

Finding Productivity While Working from Home

By Amanda Seaboch - April 28th, 2020



For those of us first time work from home-ers, finding a workflow may be difficult without the traditional office structure. How do you navigate productivity when your environment offers a seemingly endless supply of distractions? You may be more inclined to finish the next episode of your favorite series or tackle the piling tower of dirty dishes in the sink as opposed to getting to work every morning. Whatever the distraction, it's important to figure out the best work from home flow that's personal to you in order to achieve productivity. While this is uncharted waters for many, not all is lost. If you've experienced frustration with your productivity levels during the last few weeks, there's still time to shift your viewpoint of success. Here are some good ways to set goals and be productive while working from home.

Love your space. Chances are, your home isn't naturally structured for workplace productivity. Working from the sofa tends to result in greater distractions if you're used to a formal office space. You don't have to renovate your home to find a better flow. Keep your changes small. Maybe clear off a portion of your kitchen table. Place some photos in front of you while you work just as you would at your work desk. Drawing strict lines between workspace and homespace will naturally shift you into work mode. You'll be less likely to kick back and allow yourself to binge watch television if you differentiate where you do your work from where you enjoy your home.

Be realistic. Working out the kinks of a new routine won't happen instantaneously. Both overestimating and underestimating your productivity might cause frustration. Take some time to step back and analyze what's currently on your plate and think of any approaching deadlines. Organize your work tasks from top to bottom priority. From there, narrow down the tasks into what can be accomplished in a day. Only you can judge for yourself what standard of productivity is possible. Within your overall goals for the day, consider narrowing them down into a timeframe. Maybe your time in the mornings is better dedicated to answering emails, and your afternoons are the best time for Zoom calls. Once you've determined what success looks like for *you*, productivity will occur naturally.

Do your best. I once went to a writing seminar hosted by a favorite author of mine, Maggie Stiefvater, who said something that stuck with me that not only pertained to writing, but also to productivity in general. While these aren't her exact words, she told the audience that achieving 100% productivity isn't possible on a 30% day. Her idea of the 30% day references those days when you don't feel 100% yourself. Maybe you're stressed about work or running on a lack of sleep. When you're down and not feeling your best self, you won't be able to complete a 100% productive day. On these days, maybe it's best to restructure your tasks and tackle only what's most important. If you have flexibility in deadlines, taking some extra time on assignments that prove more difficult may be the best use of your time. Have your goals meet you where you are, and set goals for yourself that won't end in failure even before you've tried.

Ask to be held accountable. No one should think that they're alone in their feelings. While feelings of failure and inadequacy may be isolating, find comfort in the fact that there are at least a dozen other people around you hiding the same feelings. Ask someone you trust to hold you accountable to your productivity. Explain your realistic goals and ask if they'd check in on your progress. Finding an accountability partner doesn't mean finding someone who will punish you for not meeting your goals. Accountability partners are there to motivate you when feelings of unproductivity set in and to celebrate with you in successes.

Practice self love. Working from home isn't easy for a lot of us. Maybe for the first time you're feeling like you're falling behind in your work. Fighting through a routine that isn't working will only set you further back. It's okay to take breaks and experiment with your workflow. You need to balance out your goals with ways to keep yourself motivated and excited to start a new day. Add ways to care for yourself to your daily routine in order to feel more of a distinction between work and home life. That could look like treating yourself to a lunch takeout once a week or blocking off a time in the evening for a bubble bath. Hard work deserves praise. If you're doing your best, then that's all you can ask of yourself.

Restructuring your space and mindset will work wonders for your productivity. Quarantine is tough enough as it is. Consider these small ways to turn what isn't functional with your working from home schedule into a productivity-boosting routine.