

WFH that Actually Works

The current global situation has nearly everyone working from home, from those who've been doing it for years to those who are brand new to the concept. As a global consulting firm with nine offices around the world, Global Prairie has been connecting and engaging a wide-spread workforce ever since we first opened our doors in 2008. In this primer on **Working from Home**, we've gathered best practices from our own experience as well as insights from other experts on maximizing productivity and managing the new stresses of confined working and living. For more help ensuring your team has the information and resources to succeed in their new working arrangements, contact us at info@globalprairie.com.

Working from Home

→ **Make a schedule and stick to it.**

Research shows that daily routines support mental health and cognitive functioning. So, for those working from home for the first time, the total disruption of habit can be disorienting. To help overcome this upheaval we recommend committing to a routine that resembles your pre-work-from-home schedule as closely as possible. This means rising with your pre-WFH alarm and resisting the urge to sleep through what would normally be commute time. After accounting for the changes that home childcare and other new challenges may demand, establish daily working hours and do your best to start and finish at the same time each day. We also suggest that teams clearly communicate their working hours by blocking calendars and employing “away” messages on messaging platforms. Not only does this help prevent scheduling mishaps, it also reinforces healthy boundaries and working habits.

→ **Confine your workspace to a specific area in your home.**

Physical environments can have a major impact on people's ability to focus and perform. Instead of spreading out on the kitchen table or checking emails in front of the TV, we suggest creating a designated workspace in a part of the home that will help you limit distractions. If possible, work from a room that can be closed off and make this a place of quiet solitude. Keeping all work restricted to this room can create a psychological boundary between work and home that helps maximize productivity “at work” and minimize the creep of work into relaxation time.



→ **Know thyself (and your WFH weaknesses).**

There's no one-size-fits-all path to efficient and gratifying remote work, so self-awareness is essential. Consider the conditions that promote productivity at the office and find ways to replicate them at home. For those who are easily distracted, creating a quiet place to work is that much more important. Fostering a professional and focused mindset can also be encouraged by replicating standard "office behavior"—i.e. dressing professionally and avoiding interruptions like personal calls throughout the day. For workaholics, caution should be taken to prevent burn-out from the blurring of professional and personal boundaries. Set timers to remind yourself to take breaks for lunch and to stop working at the end of each day.

→ **Use video to feel connected to others.**

Remote work can be just that—remote and isolating. It's important to cultivate a sense of connection and collaboration within teams by encouraging consistent use of video conferencing tools such as Webex, Skype, Zoom, and others. Request that your team include (and use!) video links in meeting invites. We also recommend scheduling informal coffees, lunches, or even happy hours with teammates to maintain the casual socializing that would otherwise take place in the office.

→ **Set a limit on the frequency with which you consume media.**

With news on the current crisis constantly changing and demanding attention, many people are struggling to manage their media consumption. While it's important to stay informed, it's equally important to monitor your media habits to prevent distraction, or worse—the negative impacts to mood and function that research shows result from the overconsumption of negative news. To reduce the temptation during work hours, we recommend maximizing the windows of applications you're actively working in, using "Focus Modes" of programs like Microsoft Word, and even notifying coworkers of "Offline Hours" during which you are actively working but are disconnected from the Internet and can only be reached by call or text. Outside of work hours, make screen-free time a priority, and be wary of getting lost in platforms that encourage endless scrolling.

→ **Take time for selfcare.**

Now, more than ever, making physical and mental health a priority is essential. Yoga, walking, stretching, at-home workouts, guided meditations, reading, coloring, or simply resting can go a long way in fostering a sense of well-being. One advantage of WFH is that healthy activities can be incorporated into schedules using time that would otherwise be taken by commutes. We recommend that teams encourage participation in restorative activities and identify channels and virtual spaces for colleagues to share personal updates and helpful resources with one another.

→ **Celebrate your wins.**

Working from home can diminish the sense of accomplishment that comes from a hard day's work at the office. The challenge is amplified by the significant fear and uncertainty people across the globe are facing at the moment. Reflecting on small victories – work or personal – by writing down achievements at the end of each day can help cultivate a feeling of control and can promote a virtuous circle of productivity.

Working from Home with Kids

→ **Try to block truly kid-free time.**

Working parents are facing the added challenge of balancing the demands of both full-time childcare and work. Uninterrupted time to focus may come in shorter timeframes but it's not entirely impossible. For those who have a significant other (or even an older child), we recommend coordinating schedules into rotating childcare shifts throughout the day.



Rather than being at the beck and call of children at any given moment, “off duty” parents can fully commit to being present in their work during these shorter sprints before taking over for their partners. For those with children who are old enough to operate devices, short-term babysitting can also be outsourced to friends and family via video chat, providing an opportunity for kids to engage with peers and adults beyond their nuclear families.

→ ***Put the Internet and your colleagues to work to help keep kids occupied.***

Ideas for keeping children occupied (and keeping parents sane) are clearly in high demand and fortunately, the global community of working parents and educators are sharing new strategies and resources every day (see just a few of them in Resources for Parents below). Teams can also support their colleagues who are parents by creating opportunities for company kids to participate in company-sponsored activities. For example, in the wake of this crisis, Global Prairie has begun hosting Story Time and Kids Show & Tell virtual sessions to provide a few minutes of healthy distraction for our teammates’ children. Not only do these events give our working parents a chance to take a breath, they strengthen our sense of community in a time when we all need it the most.

Resources for Parents

- [National Emergency Library](#) – A collection of nearly 4 million books made available for remote learning
- [Hour of Code](#) – One-hour tutorials for elementary age kids
- [Busy Toddler](#) – Educational and play activities
- [Virtual Museum Tours](#) – Engaging and educational indoor activity where you can virtually tour 12 museums
- [Scholastic Learn at Home](#) – Day-to-day projects to keep kids reading, thinking and growing
- [GoNoodle](#) – Movement and mindfulness videos for children
- [Lunch Doodles](#) – Artist in residence Mo Willems hosts daily lunch doodles, during which kids can follow along and draw together
- [Home Safari](#) – Educational, in-home safaris for kids
- [Epic](#) – Digital library with over 35,000 books, videos, quizzes and more
- [Free Rice](#) – Quiz questions in various categories that give back rice to fight global hunger for every correct answer
- [COVID-19 Home Education Resources](#) – A Facebook group sharing resources for home education for those working from home with kids

Sources: Global Prairie, Harvard Business Review, SHRM, Washington Post, Forbes