Due to the current global threat of the coronavirus COVID-19, countless people have suddenly been thrust into the world of remote work. And with increased encouragement to maintain social distance, many are forced to work from home. While working from home offers many tremendous advantages, it also offers some unique challenges. Here are tips to help those who will be working from home for the foreseeable future:

1. Get started early.

When working in an office, your morning commute can help you wake up and feel ready to work by the time you get to your desk. At home, however, the transition from your pillow to your computer can be much more jarring.

Believe it or not, one way to work from home productively is to dive into your to-do list as soon as you wake up. Simply getting a project *started* first thing in the morning can be the key to making progress on it gradually throughout the day. Otherwise, you'll prolong breakfast and let the morning sluggishness wear away your motivation.

2. Pretend like you *are* going into the office.

The mental association you make between work and an office can make you more productive, and there's no reason that feeling should be lost when telecommuting.

When working from home, do all the things you'd do to prepare for an office role: Set your alarm, make (or go get) coffee, and wear nice clothes.

3. Structure your day like you would in the office.

When working from home, you're your own personal manager. Without things like an in-person meeting schedule to break up your day, you can be quick to lose focus or burn out.

To stay on schedule, segment what you'll do and *when* over the course of the day. If you have an online calendar, create personal events and reminders that tell you when to shift gears and start on new tasks.

4. Choose a dedicated workspace.

Just because you're not working at an office doesn't mean you can't, well, have an office. Rather than cooping yourself up in your room or on the couch -- spaces that are associated with leisure time -- dedicate a specific room or surface in your home to work.

5. Make it harder for yourself to mess around on social media.

Social media is designed to make it easy for you to open and browse quickly. At work, though, this convenience can be the detriment of your productivity.

To counteract your social networks' ease of use during work hours, remove them from your browser shortcuts and, according to Fast Company, **log out of every account**. You might even consider working primarily in a private or, if you're using Chrome, an "Incognito" browser window. This ensures you stay signed out of all your accounts and each web search you conduct doesn't autocomplete the word you're typing. It's a guarantee that you won't be tempted into taking too many social breaks during the day.

6. Work when you're at your most productive.

Nobody sprints through their work from morning to evening -- your motivation will naturally ebb and flow throughout the day. When you're working from home, however, it's more important to know when those ebbs and flows will take place and plan your schedule around it.

To capitalize on your most productive periods, save your harder tasks for when you know you'll be in the right headspace for them. Use slower points of the day to knock out the easier, logistical tasks that are also on your plate. **Verily Magazine** calls these tasks "small acts of success," and they can help build your momentum for the heavier projects that are waiting for you later.

7. Plan out what you'll be working on ahead of time.

Spending time figuring out what you'll do today can take away from doing those things. And, you'll have planned your task list so recently that you can be tempted to change your schedule on the fly.

It's important to let your agenda change if you need it to, but it's equally as important to commit to an agenda that outlines every assignment before you begin. Try solidifying your schedule the day before, making it feel more official when you wake up the next day to get started on it.

8. Use technology to stay connected.

Working from home might help you focus on your work in the short term, but it can also make you feel cut off the larger operation happening in the office. 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.

9. Use laundry as a work timer.

You might have heard listening to just two or three songs in the shower can help you save water. And it's true; hearing a few of your favorite songs start and end, one after another, can remind you how long you've been in the bathroom and shorten your wash time.

Why bring this up? Because the same general principle can help you stay on task when working from home. But instead of three songs off your music playlist, run your laundry instead.

Doing your laundry is a built-in timer for your home. So, use the time to start and finish something from your to-do list before changing the load. Committing to one assignment during the wash cycle and another during the dry cycle can train you to work smarter on tasks that you might technically have all day to tinker with.

10. Communicate expectations with anyone who will be home with you.

Of course, you might be working from home but still have "company." Make sure any roommates, siblings, parents, spouses, and dogs (well, maybe not dogs) respect your space during work hours. Just because you're working from home doesn't mean you're home.

11. Take clear breaks.

It can be so easy to get distracted as a telecommuter that you avoid breaks altogether. Don't let the guilt of working in the building you sleep in prevent you from taking five to relax. rather than just opening YouTube and watching some comfort clips, however, use your breaks to get away from your desk. Go for a walk outside or spend time with others who might also be in the house.

12. Interact with other humans.

Remember: You're working from home, not the moon. Interacting with other people during the day is allowed, even if they're not your coworkers. In fact, it's a good idea to see another face during the day when most of your workday is solitary.

13. Go for a walk.

Never underestimate the power of a walk!

Sometimes, just a walk around your home is enough to get you past the problem you've been stuck on. But even better is a short walk outside, between 10-20 minutes. The combination of fresh air and different scenery is invaluable in helping to get the creative juices flowing.

14. Pick a definitive finishing time each day.

You might be under the impression that working from home establishes more work-life balance but be careful with that assumption. Working from home can also feel like being at a casino -- you can get so caught up in your activity, in a relaxing environment, that you lose complete track of time.

In lieu of coworkers, who's packing up and leaving the office reminds you to do the same, set an alarm at the end of the day to indicate your normal work day is coming to an end. You don't have to stop at exactly that time, but knowing the workday is technically over can help you start the process of saving your work and calling it quits for the evening.