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Telework Tips: Top Ten Tips for Successful Teleworking

Read on to dive into each of these tips and grow your telework skills

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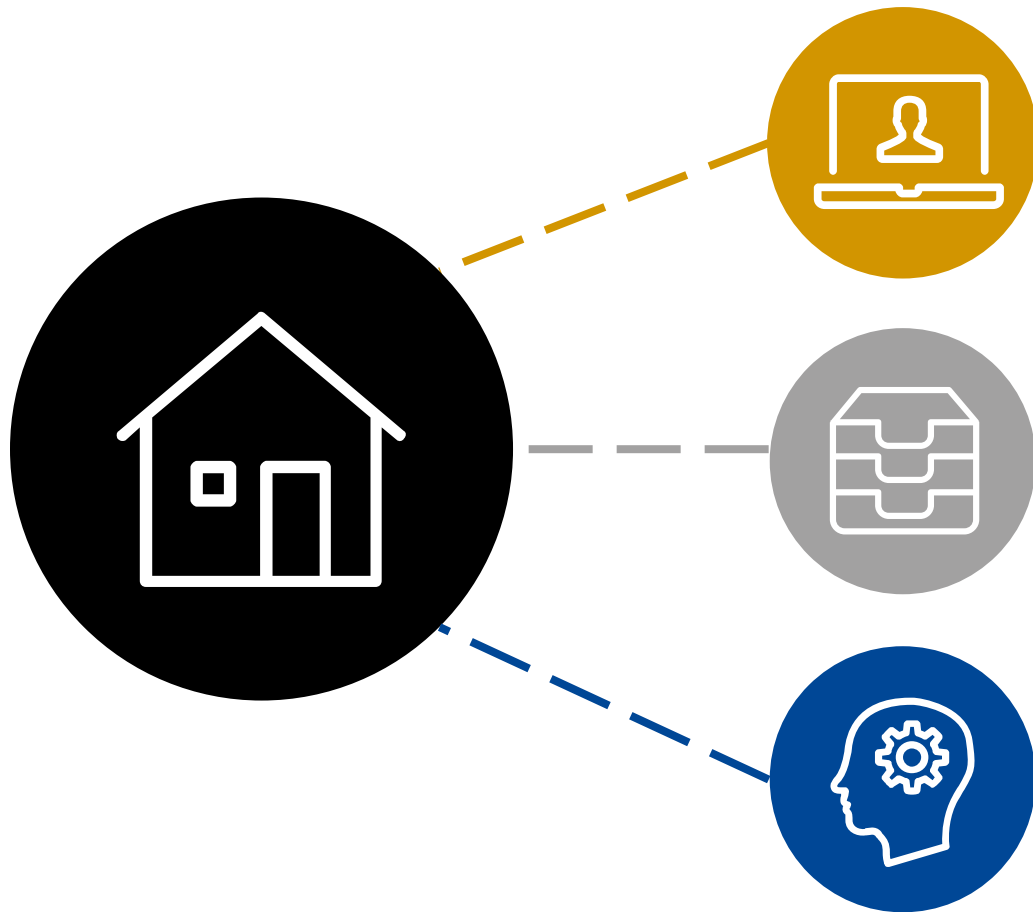
LEADER TIP

Assume positive intent with all team members and have a conversation before making a conclusion about how work is getting done — ambiguity is inherent in having team members working virtually and can lead to assumptions about focus and commitment to work.



Telemark Tip:

Designate a workspace in your home for focus



Create a quiet space to concentrate and spread out. Make room for your computer, monitor, mouse, and any other materials that help you succeed

It doesn't have to be an elaborate set-up, but an area in which work-related material can be stored and organized prevents important papers from being tossed out with junk mail or lost somewhere in the house

A dedicated area also trains the brain to associate this place with professional activities, leading to greater focus

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Telework Tip: Organize for your workday



Start Strong

At the beginning of the workday lay out the list of items that you want to get done. Prioritize the “Must Do” tasks.



Capture the Details

List tasks like check-ins with your supervisor; discussions needed with co-workers, and research you may need to do in support of a work assignment. Make sure you capture the big tasks and the little ones that might slip your mind.



Prepare for Meetings

Always check your calendar for meetings, conference calls or other sessions. Jot down notes on what YOU need to do to prepare in advance to contribute to that session. Do you have to report status? Provide an update? Share information?



Wrap Up

At the end of the day, if there are items on your list which did not get done, move them to your list of work for tomorrow. If the work item can be moved to another day, put it on your calendar or work log. This provides you with continuity from day-to-day; helps to keep things from falling through the cracks.



Telework Tip: Follow your regular work schedule

Unless specific arrangements have been made and approved through your supervisor, you should continue to **follow your regularly assigned work schedule.**

You should also continue to **take meal and rest periods** as normally scheduled.

Overtime will also need to be requested and approved in advance.



TRY THIS

- Organize and prioritize key tasks with a To-Do List. This will help you avoid procrastinating or losing focus by switching between tasks.
- Create a list of “in between” tasks – minor jobs that should take 10 minutes or less to complete that you can fit into your day when a gap opens up.

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Telework Tip: Practice using technology tools for collaboration



When scheduling any meeting, **set up a conference line** so that coworkers always have the option to participate remotely if necessary.



When sharing documents during the meeting, plan ahead and **send files to any coworkers** who will be participating remotely.



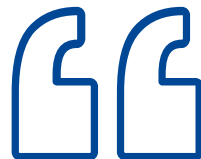
If there are more than 2 or 3 people in the meeting, make it a habit of **stating your name** when you speak to help avoid confusion about who is talking. Encourage meeting participants to do the same.



Be an **active listener** on conference calls by verbally acknowledging that you are listening, by using short statements to paraphrase the main takeaways, and asking for permission to ask questions.



Be fully engaged and **give the remote meeting your full attention**. Avoid multi-tasking or reading emails during the meeting.



If you have something to contribute or missed something that someone said, **jump in rather than waiting to be asked** as meeting facilitators cannot read your body language and may not recognize the need to pause and invite your participation.



IF YOU HAVE A WEBCAM....

- Seeing your coworkers' faces (and letting them see yours) can help alleviate feeling disconnected.
- When the webcam is on, you're more likely to turn off distractions and focus on the discussion.
- Seeing coworkers live via video helps facilitate teamwork and fools the brain into thinking you are sitting in the same room.
- You are more likely to build trust and human connection when you have an opportunity to collaborate face-to-face, even via video.



Telework Tip: Communicate frequently with your team

Update your Teams status if you are going to be away for longer than a few minutes so your teammates know how/when to contact you.

Set your out-of-office message on email when you are not available.

If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask for help.

Keep your calendar up to date to avoid confusion and breakdown in communication.

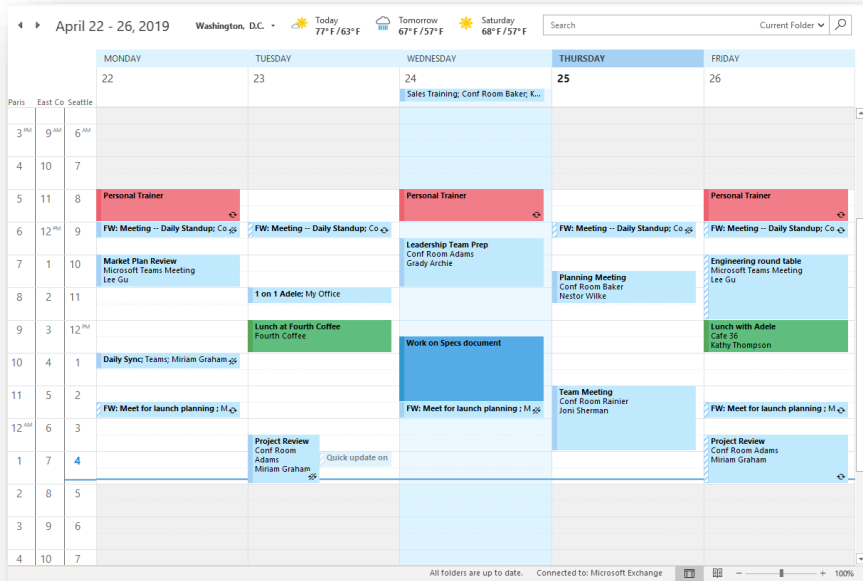
Reach out to your supervisor or team in advance of absence or time away from your computer.

Use Office 365 and OneDrive to collaborate and share documents if appropriate.

Plan to connect with your supervisor at least once a day to clarify priorities, ask questions, or validate plans.

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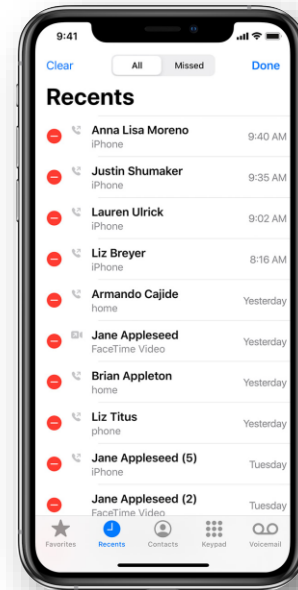
Telework Tip: Remain contactable and responsive



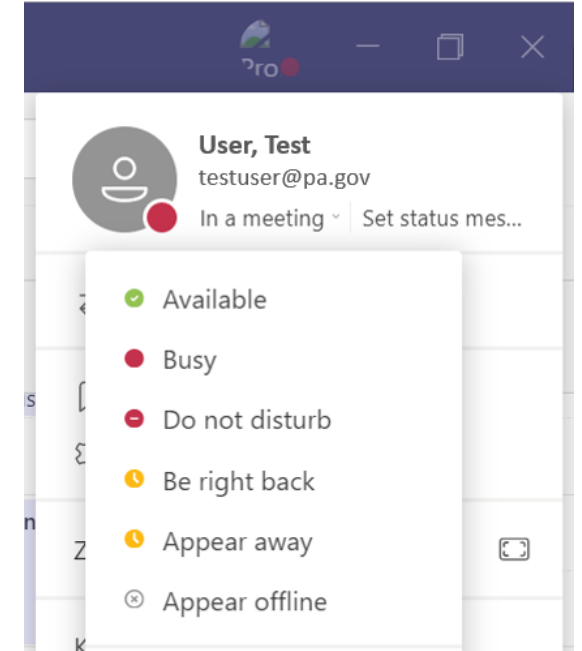
Let your supervisor and team members know **when you're working and when you have to step away**. It's important that others know how to reach you, and when you're available for meetings.

Keep your electronic calendar up to date and share it with your team.

Use email effectively. Use the subject line to alert the reader to the topic, the level of urgency, and the required action.



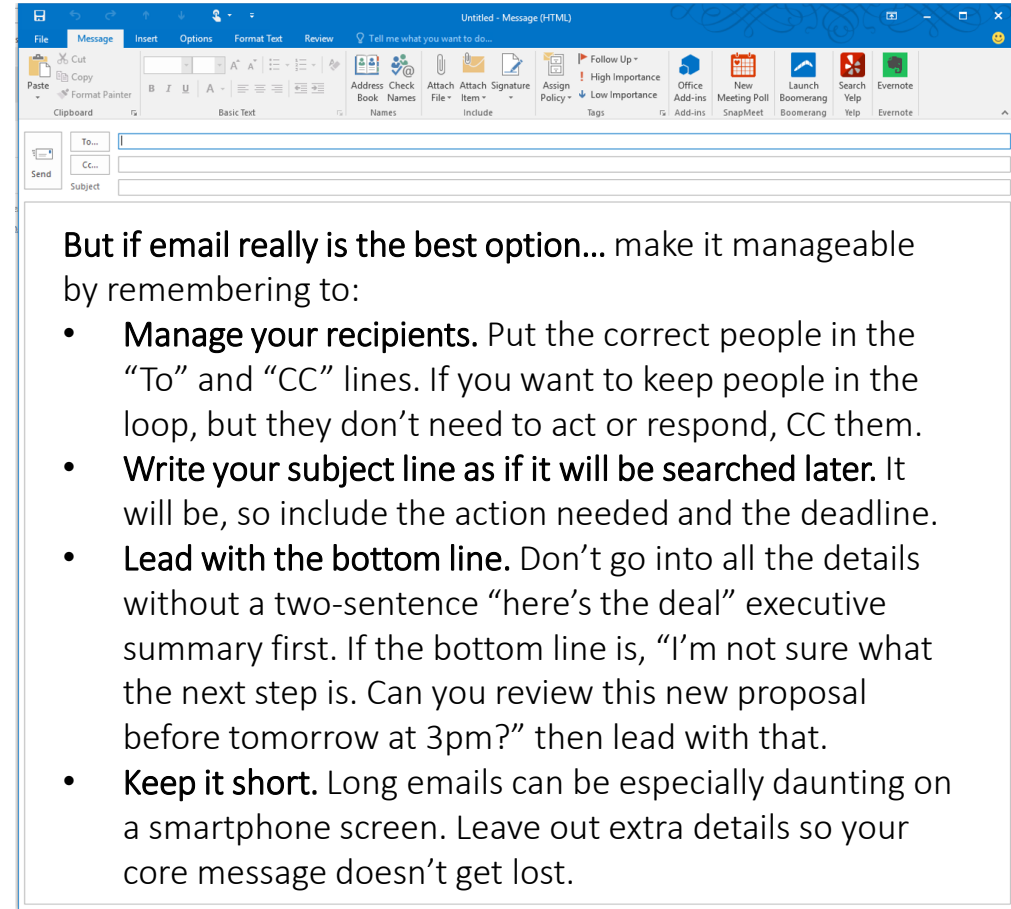
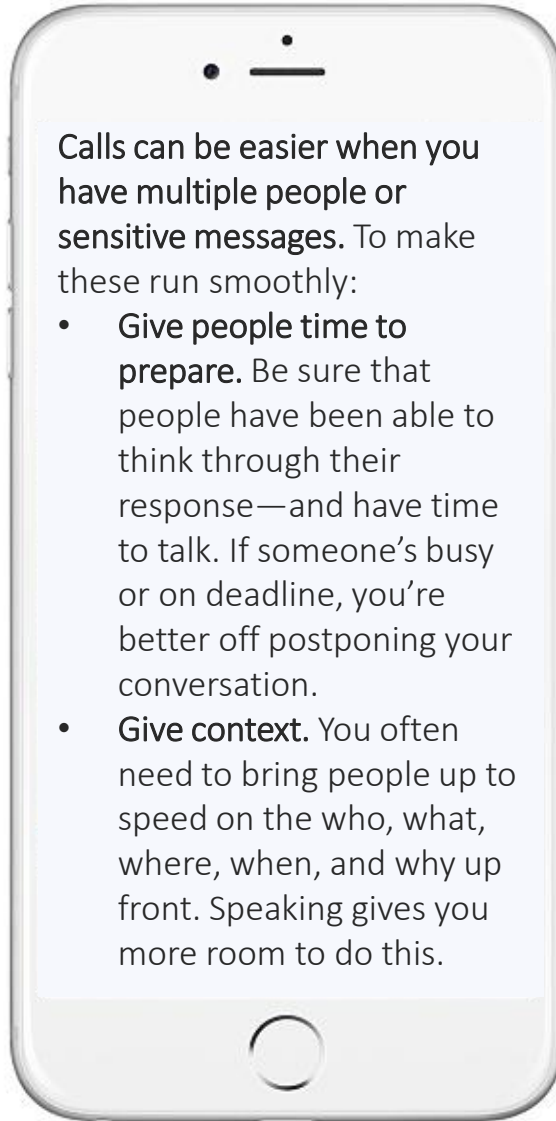
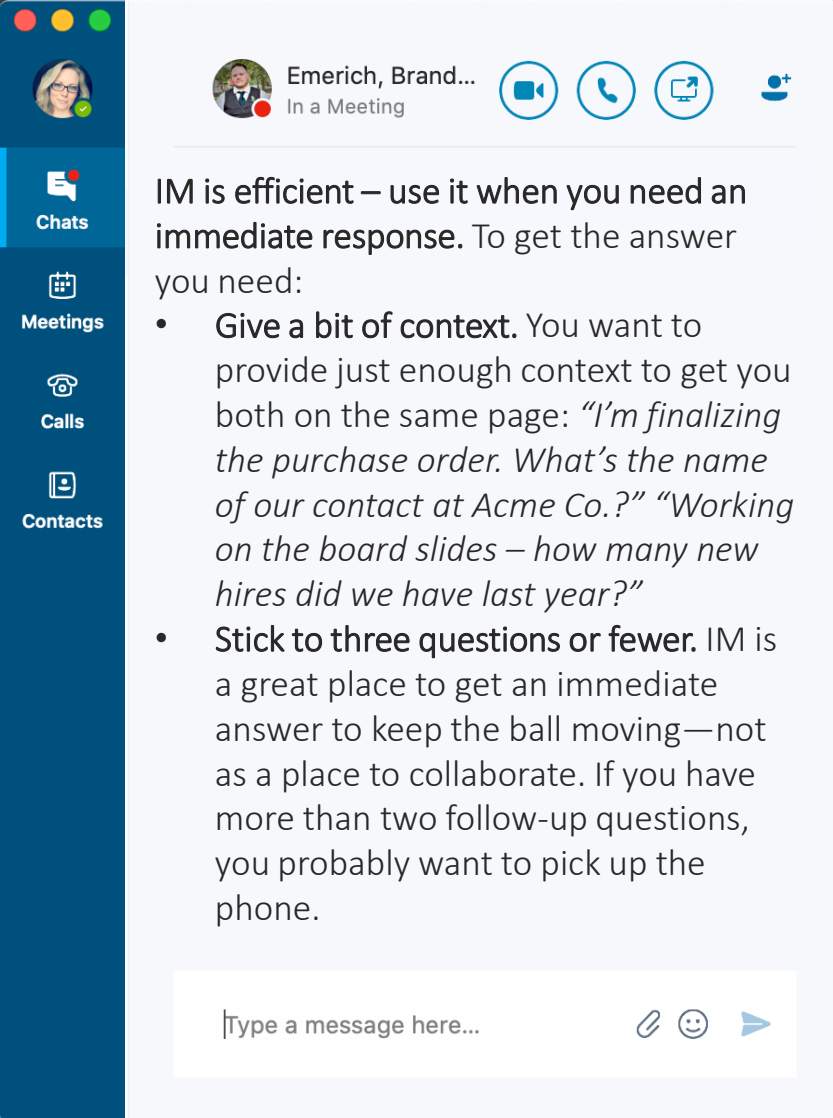
Stay connected to your workplace and team members by being available and responsive (e.g., **answer calls and respond to emails** in a reasonable time).



Use **your Teams status**; it lets people know when you are available or away from your desk.



Telework Tip: Use the right communication tool for the message

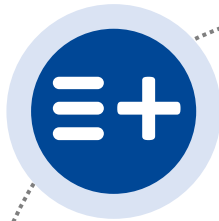




Telework Tip: Use your Outlook calendar and schedule your work

Schedule your high-level priorities

This is the time to work on deep focus work like writing, designing, or coding. Knowing your high-level priorities and goals will shape what makes it onto your schedule and how you organize your day.



Set time for both deep and shallow tasks

Schedule your most meaningful work for when your attention and energy naturally peak and save email or administrative tasks for when you'll naturally hit a dip.



Overestimate how long things will take

Don't be over-optimistic with your day until you have a solid understanding of what you can get done. Some experts say you should give yourself 2–3X as long as you think a task will take.



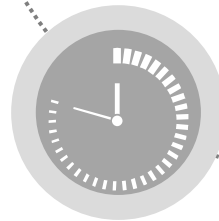
Place buffers between tasks

Getting back on track between activities can take 10+ minutes. If you assume you can switch gears on the spot, you're going to end up frustrated and behind schedule.



Schedule your breaks (not just lunch)

We're not machines. Make sure you set aside time throughout the day for a quick stretch or walk to give your brain (and your eyes) a rest. Schedule some downtime, relaxation, and learning.



Schedule an "overflow" day

If you're constantly falling behind on tasks, you'll want to set aside an overflow day dedicated to getting caught up. Don't let yourself get overwhelmed.





Teletwork Tip: Dedicate time for informal social interactions



Social interactions alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness and facilitate cooperation and engagement. Fill the socializing gap by **buddying up with a colleague** for casual conversation or schedule a video call via Teams instead text or email.



Use technology to stay connected. Working from home can make you feel cut off from the larger operation. **Instant messaging and videoconferencing** tools can make it easy to check in with coworkers and remind you how your work is contributing to the big picture.



Interpersonal interaction is welcomed and expected.
Remember: You are working from home, not the moon. Interact with other people via phone, email, instant messages, and webcam.



Telework Tip: Have meaningful check-ins with your supervisor

The Short Version

Check-ins are frequent conversations where you and your supervisor **clarify expectations, align on priorities and work outcomes, and figure out how to help you play to your strengths** more of the time. The more frequently you and your supervisor conduct check-ins about upcoming priorities and how to best deliver on those, the more successful you can be at your job. It's that simple: **Regular check-ins fuel performance.**

Getting Started

Check-ins may differ in nature from one to the next. Topics covered should flex based on the work and individual, with employees helping to drive the conversation and agenda. Start with one of these:



Status of the work—general/specific updates



Roadblocks—what's impeding your progress?
How can supervisors help to clear the path?



Performance—input on what's going well, what's not going well and behaviors observed; actionable steps you can take in the future



Wellbeing—what you need to accommodate your own work/life needs



Course correction—help get yourself or your team back on track when necessary



Strengths—understanding your strengths and identifying opportunities to align work accordingly