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Get started early.

When working in an office, your morning commute can help you wake up and feel ready to work by the time you get to your desk. At home, however, the transition from your pillow to your computer can be much more jarring.

Believe it or not, one way to work from home productively is to dive into your to-do list as soon as you wake up. Otherwise, you'll prolong breakfast and let the morning sluggishness wear away your motivation.

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Plan out what you'll be working on ahead of time.

Spending time figuring out what you'll do today can take away from doing those things. And, you'll have planned your task list so recently that you can be tempted to change your schedule on the fly.

It's important to let your agenda change if you need it to, but it's equally as important to commit to an agenda that outlines every assignment before you begin. Try solidifying your schedule the day before, making it feel more official when you wake up the next day to get started on it.

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Use technology to stay connected.

Working from home might help you focus on your work in the short term, but it can also make you feel cut off the larger operation happening in the office. Instant messaging and videoconferencing tools can make it easy to check in with co-workers and remind you how your work is contributing to the big picture.

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Pretend like you are going into the office.

The mental association you make between work and an office can make you more productive, and there's no reason that feeling should be lost.

When working from home, do all the things you'd do to prepare for an office role: Set your alarm, make coffee, and wear nice (but comfy) clothes.

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Communicate expectations with anyone who will be home with you.

Of course, you might be working from home but still have "company." Make sure any roommates, siblings, parents, spouses, and dogs (well, maybe not dogs) respect your space during work hours. Just because you're working from home doesn't mean you're home.

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Structure your day like you would in the office.

When working from home, you're your own personal manager. Without things like an in-person meeting schedule to break up your day, you can be quick to lose focus or burn out.

To stay on schedule, segment what you'll do and when throughout day. If you have an online calendar, create reminders that tell you when to shift gears and start on new tasks.

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Take clear breaks.
It can be so easy to get distracted as a telecommuter that you avoid breaks altogether. Don't let the guilt of working in the building you sleep in prevent you from taking five to relax. Rather than just opening YouTube and watching some comfort clips, however, use your breaks to get away from your desk. Go for a walk outside or spend time with others who might also be in the house.

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Pick a definitive finishing time each day.

You might be under the impression that working from home establishes more work-life balance but be careful with that assumption. You can get so caught up in your activity, in a relaxing environment, that you lose complete track of time.

Without coworkers packing up and leaving the office reminding you to do the same, set an alarm at the end of the day to indicate your normal workday is coming to an end. You don't have to stop at exactly that time, but knowing the workday is technically over can help you start the process of saving your work and calling it quits for the evening.

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Choose a dedicated work space.

Just because you're not working at an office doesn't mean you can't have an office. Rather than cooping yourself up in your room or on the sofa – spaces that are associated with leisure time – dedicate a specific room or surface in your home to work.

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Commit to doing more.

Projects always take longer than you initially think they will. For that reason, you'll frequently get done less than you set out to do. So, just as you're encouraged to overestimate how much time you'll spend doing one thing, you should also overestimate how many things you'll do during the day. Even if you come up short of your goal, you'll still come out of that day with a solid list of tasks ticked off as complete.