

How to Make Work from Home Work for You

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Nice to meet you!

- Miranda Milovich, Academic Advisor
- Arizona State University since 2016
- Currently advise undergraduate engineering students
- Bachelor's degree from University of Nebraska – Lincoln
- Master's degree in Higher and Postsecondary Education from Arizona State University



Unit overview

- ASU
 - 90,000 in-person students and 38,000 more online
 - ~17,000 staff across multiple campuses
- SEMTE- within ASU's engineering school
 - 9 undergrad advisors
 - 3 grad advisors
 - 2 support staff and 2 supervisors
- Student caseload
 - Approximately 350-450 students per advisor
 - Mainly advise on-campus programs, but just launched an online program
- Began working from home 1 day a week in Summer 2016
- Working from home full time (most weeks) since March 2020

Getting to know you

The agenda

- Setting up for success
- Maintaining health & wellness
- Dealing with distractions
- Staying connected to team
- Maintaining accountability
- Setting expectations
- Q & A

Feel free to put questions in the chat or write them down to ask during Q&A!

Put it in the chat!

**What is one challenge you are facing currently
related to working from home?**

Working from home: It's not all sweatpants and lunch break naps...

- 70% of team reported having trouble logging off at the end of the day at least weekly, if not daily.
 - And they didn't tell their supervisor
- Slow internet/technology issues more frequent at home
- 57% of team reported back/shoulder/neck or other pain caused from sitting in a non-ergonomic environment
- Being more sedentary
- Distractions at home (like kids, pets and partners/roommates)
- Not having a designated office space

Setting up for success

- Don't "roll and go"
 - Shower, get dressed, brush teeth, wake up
 - Set expectations with your team about attire and appearance
- Prepare the night before
 - Make sure laptop/phone is charged and ready
 - Tidy up workspace
- Schedule a 15-minute break mid-morning and take it!
 - Throw in a load of laundry
 - Go for a walk
 - Play with the dog
 - Make some tea/a healthy snack
- If you don't have an office/room to dedicate to work:
 - Pack up as much "work stuff" as possible at end of day/week

“Get comfortable” working from home

- ❑ Find out what your office can provide and ask for what you need
 - Wrist rest, standing mat, chair, mouse, keyboard, extra monitor, etc.
 - Not only important for comfort, but to prevent injury

Try this:

- Walking meetings
 - Download the Zoom app and bring headphones - great way to get steps in and move around while working - especially great for informal meetings!
- Try standing for part of your shift
 - Get a cushioned mat to stand on and wear supportive shoes

Ergonomics Check

- Screen location - should be 18 to 30 inches away
- Where are your arms?
- How are your feet and legs positioned?

Tips

- **If your work surface is too high...**
 - **Raise your seat with a cushion**
 - **Don't dangle legs/feet**
- **Stay hydrated by taking water breaks often**

Adapted from ASU Office Safety Guide: <https://cfo.asu.edu/office-safety#ergonomics>

Maintaining healthy posture

- Take a “micro break” every 30 minutes to an hour
- Check for and correct potentially unhealthy postures
 - Crossing your legs
 - Holding your fingers up when mousing
 - Hunching over your laptop
 - Leaning on your elbow/s
 - Rotating your neck to one direction
- Switch how you are sitting/standing or your location throughout the day
 - Don't forget about your eyes! Use the 20-20-20 method
 - Set up night mode or low blue light - be careful not to set it so low you cause more eye strain
- Communicate needs to supervisor and inform them of any injuries
- Discuss with a doctor/chiropractor if you are in pain

Dealing with distractions

- Circle of Control
 - Not every distraction is something we can avoid.
 - For the ones we can, try using a focus tool (like the [Tomato Timer](#)) to stay on task
- If possible, have a space with a door where you can take meetings.
- If you have a meeting, let others in the house know at least a few minutes in advance.
- If you have a high-energy dog, tire them out during your breaks and get a stuffable chew toy to keep them entertained.
 - Doggy day care/dog walker
- Ask about working a flex schedule while kids are sleeping/at school or daycare.

Food for thought: working at home with kids

HOW TO WORK FROM HOME WITH KIDS AROUND



BABIES

- Wear your baby with babywearing wraps
- Schedule calls in the evenings
- Work early in the morning
- Use a platform that's available on any device
- Get some help (like a neighbor to take your baby for a stroll)
- Use those nap times
- Switch off with your partner



TODDLERS

- Don't be so strict with screentime
- Go with the flow
- Find what works best for you - working in the morning or evening
- Switch off with your partner
- Create a play area
- Plan meetings and work that needs full attention during naps



EARLY SCHOOL-AGE

- Plan playdates or videocalls with friends/neighbors
- Don't be so strict with screentime
- Start a movie right before an important call
- Find online games that reinforce learning and are fun
- Switch off with your partner
- Tell them what you need - they might not listen but can understand you



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Communicate in a fun way
- Set and enforce expectations
- Create a fun to-do list together
- Plan playdates or videocalls with friends/neighbors
- Don't be so strict with screentime
- If safe, send them outside
- Create a play-area
- Switch off with your partner
- Get some craft supplies



MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Create a schedule they can easily follow
- Set daily goals for school work and reward them
- Don't be so strict with screentime
- Check in to see what they're up to
- Take breaks to go for a bike ride, a walk or something else that's outside
- Talk about what's happening

Source: Paynter

CONNECTTEAM.COM



Internet woes

- Try a corded connection if possible
- Turn off video on Zoom if it's lagging
- If possible, ask others in your house not to stream video during your meetings
- Try to close out of unnecessary windows and programs before meetings
 - If something isn't working right, don't suffer alone! Ask your team or the IT department for help
- Backup plan?
 - Mobile hotspot
 - Have a phone number handy to call the student or call into the meeting if needed

If it all goes south:

- Talk to your team/boss about expectations for worst case scenario.
 - If things are unexpectedly going crazy at your house, is it okay to reschedule the appointment? Switch to phone appointment?
- My method: If something happens unexpectedly, acknowledge it and take a moment to compose yourself before moving on.
 - Turn off the video and mute yourself if needed to re-adjust, put the dog somewhere else, make sure the kids are okay, etc.
- Be real with students - they typically understand since they are often dealing with similar issues

Staying connected to the team

- Develop a remote communication policy (when to use email vs. IM, vs. schedule a meeting, vs. quick phone/Zoom/Teams call)
- Virtual professional development is possible!
- Have the team watch a movie via Netflix party and then have a discussion about it in small groups
 - Break out rooms work well for this
- Podcasts or virtual games over lunch
- We use Power Ups! & Microsoft Teams for keeping up team morale

Virtual Meeting Tips

- Set expectations as a team
 - Figure out a plan for how people should ask questions (hand raising, unmuting, chat, etc.)
- Utilize technology that encourages teamwork
 - Jamboard for brainstorming - here's an [example](#)
 - Microsoft Teams collaboration tools
- Gauge how the team is doing
 - Ask open-ended questions.
 - Instead of, “How are you doing?” ask, “What have been some successes this week?” or “What challenges are you facing right now?”

Signs of team overwhelm

- Feelings of loss of strategic overview
 - Loss of group cohesion or having a hard time staying on the same page with the team
 - Changes in work standards, including social and ethical standards
 - Demonization of others and forging/dissolution of trust bonds among the team
- (Wonder, 2020)

Wellness tips:

- Encourage a healthy team environment:
 - Example: Employee Wellness Hour
- Utilize support services your campus might offer to staff (counseling, wellness classes, etc.)
- Check with your insurance company to find out if they are offering any COVID-related mental health benefits outside of what would normally be covered

Maximizing time & maintaining accountability

- Less interaction with team can sometimes lead to forgotten projects and missed deadlines
 - Holding yourself accountable is even more critical while working from home
 - Outlook reminders, to-do lists (Trello!), sticky notes
- If you are managing someone who is falling behind:
 - Find out why! Ask open-ended questions to find out what support they need.
 - 1-1s are even more important now - make time for them.
- Clear instructions and due dates are critical to keeping team on same page
 - Setting clear expectations is key!

Setting (& sticking to) expectations as a team

- Telecommuting agreement
 - [Handout](#)
- Some examples of what to discuss:
 - Is it expected that you have a separate room in your house with “4 walls and a door” to set up your workstation?
 - Is it acceptable for students to hear the occasional dog bark, or see the occasional cat crawl across the screen?
 - Does your boss expect you to have childcare lined up throughout your entire shift while you work from home?
- Check with your HR/legal team for help developing this



Telecommuting Agreement Form

Complete this Agreement with your supervisor after your telecommuting request has been approved.

College or Department:	Month/Date/Year:
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Employee Name	Last Name:	First Name:
Begin Date:		End Date:
Telecommuter Telephone Number:		
Alternate Work- site Location:		

Telecommuting Work Schedule Hours:

Day/s of the Week:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Beginning/Ending Times (AM/PM):					

Schedule of standing weekly meetings:

Day of Week	Time of Meeting	Location of Meeting	Title/Purpose of Meeting	Frequency of Meeting

Methods of contact:

Contact	In-person	Telephone	E-mail	Other	Frequency
Clients					
Co-workers					
Manager/Supervisor					
Others					

Telecommuter Duties and Assignments:

No.	Duties and Assignments (brief description)
#1	
#2	
#3	
#4	
#5	
#6	
#7	
#8	
#9	
#10	

You are authorized to use the following Arizona State University (department name here) equipment at your telecommuting site:

Equipment (description):	Serial/Property Number:

Telecommuting Agreement Specifics:

By signing below, I understand and agree to the terms and conditions set forth in this Agreement for an arrangement for me to perform work for Arizona State University ("University") at an alternate work site on a regular basis. This Agreement begins on [mm/dd/yyyy] and continues until [mm/dd/yyyy]. I understand that the University may terminate this Agreement at any time if it is determined to be in the best interest of the department or university. I also understand that telecommuting does not alter my employment relationship with the university and that I continue to be subject to all university policies and terms and conditions of employment.

1. This Agreement is subject to the University's approval of any necessary space, equipment, set-up, and maintenance and documented as a part of this Telecommuting Agreement above.
2. I agree to maintain a safe and secure work environment, and will allow the University access to the worksite to assess safety and security, upon reasonable notice.
3. I agree to report any and all work related injuries to my supervisor at the earliest reasonable opportunity. I agree to indemnify and hold the University, its employees, officers, directors and agents harmless, including any attorney's fees, for any injury to others at my alternate work site. This provision shall survive the termination of this Agreement.
4. I agree to use University owned equipment, records, and materials solely for purposes of University business, and to protect them against unauthorized or accidental access, use, damage, destruction, or disclosure. I agree to report to my supervisor any and all instances of loss, damage, destruction or unauthorized access to or disclosure of University owned equipment, records or materials at my earliest opportunity.
5. I understand that all equipment, records, and materials provided by the University shall remain the property of the University. I understand and agree that records created by me in the course and scope of my employment at University are the property of the University. This provision shall survive the termination of this Agreement.
6. I understand and agree that I will not use my personal automobile for University business unless specifically authorized by my supervisor in advance.
7. I agree to return any and all University equipment, records, and materials immediately upon termination of this Agreement or within a mutually agreeable timeframe with my supervisor.
8. I understand that I am solely responsible for tax consequences, if any, of this arrangement, and for conformance to any local zoning regulations.
9. I understand that all obligations, responsibilities, and terms and conditions of my employment with the University remain unchanged, except those obligations and responsibilities specifically addressed in this agreement.
10. I understand and agree that I shall remain subject to all Arizona Board of Regents and Arizona State University policies and procedures during the term of this agreement

11. I understand that pursuant to ASU policy, [SPP 306](#), my work schedule may be changed by my supervisor and may be changed for periods of 30 days or more with at least two weeks' notice to me. My work schedule may be changed for periods of 30 days or less with 24 hours notice. I understand that, in an emergency, I may be required to change my work schedule without notice.
12. I understand and agree that if I'm a nonexempt employee, my supervisor's prior approval is required before I work any overtime hours.
13. I understand that if I'm a nonexempt employee I am required to report my work hours and take required rest breaks and meal periods as applicable (see [SPP 306: Work Schedules.](#))

I hereby affirm by my signature that I have read this Telecommuting Agreement, and understand and agree to all of its provisions.

Employee Name Printed/Signature

Date

Supervisor Name Printed/Signature

Date

Department Head Name Printed/Signature

Date

Takeaways

- Eventually the pandemic will end, but things might never be the way they were before
- Start thinking about the future of your office now
- If you are an advisor:
 - Share the telecommuting agreement handout with your supervisor to start the conversation.
 - Set up a meeting with your coworkers to talk about what the pros and cons of working from home have been and use tips from this presentation to come up with solutions.
- If you are a manager:
 - Start gathering feedback/input from your team now.
 - Use the telecommuting agreement handout to draft a plan that will support student/office needs as well as advisor needs.

Embrace it!

- ❑ Prep dinner, tidy up the living space, or go for a walk during an afternoon break - one less thing to do after work!
- ❑ Watch your favorite TV show or movie during your lunch break or play with the kids, dogs, or spend time with your spouse.
- ❑ Home workouts!
- ❑ Think of all that money you are saving on car maintenance and gas!
 - Ask your insurance company about discount on car insurance
 - Does your campus allow a refund for your parking permit?
 - Less traffic = shorter commute times for those who can't work from home
 - Potential positive impact on the environment!

Next steps

1. Set a goal for how you would like to “embrace” work from home this week.
2. What is one thing you can commit to doing this week to help work from home work better for you and/or your team?

Q & A

Thank you!

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or if you would like these slides.

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References

Arizona State University (n.d.) *Office Safety*.
<https://cfo.asu.edu/office-safety>

Wonder, A. (2020, Sept. 24). *Emotional Resilience for Leaders* [PowerPoint slides].