

STUDENT EMPLOYEE - WORK FROM HOME GUIDE

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GETTING READY TO WORK FROM HOME

Working your campus job from home is different than being on campus. There are definitely perks (zero commute time!) but there are also challenges.

Even if you're working "off campus" right now, our hope is that your **McGill work experience equips you with the skills and confidence** you need to succeed in your future careers – regardless of the work environment you find yourself in.

Are you wondering: **How do I work my campus job from home?** Then keep reading this guide!



Get in work mode

This is a workday. So even though you're at home, **try** to keep a routine:

- **Shower and get dressed** as you would for school
- Make time **for lunch and breaks** – preschedule meal times, so you stick to a schedule
- Find **balance** between school and work tasks – plan your time to juggle tasks according to the urgency of the priorities

YOU know your most productive times, so schedule your day around them.

Set **daily goals** and hold yourself **accountable** - accountability is one of the toughest things remote workers struggle with

- This may mean **communicating your goals** to your supervisor at the beginning of each day and sending an update on what you have accomplished at the end of the work day
- If you need extra motivation, **try setting small rewards** for yourself – get through the morning without distractions? Treat yourself with some chocolate!

Self-care is key to maintaining productivity

- **Going on a walk** can help clear your mind, work more efficiently, and decompress after being home all day
- **Fresh air** and **sunlight** are great for lifting your mood
- **Limit your intake of social media** – besides making it hard to focus, panic scrolling, and FOMO are not good for mental health

DON'T FORGET



GitLab's recent *Remote Work Report* found **86%** of respondents believe that **the future of work is remote.**



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Set up your workspace

- Designate an uncluttered and comfortable workspace to do your work
- Limit distractions as much as possible by finding a quiet area and setting your phone to silent.

Good ergonomics allow for a comfortable work environment

- Don't work from your couch or bed. Instead, use a desk or table – Your posture will thank you!
- If you have one, **connect to a monitor at eye level**. Working for an extended periods on a laptop screen can be bad for your posture.

Follow the 20/20/20 rule:

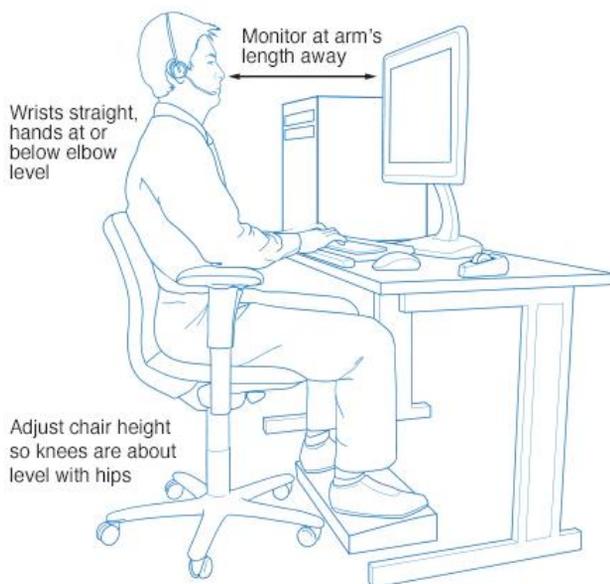
Every 20 minutes, look at something that is 20 feet away from you, for at least 20 seconds

To ensure that you can [access your departmental files from off campus](#), you will need to connect to McGill's Virtual Private Network (VPN).

- For VPN activation instructions, click [here](#)
- For VPN access support, contact the IT Service Desk at ITSupport@mcgill.ca | 514-398-3398.
- Use [MS OneDrive](#) for secure cloud-based file storage and sharing.

In a remote setting, where in-person interactions are less common, it's easier to feel isolated. Even though you will not physically **see** your co-workers, that doesn't mean you shouldn't call on them when you need support.

For more info on the services you have access to remotely and in-person, visit [Student Services](#).



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If the VPN is experiencing high user volume, you should only connect **IF required** for your work. Cloud-based apps can be accessed without VPN (e.g., Outlook and OneDrive).



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Communication

In every survey of people that work from home, **the #1 problem is always communication**. Good communication is always important, but it's even more important when working remotely.

Key takeaway: **Don't hesitate to over communicate!**

It is key to ask your supervisor **how and when** they want you to communicate questions and seek guidance. For example, they may want to connect at the beginning of the day and prefer questions to be sent via email.

API: Assume positive intent whenever you are unsure about someone's messaging – **misunderstandings** happen all the time over written communications due to a lack of context.

Getting in this habit will not only set the tone for excellent communication with your supervisor but will also **build trust**

- **Report to your supervisor on a regular basis** - Depending on your role, this may be a **quick daily check in**, or a bi-weekly conference call. Take these opportunities to:
 - **Share how you feel:** what's going well – or not, do you need help, build connection
 - Ask them if they're getting what they need from you
 - Treat email like your Instagram account, check it frequently
- **Communicate with co-workers** – especially if you are collaborating on a project
- **If you are unable to work on your tasks, discuss it with your supervisor.** There might even be opportunities to take courses, webinars, or do new skills or professional development training online



Documentation

Documentation is everyone's responsibility. When you ask a question and receive an answer, **write it down.** Putting things in writing (i.e., emails) helps because it:

- It's great for future reference
- Avoids confusion by keeping everyone on the same page about who is responsible for what
- Demonstrates respect of others' time
- Explains the reasoning behind decisions



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Efficient remote meetings

Working from home doesn't mean meetings aren't needed. It just means that like everything else, they happen online too. Here are some tips to make them more successful:

- **Attend meetings on time** – Many meetings will be scheduled on Teams; it's your responsibility to be punctual
- When meeting remotely it is recommended to **turn on your video**. Even if just for a few minutes, displaying your face sends a stronger signal that you're present and paying attention. Use your discretion
- **mute** when you're not talking. This practice minimizes unwanted background noises and audio feedback.
- **Pause for others to speak**. It can be hard to find space to speak in a meeting, and even harder when everyone is virtual. Make sure there's time and opportunity for all voices to be heard
- **Use headphones** to minimize the distractions of normal noises in your home and keep conference calls private – this is especially important if you are discussing confidential topics

Most video conferencing software include the option to blur your background or customize it with a fun template

Nothing beats in-person, but video chats or calls are better than instant messaging for back and forth discussions.

- **Use agendas**. Meeting owners set the meeting agenda and share it in advance or at the start of the meeting
- **Create action items**. This is a great way to impress a supervisor because it ties into documentation best practices.



Make yourself visible

- **Work and be available during work hours** – it is up to you how you structure your work at home, but you need to be available during your regular work hours. If you're unsure what these are, **ask your supervisor**
- **Be available via email** and Teams, if applicable
- If you use a calendar, **keep it updated** so that people know your availability
- **Proactively** tell your supervisor and your team what you're working on, what meetings you have, and when you are unavailable
- **Reply quickly** to emails. Even if it's just to say "I'll get back to you shortly." This makes the sender feel like you are treating their communication as a priority and makes you look more professional.
- If you use Teams, use the **status feature** to set a message that people will see when they look you up or message you. Be informative: i.e. "Lunch noon – 1pm" - You can find it by clicking on your picture icon



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Additional Resources & References

This guide isn't exhaustive; more information can be found in these **additional resources**:

- [Here](#) are McGill's IT resources on working remotely
- [Here](#) are some Mayo Clinic tips on how to arrange your workstation
- [Working from home tips from our experienced remote employees](#)
- GitLab remote work resources are searchable [here](#)
- [CEWIL Tips for working at home](#)

Remote Meeting Software info:

- [ZOOM](#)
- [Cisco WebEx](#)
- [Skype for Business](#)
- MS Teams: A How-To guide can be found [here](#)

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