

# TIPS FOR STUDENTS WORKING REMOTELY

Virtual co-ops, internships, or jobs allow you to develop essential digital skills for the 21st century. Working remotely also requires you to be highly motivated and organized. Without regular onsite supervision, you must manage your own time and complete assignments effectively. Remote work can be an excellent resume booster in demonstrating the online project management and communication skills required by many organizations.

To succeed, treat online learning or remote work like any "real" course or job. Working offsite does not mean your responsibilities have changed. You will still be evaluated by what you produce and how you interact with others. You're building a portfolio of experience that you want to look back on with pride. Likewise, you're growing an invaluable network; strive to perform so that your boss and colleagues can sing your praises as a smart, reliable, and hardworking team player who got the (remote) job done.

## **Understand your role and responsibilities.**

Expectations should be clear before the start of the co-op, internship, or job. Much like an academic course syllabus lays out expectations and assignments, job description and onboarding should clarify duties, expectations, daily work schedules, technology usage, and modes of communication. If you're unclear, ask your work supervisor or mentor.

## **Test your technology.**

Ask your employer which platforms or technologies are most commonly used and if training is available. If you do not have the necessary equipment, ask for a company-issued laptop/tablet/webcam. If you need formal accommodations, contact your Co-op Coordinator or the Disability Resource Center, who can help you understand the process to request those as well. If technology training isn't part of your orientation, then allow enough time to test the platforms, which may include:

- Face to Face – GoToMeeting, Zoom, FaceTime, WebEx, Zoho Meetings, etc.
- Other communication tools – Slack, Teams, Email, Instant Messenger, etc.
- Free Project Management Tools – Asana, OpenProject, Trello, nTask, Monday, etc.
- Online file sharing – DropBox, Box, GoFile, etc.

## **Be professional.**

In the spirit of "dress for success," it helps to stay well-groomed and present a professional appearance and demeanor while working remotely. First, it's a behavioral trick that cues your brain "it's time to go to work." And second, you may be involved in video conferences or other online engagements in which people can see you, so it's always best to look neat and professional.

## **Schedule your time and be visible to colleagues when working.**

Schedule your hours, so your manager and colleagues know when you'll be working. Be sure that your status check is accurate, so your colleagues know when you're available, busy, or away. Respond to emails and other communications promptly and professionally to indicate your commitment and engagement. If your time zone varies from traditional business hours, speak with your manager about how to align your schedule with your manager and employer to meet business needs.

## **Create a workspace and avoid distractions.**

Just as a bed or couch cues you to sleep or relax, establish a regular space that puts you in work mode. And just as you would in class or a meeting, put your phone and TV aside and log out of your social media accounts on your computer during work hours to minimize distractions so you can focus on the task at hand. If you like background music or other sounds on to avoid unnerving quiet, then feel free to play something on low volume.

## **Ask for advice, feedback, and help.**

During your scheduled check-ins with your manager or team members, ask for other remote work tips as well as feedback in terms of your communication or collaboration, and be ready to adjust or adapt as needed. Stay connected, be productive, and continue to grow your network remotely.

## **Build in a reward system.**

After completing an academic or remote work assignment, give yourself the reward of going outdoors for a walk, listening to a favorite artist, or refueling with a healthy snack. Acknowledging your efforts by doing something you enjoy creates a positive feedback loop that makes you more likely to persist in, rather than procrastinate, your work.

**Create a calendar and a to-do list.**

As a student, you juggle multiple academic projects and deadlines. Likewise, effective task or project management skills are key when working remotely. Since you may not get as many reminders of deadlines or meetings that often happen organically when working onsite, build reminders and alerts into your calendar and a daily to-do list to advance your project and goals.

**Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Working onsite brings organic opportunities to ask questions or quickly update your manager or co-workers with progress reports. In the absence of facetime, people have no way of knowing what or how you're doing. Therefore, regular check-ins become even more important. Be thoughtful about what and how you're communicating. Consider whether it's best to share through a video meeting, phone call, messenger chat or email. Ask your supervisor at the outset: what's the best way for us to communicate in this virtual arrangement? Try scheduling regular check-ins via email or other chat options.

**Create a virtual community.**

Find other friends or co-workers who are also working remotely and schedule daily or weekly check-ins to help you stay accountable and connected. Sharing your to-do list or asking each other how you're progressing may relieve stress by enabling you to talk through any challenges or issues you're facing. Check to see if your employer or team already has virtual coffee breaks scheduled or if there are other ways to connect employees online. If none exists, suggest creating such opportunities.

**Set boundaries and establish work expectations with housemates.**

Communicate with family and roommates about your work obligations and establish boundaries, so they don't create unintentional distractions. Find ways to indicate when you're in a work meeting and can't be disturbed. Be proactive about minimizing outside disturbances from family, pets, or noise. If needed, talk with your manager about any scheduling or other obstacles you may have.

**Take mind/body breaks and change the scenery.**

Too much uninterrupted screen time or sitting hunched over your computer is unhealthy. It can be particularly hard on your eyes as well as arms/wrists.

- Follow these tips to reduce eye strain and these suggestions for preventing carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Take quick stretches hourly and a real lunch break when working full days. Schedule those into your calendar.
- Just as onsite work requires you to shift locations between events, build site changes into your remote workdays to keep things interesting and stimulating. This also provides ongoing transitional breaks for your mind and body.

**Build a routine.**

Adjusting to a new work environment – especially abruptly – can take time. Building a daily routine can help. Starting your day off on the right foot sets up your whole day for success. Find a routine that works for you – a walk, coffee, healthy breakfast, shower, etc. and stick to it so that when you sit down to work, you're in the right frame of mind.

**Finally, you can use the [SAIL](#) platform to set goals and capture all of the learning opportunities, challenges, and successes that you encounter during this unique experience.**