cat videos can become an escape to help you feel better at the expense of getting your work done.

Controlling how and when you are allowed to go online for non-work purposes can help minimize exposure to online distractions.

**4. Plan for interruptions**

Even the best laid plans to get your work done can fall apart when unexpected interruptions appear. If you're not prepared, a call from your mom can lead to procrastination and throw your work schedule off track.

One effective approach is to make specific "if-then plans" for dealing with interruptions. Think about the possible interruptions you might encounter, and then rehearse how you will respond. For example, if your mom calls, then you can say: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> ...

**5. See the value of work**

Research suggests that a lack of positive feelings about a task can also contribute to procrastination. When you work at home you are surrounded by things that are personally meaningful to you. \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> ... This may make it difficult to stay focused and productive. Remind yourself why your work is important and valuable to increase positive feelings and reduce procrastination.

*Adapted from TheConversation.com, March 20, 2020, By Fuchsia Sirois, Reader in Health Psychology, University of Sheffield*



## 4

**Read for detail**

These sentences have been removed from the article. Read the article again and match each one with a numbered gap. Be ready to explain your answers.

- a. Before you start a new or unfamiliar work task, check to make sure you have clear guidance about what needs to be done.
- b. In comparison, your work can seem less meaningful.
- c. Set yourself up to work in a quiet space away from family members or roommates.
- d. Sorry, I'd love to chat but I'm working right now. I'll call you back after work.
- e. This strategy also provides opportunities to experience small successes, which can help keep you motivated.



## 5

**Vocabulary**

Look at the article again and find words with these meanings. The part of the article where you will find the words is shown.

- Part 1
1. easy or possible to do, because it is in stages (adj) = \_\_\_\_\_
  2. very large and difficult to deal with (adj) = \_\_\_\_\_
  3. two words for using the internet for fun rather than for work (noun; informal) = \_\_\_\_\_
- Part 2
4. a feeling when you think you cannot do something (noun) = \_\_\_\_\_
  5. a feeling when you think you have done something wrong or badly (noun) = \_\_\_\_\_
  6. unable to move or act, mentally, or physically (verb - past participle) = \_\_\_\_\_
- Part 3
7. reduce something to the smallest possible amount or size (verb) = \_\_\_\_\_
  8. a situation when you are likely to experience something (noun) = \_\_\_\_\_
- Part 4
9. happen or find by chance (verb) = \_\_\_\_\_
  10. practice (verb) = \_\_\_\_\_



## 6 Language in context

Choose the best meaning for these expressions in bold from the article, using the context to help you.

1. So make a plan for your work that has clear and realistic goals that you can expect to achieve within a **given time frame**.
  - a. The time it normally takes to do something
  - b. The fastest time possible
  - c. The time you have to complete your work before a deadline
2. Some people are good at **turning a blind eye to** these distractions and can stay focused on their work.
  - a. Giving someone an angry look to make them stop what they are doing
  - b. Ignoring
  - c. Listening to something but not looking at it
3. Even **the best laid plans** to get your work done **can fall apart** when unexpected interruptions appear.
  - a. You planned well but something went wrong anyway
  - b. You didn't plan well and that's why something went wrong
  - c. You really wanted to do something but you didn't plan it well
4. If you're not prepared, a call from your mom can lead to procrastination and **throw** your work schedule **off track**.
  - a. Stop your work completely
  - b. Make you forget what you were doing
  - c. Cause a delay to your work plan

Now answer these questions, using these phrases in full sentences.

1. Are you usually able to complete your work within the **given time frame**? Who decides on the time frame - is it your manager or you, or both?
2. Are you able to **turn a blind eye to** distractions at home? What about distractions in the office?
3. Talk about a time when your **best laid plans fell apart**. How did you deal with the situation?
4. In your job, do your clients, customers, or suppliers ever **throw your work schedule off track**? How?

## 7 Extension/homework

Your manager has asked you to pass on advice to coworkers about working productively at home. Rephrase the information from the article in a shorter form using your own words, making it relevant to your own work context. Include vocabulary and phrases from the lesson. Choose one of the following ways of passing on the information:

- a short PowerPoint or webinar - 5 slides or 3 minutes to speak
- a memo/e-mail for your coworkers - 150 words



# Key

## 1. Warm up

5 mins. This stage introduces the topic of the lesson and personalizes it for students. Working with the whole class, set the first question and elicit the definition of a remote worker (see Answers) before doing a quick survey of the class to check who has experience of this - from before or during the coronavirus epidemic. Students can work in pairs to quickly answer question 2 - no need to check answers with the class here, although you could ask if students face any other distractions not listed in the question.

A remote worker is someone who works away from the main office. Some people do this because they do not live near the company they work for, but recently many people have been working at home due to coronavirus restrictions.

## 2. Before you read

10 mins. In this stage students preview the article and define key vocabulary in order to make predictions about the content. Give students a couple of minutes to read the article (or do guided reading - the teacher reads while the students listen and follow the text) and elicit/explain the meanings of the words in bold. Finally, working with the whole class, elicit and record predictions of general advice - aim to record at least three. These predictions will be checked in the next activity.

1. A distraction is something that takes your attention away from working.
2. Procrastinating is making excuses to do a necessary task later rather than immediately - "I'll do it tomorrow." The phrasal verb "put something off" is a synonym.
3. Productivity is how much useful work an individual does.

## 3. Read for main idea

8 mins. In this stage, students practice reading strategies and check the predictions they made in the previous stage. The aim is for them to identify key points and see how the text is organized. There are several strategies that students could use.

Strategy 1: skimming, or just reading through the text quickly, ignoring unknown words - a good time limit for this would be 3-4 minutes.

Strategy 2: the format of this text includes headings, so just spending 1-2 minutes looking at these would be an effective way to read for main idea.

Strategy 3: sampling is a strategy where students carefully read just the first sentence of each paragraph or main section - for this article, a good time limit would be 3-4 minutes. Decide which strategy would suit your students and give explicit instructions and rationales.

Alternatively, quickly present all three strategies and allow students to choose one to follow. After the time limit, students should put the text away and discuss in pairs what they recall, comparing the five pieces of advice to the advice they formulated in the Warm Up. Then check ideas with the whole class. You could also ask students to reflect on how well the strategy they used worked for them.

The writer's advice is:

1. follow a schedule
2. reduce uncertainty about tasks
3. avoid distractions
4. plan for interruptions



5. remember why your work is important

#### 4. Read for detail

7 mins. In this stage, students must read more closely to place missing sentences into the text. Go over sentences A-E and make sure students understand the vocabulary, eg in A) "guidance" means instructions. Then give them a few minutes to complete the task. They can check answers in pairs and then check with the whole class. Encourage students to justify their answers by referring to the structure of the text and the immediate context of each missing sentence.

- a. E                      b. A                      c. C                      d. D                      e. B

#### 5. Vocabulary

15 mins. In this stage, students locate and define words in the text which will be a useful addition to their vocabulary at this level. The vocabulary has been split into groups relating to the location of the items to support students; all items in the order they appear in the text. Go over the definitions and direct students to locate the relevant words in the text - you might want to demonstrate with the first one. The grammatical information will provide extra support. Check answers by prompting students with the definition so they have to say the word; this provides a check on pronunciation - the answers show the stressed syllables, underlined.

VARIATION: split students into A or B groups and have each group work on 5 different items of the vocabulary exercise. Then students work in A + B pairs to explain and check their ideas. Finally check answers with the whole class.

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. <u>manageable</u>   | 2. <u>overwhelming</u> |
| 3. <u>cyberloafing</u> and <u>cyberslacking</u> - loaf and slack relate to the concepts of relaxation and laziness, respectively | 4. <u>self-doubt</u>   |
| 5. <u>self-criticism</u>   | 6. <u>paralyzed</u>    |
| 7. <u>minimize</u>   | 8. <u>exposure</u>     |
| 9. <u>encounter</u>  | 10. <u>rehearse</u>    |

#### 6. Language in context

10 mins. In this stage students can focus on some multi-word expressions, or chunks, that appear in the report and are often used in other contexts. Give students working alone or in pairs and give them a few minutes to read the sentences and the options and then check answers. Students can then activate these phrases by asking and answering the questions in pairs. Encourage students to answer the questions in full sentences and include the target language. Monitor and offer error correction as appropriate.

1. c                      2. b                      3. a                      4. c

#### 7. Extension/homework

5 mins. to explain. This optional activity offers students an opportunity to summarize the information in the article and personalize it to their own working contexts, while activating vocabulary from the lesson. Students can choose the task which is most relevant to their own role or company or invent another option. The word/time limits are suggestions which can be adapted. Students can submit written homework or deliver a PowerPoint or webinar in person in a later lesson or as a virtual submission for the teacher to mark, focusing on the use of the target language.