

The Ultimate Guide to Remote Teamwork

... checklists & hacks for teams working virtually

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Working from Home (WFH) Checklist

Getting yourself organised and prepared to do effective WFH: Part 1



- **Workspace:** Create an efficient, dedicated workspace with great lighting, robust internet, and limited distractions. Where possible use the same space every day to create a positive work anchor.
- **Work Preparation:** Get up at the same time each working day. Get dressed in “work” gear (i.e. not pyjamas) and create a routine.
- **Work List:** Plan every day what you’ll be doing, ahead of time. At the end or start of every day, have a TO DO list – and build in 30% flexibility to cope with unexpected interruptions.
- **Working Hours:** Set up “office hours” and do work you would normally do then. Focus guilt-free on personal actions during “after office hours”.
- **Time Management:** Avoid too many work calls/meetings by scheduling meetings/working hours into 120-minute chunks of time.
- **Breaks:** Take a break from work (and screens) every 120 minutes for 5-10 minutes to relax and recharge. And have a full lunch break.
- **Personal Rhythm:** Do the important and urgent work at your best time of day. Could be morning, afternoon or evening. Your choice
- **Blocked Out Work Time:** Schedule 1 or 2 days a week without calls or meetings to focus on projects, urgent/important deadlines or tough tasks.
- **Calendar Etiquette:** Clearly schedule each diary element such as call, meeting, lunch-break, strategic work, project work etc.
- **Distractions:** Shut down social media/other tech and focus on work completion. Negotiate with whoever is also at home for blocks of time when you are left undisturbed.

Getting yourself organised and prepared to do effective WFH: Part 2



- **Set Expectations:** Be clear about your expectations of others and agree ways of working together in a transparent and fair way.
- **Virtual Coffee:** Organise regular virtual chats with team members where you don't talk about work and find out more about each other.
- **Exercise:** When you take a break, think about exercising or taking a walk outside, to recharge physical as well as psychological batteries.
- **Use WFH Creatively:** Use doing the laundry as a built-in timer. Use one wash cycle to work on a key project/task, then take a quick break when the cycle has finished. If that works for you- that's great!
- **Food:** Prepare lunch the night before so that you spend the lunch-break having a break, not doing food preparation or cooking.
- **Ask for Help:** Covid 19, and its aftermath are not BAU (business as usual). You may struggle with some aspects of WFH or remote teamwork. Don't suffer in silence. Let your line manager or your colleagues know what your challenges are. They will support and help you. Next time, they may need help, and you can gladly reciprocate!
- **Water Cooler Moments:** If you have Slack, then – even in a remote team – you can create moments of socialization. Simply set up Slack channels such as a Personal Channel to wish each other happy birthday, or ask about weekend plans. Some companies have a Dream/Vision channel to share each other's big goals and dreams. For example, if the remote team is into health & fitness, start a channel where recipes and workout tips can be shared

The Basics of Remote Team Meetings

There are five broad reasons for holding a meeting:

1. To solve problems
2. To progress a project or plan
3. To make decisions
4. To influence others
5. To strengthen relationships

Here are some useful hacks for dealing with the basics; setting up and getting prepared for any of these meetings.

Pre-Meeting Set Up



- **Room:** Set up in a quiet space, keeping background noise to a minimum.
- **Webcam or Camera:** Your mobile, iPad and smartphone have an inbuilt camera. For best visual results, use a laptop/desktop and plug in a webcam.
- **Testing:** Test your technology, lighting, and connection *before* start time.
- **Audio:** Use high-quality equipment, including a noise-cancelling headset or high-quality earbuds.
- **Lighting:** Ensure sufficient lighting. Also consider having a plain wall or background behind you to reduce visual distraction.
- **Distractions:** Reduce distractions by disabling alerts, alarms and announcements.
- **Duration:** Make the video conference as short as possible so that people avoid VC fatigue.
- **Back-up plan:** Agree a back-up such as Facetime or mobile call if the technology fails.

Pre-Meeting Preparation



- **Timing:** Allow between five and ten minutes' set up time for you and participants before you begin. Better still, invite all participants to come into the virtual meeting on the hour, and then give people 10 minutes to get setup and prepared, officially starting the meeting at ten minutes past the hour.
- **Agenda:** Post the purpose of the meeting in the online invite with a title if possible - and avoid adding time for AOB (Any Other Business).
- **Facilitation/Notes:** Appoint someone who will facilitate and someone else to take notes during the virtual meeting. That's two distinct and separate roles. These roles can be rotated for every meeting so the load is shared.

Interaction During the Meeting



- **Sound:** Mute your microphone when you are not speaking. Unmute it when you are asked to do so, or when you are going to speak.
- **Icebreaker:** Use a variety of icebreakers. (See Separate Checklist below). You don't have to use one at every meeting, but do make sure that when you use them, they are appropriate to the type of meeting.
- **Chat:** With 4 participants or less, you don't have to use the Chat facility if you don't want to because you can easily see each other on screen and talk to each other. For 5 + participants do use the Chat facility to post questions, comments and feedback, to answer questions, give your opinion and feel that you are present in the session.
- **Park:** Note questions and comments while you are watching and listening to other people speaking and presenting. Aim to avoid interrupting until others have finished. A good facilitator will make sure you get your turn..
- **Eye Contact:** When you speak, look directly at your camera or webcam. It's like making eye contact.
- **Interactivity:** Share your screen with notes or slides or graphs and use questions & polls to grab and retain attention.
- **Call-ups:** A good facilitator will call on selected people for comments and ideas. Rotate this selection of people at different meetings.

Post Meeting Follow-Up



- **Feedback:** If you have a facilitator and note-taker, they can compare notes and share their feedback to confirm what worked well and what might be done differently next time. This could be shared on Slack or via email.
- **Action Plans:** Whoever is designated with the task of following up needs to do so in writing – probably via email. This person will confirm vital minutes or agreements of the meeting (if required and appropriate) and also confirm the action plan, with a name of the person who is responsible and a deadline or next review date.
- **Save files & documents:** Save meeting notes, slides, project plans or other documents in your agreed, shared space.
- **Rotated roles:** If you rotate roles in each remote session, in the action plans confirm who are the people that will be undertaking these roles in the next remote meeting.
- **Continuously improve:** Once a month, ask for feedback on what is working well in remote meetings and what could be done better or differently. Ask for it anonymously or named – as you see fit – and share all feedback with a vote to use/not use the improvement suggestions that gained the highest number of votes.
- **Rotated roles:** If you rotate roles in each remote session, in the action plans confirm who are the people that will be undertaking these roles in the next remote meeting.

Avoid Video Conference & Meeting Fatigue



- **Stagger video conference times:** If you're international, rotate VC times across 3 agreed time zones to support more remote, global workers.
- **Don't Toggle:** We all multi-task; try driving a car without multi-tasking. But when we toggle between separate tasks, such as texting a friend, while doing emails, why participating in a remote meeting, we become unproductive and unfocused. During a remote teamwork meeting, close down all other apps, switch off your phone and stay present.
- **KISS:** Keep the video conference short and straightforward. The shorter the better. Unless it's a large meeting or team session, keep remote team meetings to 20 or 30 minutes. If it's a longer session, then give a 10 minute break after the first 45 to 60 minutes to prevent screen fatigue. Avoid trying to do too much in each meeting. And DON'T have AOB!.
- **Stop looking at yourself:** On Zoom you can right-click over your video image when you are live, and a menu will appear. Click on Hide Myself, and your image will vanish from your screen, but all other participants will still be able to see it. This stops you focusing on yourself on screen.
- **Be an audience member:** If you are not presenting, agree with presenters, facilitators or line managers, a time on each video conference that is longer than 30 minutes, when you can mute your microphone and turn off your video and just listen and watch. It gives you a chance to relax and just process what you are seeing and hearing. This means that – when your video is on - it's because you are part of the discussion or feedback conversation.
- **Use the telephone/mobile:** Agree with your line manager when you will do video conference calls, and when you will just have a telephone chat. For example, you could run team meetings with video conferencing, and then organise alternate one-to-one sessions via phone call or video conferencing, to provide variety.
- **Use Slack to support or replace Video Conferencing:** If your organisation has Slack, (a workplace communication tool which enables messaging, tools and files), you can replace or supplement video conferencing with this instant messaging tool at times. There are 2 methods of chat in Slack; *channels* (group chat which can be organised as public for all, or private groups), and *direct message or DM* (person-to-person chat which is always private but can include up to 8 people). You could run a 15 minute video conference for the entire team and then break-out or project teams could connect through Slack channels or DMs to work on specific aspects of tasks, programmes or projects.

Icebreakers

Where you are an introvert or an extrovert, there is an Icebreaker for everyone. It's not about being clever or witty or entertaining. It's about being real, human, authentic – and a good team member. The following icebreaker ideas are just to indicate the range and variety of ideas out there for starting off – or finishing – a remote session, so that it has energy, enthusiasm, and a moment or two of professional or personal reflection.

Definition

A game or an activity used to “break the ice” – that is, introduce or connect people so that they feel more relaxed, comfortable, and engaged with each other.

Uses

To start or end a team meeting, or team-building session, to lighten the mood, or provide some energy during a slow-moving or difficult session.

Benefits

Ice breakers help you to:

1. Build a sense of connection and empathy
2. Get to know your colleagues better
3. Build a community between individuals via a shared experience
4. Improve interaction
5. Gain additional or expanded perspectives about team members

Team Question Icebreakers



- What is the best thing about our team?
- If there was one thing you would change about our team, what would it be?
- What would an ideal work day look like for you?
- What is the best thing about your job role today?
- What happened this week (or last week) at work, that you feel proud about?
- What in the team did an outstanding job this week in your opinion? What did they do and why was it so great?

Personal Story Questions Icebreakers



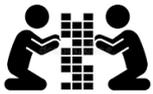
- How did you get your name?
- What does your name mean?
- If you could be anywhere in time, which time would you pick and why?
- If you could be anywhere in the world, which location would you pick and why?
- What is the weather like with you? No, not the real weather. If you had to sum up your mood today, what would it be in weather terms? Stormy? Sunny? Windy?
- What is a dream or goal that you want to achieve but have yet started working on?

Fun Question Icebreakers



- What doesn't Google know about you?
- When you dance, what do you look like?
- If you were a fruit/vegetable/animal/car, what would you be?
- What is the funniest thing that has ever happened to you?
- If you were going to perform in a circus, what would your act be?
- What are your nicknames? Or what were they in the past?

Activity and Game Icebreakers



- **Aliens** : Aliens who don't speak English have landed on earth. Upload five images to explain our company culture/our products/our service etc. Discuss all the images and look for themes & ideas.
- **Two truths and a lie**: Ask each person this: "Tell us 3 things about you and 1 must be a lie which we have to guess"
- **Emoji check in**: Put an emoji that best describes you into the chat box and then everyone has to guess what it means.
- **Six words to tell your story**: Sum it all in 6 words – done in the chat box or speaking.
- **Who am I?** Get all team members to send the facilitator/team leader a photo of them as a child, then each person votes on who each photo depicts.
- **Share a photo**: Every quarter, get each team member to send in their photos of something specific such as the local park, sky outside the window, their shoes, favourite hat, work outfit, book they are reading, game they are playing – there are endless possibilities.

Brainwriting Icebreakers



Brainwriting is an activity that can be done any time, at the start, middle or end of a remote team meeting. It works as an Icebreaker, or as a framework to get people to reflect on a topic or issue and then to think creatively about it. Brainstorming, when everyone is face to face in a room, is not that effective anyway, because extroverts or leaders tend to lead and others remain passive. Instead, use brainwriting to encourage people to do their own thinking. It can be as short as 2 minutes, with a 5 minute breakout session, or it can be a whole team-meeting. Here is how it works:

- Each participant writes their ideas on post-it notes; each single idea is written on a separate post-it note. Give participants 5 minutes whilst they stay online in the remote meeting. They can mute their microphones and turn off their videos, but they must write down some ideas.
- After five minutes, ensure everyone has turned back on their video and muted their microphone. Then ask each participant in turn, to hold up their post-it notes to the screen and explain each one. Make sure everyone shares at least one idea..
- As facilitator write notes on a live flip chart or on the video conferencing white board. Where possible, group the ideas into themes/similar ideas.
- Once ideas are grouped together, divide them into three groups, and run a three-group breakout session. (This is possible using Zoom or Adobe Connect).
- Each breakout room will discuss their ideas and be ready to have one spokesperson from the group who will take notes and feed back what was discussed and any action plans or next steps. Give each room 10 to 15 minutes.
- After a maximum of 15 minutes, get everyone back in the plenary, full-group room and ask each spokesperson to feed back their ideas/discussions.
- The facilitator summarises discussions and feedback, and then – if relevant, all the participants can vote on their top 3. Once they have voted, the facilitator will confirm which three ideas got the most votes.
- The facilitator will finish and confirm action plans or next steps.

Making Remote Team Meetings more participative and effective

It can be hard enough to get people to engage and participate in a face-to-face meeting. People hide behind natural leaders, extroverts and those with the loudest voices. So in a remote setting, it can be even more challenging to get people to be present, pay attention, and participate, when all they have to do is mute their microphone and say their bandwidth isn't strong enough to allow video! Here are some hacks to make team meetings more participative and effective:

Stage 1: Have a clear focus and even a meeting title

Have a very clear meeting focus and if it helps, a title. For example *"Project Update for Project [add name here]"* or *"New Marketing in the New Normal"* etc. And make sure that you are only holding the meeting for ONE specific set of outcomes. Don't try to do too much; you'll tire everyone out.

Stage 2: Do something that makes people feel/live the issue

Set the scene. Research by Vitalsmarts has found that people won't accept an issue unless they can imagine it. So share shocking, provocative or fascinating insights, case studies, statistics or videos which bring the issue to life. Do this in no more than 90 seconds. The goal is to get people to buy in to the meeting because they can understand its value or importance.

Stage 3: Make people feel responsible and give them something to do

As humans we always choose a role. In a theatre or cinema, our role is passive participant. As a leader, we lead from the front. So if you want proactive, dynamic participation, make people feel that they are a part of the solution or the programme, or the future way. Breakout sessions are a great way to get people to discuss issues and get involved – and they stop them hiding behind others to some extent – because they are in a smaller group and it will be more evident if they say or do nothing. Make the breakout structured with a clear task and give a fixed and limited amount of time for the discussion. Then ask for feedback from each group, either in the chat box or verbally.

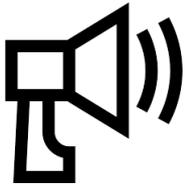
Stage 4: Live by a five-minute rule

To avoid or reduce death by PowerPoint, reduce the number of slides you use. And, every five minutes, have a brief, yet well-defined and meaningful interaction. That could be a question to the group, or a poll. Or a video. Aim to change the scene and the pace every five minutes, during the remote meeting, in order to increase attention and participation. (This is not always easy to do, and that's why it can make sense to rotate the two roles of note-taker and facilitator. Doing both is already time consuming; but also trying to keep interest in a remote meeting can be very tiring. Therefore, getting different people involved in running meetings can be good for everyone).

Communication & Collaboration Tools

This is an up-to-date (not exhaustive) list, to show the range of tools available.

Popular Tool Suites



- **Instant Messaging:** Slack, Skype, Zoom, Google Chat
- **Project Management:** Trello, Pivotal Tracker, Basecamp
- **Team Collaboration:** Slack, Yammer
- **Phone calls:** Zoom, Skype, cellphone/smartphone

NB These are the most popular currently: Source: Remote.co

Group Chat



- **FRONT:** Shared in-box for team with all email, apps and team members in one collaborative workspace." (<https://frontapp.com>)
- **GLIP:** Team messaging, file sharing, and video (<https://glip.com>)
- **HANGOUTS CHAT:** Messaging platform build for teams. (<https://gsuite.google.com/products/chat>)
- **SLACK:** Team conversations in open or private channels. (<https://slack.com>)
- **TWIST:** Keeps conversations on-topic and in one place for fewer notifications and more meaningful teamwork." (<https://twistapp.com>)
- **WHATSAPP:** Secure, straightforward and reliable messaging. (<https://www.whatsapp.com>)

Video Conferencing



- **Amazon Chime:** Frustration-free online meetings with exceptional audio and video quality." (<https://aws.amazon.com/chime>)
- **Blue Jeans:** "Video, audio, and web conferencing that works with the collaboration tools you use every day." (<https://www.bluejeans.com>)
- **GoToMeeting:** Online meeting software with HD video conferencing. (<https://www.gotomeeting.com>)
- **Hangouts Meet:** Real-time meetings by Google. Using your browser, share your video, desktop, and presentations with teammates and customers. (<https://meet.google.com>)
- **Loom:** Google Chrome extension that allows you to record and share your screen and webcam. (<https://www.useloom.com>)
- **Meeting Owl:** Intelligent 360-degree all-in-one video conferencing device. (<https://www.owllabs.com/meeting-owl>)
- **Zoom:** Enterprise video and web conferencing (<https://zoom.us>)

Password Management



- **1PASSWORD: Instant Messaging:** Remembers all [your passwords] for you. Save your passwords and log in to sites with a single click. (<https://1password.com>)
- **DASHLANE:** Never forget another password. Manage important account passwords intelligently and automatically (<https://www.dashlane.com>)
- **LASTPASS:** Remembers all your passwords, so you don't have to. (<https://www.lastpass.com>)

Task & Project Management: (In alphabetical order)



- **AHA!**: Roadmap software to manage your products and connect strategy to execution. (<https://www.aha.io>)
- **ASANA**: Manage team projects and tasks. (<https://asana.com>)
- **BASECAMP**: Basecamp puts everything you need to get work done in one place in order to manage projects, work with clients, and communicate company-wide. (<https://basecamp.com>)
- **BOLSTE**: The all-in-one digital work hub with business messaging, video conferencing, unlimited file storage, and task management. (<https://bolste.com>)
- **CLIO**: All you need to run a law practice from intake to invoice, with powerful tools to manage cases, clients, documents, bills, calendars, time tracking, reporting, and accounting. (<https://www.clio.com>)
- **EYLEAN**: Scrum and Kanban desktop software that integrates well into the Office tools and TFS [Team Foundation Server] from the Microsoft product family. (<http://www.eylean.com>)
- **FREETER**: Freeter helps you to “gather all the things you need for work in one place and have quick access to them.” (<https://freeter.io>)
- **G SUITE**: (formerly Google Apps for Work). Gmail, Docs, Drive, and Calendar for business. All you need to do your best work, together in one package that works seamlessly from your computer, phone, or tablet. (<https://gsuite.google.com>)
- **HIBOX**: Task- and project-management, chat, and video calls in a single app.” (<https://www.hibox.co>)
- **INSTAGANTT**: Gantt charts for Asana. Manage your schedules, tasks, timelines, and workload like a pro. (<https://instagantt.com>)
- **INVISION**: Create context around your projects with Boards—flexible spaces to store, share, and discuss design ideas. Built-in layout options allow you to create visual hierarchy for your ideas. (<https://www.invisionapp.com>)

Task & Project Management: (In alphabetical order)



- **JIRA:** Plan, track, and manage your Agile and software development projects in Jira. Customize your workflow, collaborate, and release great software." (<https://www.atlassian.com/software/jira>)
- **NOZBE:** To-do, task-, project-, and time-management application. (<https://nozbe.com>)
- **PIVOTAL TRACKER:** The Agile project management tool of choice for developers around the world for real-time collaboration around a shared, prioritized backlog. (<https://www.pivotaltracker.com>)
- **PODIO:** With content, conversations, and processes structured and together on one tool, Podio creates the focus and clarity your people need to get their best work done. (<https://podio.com>)
- **PROOFHUB:** All-in-one project management software for your growing business needs. (<https://www.proofhub.com>)
- **QUIP:** A Quip doc is your team's collaboration headquarters. Insert Live Apps for calendars, Kanban boards, videos, images, and polls. Or, you can build your own. (<https://quip.com>)
- **REDBOOTH:** Easy-to-use online task- and project-management software to help busy teams get more done. (<https://redbooth.com>)
- **REDMINE:** A flexible cross-platform, cross-database project-management web application using the Ruby on Rails framework. (<https://www.redmine.org>)
- **RING CENTRAL:** Take back 30 percent of your time by replacing unnecessary emails with team messaging, file sharing, tasks, scheduling, and integrations. (<https://www.ringcentral.co.uk/teams/overview.html>)
- **SALESFORCE CHATTER:** Share knowledge, files, and data. Connect with experts from across your organization regardless of their role or location. (<https://www.salesforce.com/products/chatter/overview>)

Task & Project Management: (In alphabetical order)



- **SCRUMDO:** Agile and Kanban software for better work. (<https://www.scrumdo.com>)
- **SCRUMILE:** No more choosing between Jira and your scrum tools.... Supercharge your Agile teams. (<https://www.scrumile.com>)
- **SCRUMPOKER:** Play Planning Poker in Confluence to estimate your JIRA backlogs. (<https://softwaredevtools.com/scrumpoker>)
- **SMARTSHEET:** The best way to plan, track, automate, and report on work, enabling you to move from idea to impact—fast. (<https://www.smartsheet.com>)
- **TALKSPIRIT:** Your own branded enterprise social network solution to share information, encourage modern collaboration, and strengthen company culture. (<https://www.talkspirit.com>)
- **TEAMWORK:** Online project management, help desk, and team messaging software designed to maximize your team’s productivity, communication, and overall customer happiness. (<https://www.teamwork.com>)
- **TRELLO:** Trello’s boards, lists, and cards help you “keep track of everything, from the big picture to the minute details. (<https://trello.com>)
- **VIVIFY:** For small Agile teams and large organizations alike. Handle all your projects in one place—from top to bottom. (<https://www.vivifyscrum.com>)
- **WORKPLACE BY FACEBOOK:** Make space for teams to share ideas, brainstorm, and achieve more together. More than just a collaboration tool, Workplace by Facebook connects everyone to familiar features and their favorite business tools. (<https://www.facebook.com/workplace>)
- **YAMMER:** Connect with people across your organization to make better decisions, faster. (<https://www.yammer.com>)

Remote Team Agreement

If you want your remote team to be really effective, it makes sense to establish some rules of engagement or ways of working so that the team members communicate, interact, and work well together.

A *team agreement* outlines all the team protocols, including what kinds of information will be shared, how members will communicate with each other, even how to know who is doing what. The agreement can be the framework that helps every team member to be clear about job roles, about tasks, and even about responsibility and accountability. That's because the agreement decreases the possibility of misinterpretation and disconnect within the team. How? By giving team members a platform for discussing assumptions. When you're clear about what is acceptable practice and behaviour in a remote team, you can be more efficient.

Follow these steps to create your Team Agreement:

1. Consider what your needs are based on your team and situation.
2. Research the options and alternatives which would suit your team members.
3. Establish or review your Team Agreement (see the blank template below) and share this with all the team along with your research recommendations.
4. Ask each team member to review the TA and give their (TA) template that you will present to your team, including some specific options based on your research.
5. Distribute the template, requesting that team members review it and share their views.
6. In a video conferencing session, finalise the agreement – using discussions and majority voting.

Here are just a few examples of the elements that could be included in the Team Agreement:

Potential Elements to include in a Team Agreement



- **Information**
 - What kind of information do you others to share, or for you to share?
 - Do you need a centralised or shared task system or calendar?
 - How will you track time?
 - What issues might there be around security?
- **Communication**
 - Which chat tools will you use to remain in contact daily? Such as *email, text, instant messaging, phone, video calls, video chat, virtual office, etc.*
 - What should be the expected response times for each comms tool?
 - Should some comms tools be specific to particular tasks or situations? Should core hours be established when everyone will be accessible?

Potential Elements to include in a Team Agreement



- **Collaboration**

- **TASK MANAGEMENT/DESIGNATION AND WORKING OUT**

LOUD: How should tasks be assigned and how can everyone work out what everyone else is doing and how each fits? And how would time be tracked?

- **PRODUCTIVITY/RESULTS:** What should the measurable goals be? Should these include OKR (Objectives and Key Results)?

- **MEETINGS:** What kind of rituals and habits will you establish for regular update meetings, impromptu discussions, celebrations, or a “retrospective” look back at what the team has achieved?

Sample Team Agreement – how to get the best out of Slack

(with thanks to Jurgen Appelo)

- Every team member is responsible for managing their own downtime and notifications.
- @Tag people when you want them to see something.
- Segment topics into different channels.
- Use threading in conversations when possible.
- When in doubt, always post a message where everyone can read it.
- When referring to a Slack channel or name, always #link to it.
- Ask people to do a task in Slack. If it’s a big task or a task with a deadline of >1 week, also create a Trello card for it, and include the link to that card in the Slack mention.
- Re: conflict issues: in general, start with a one-on-one conversation. If you choose to take it public, the #pillow-fight channel is the place designated for uncomfortable conversations.
- When posting messages, be specific with your needs and give context. Use full sentences. Link to the information you’re discussing (Trello cards, Google Docs, etc.) to make it easy for everyone to access. Again, threading helps keep conversations organized by topic.
- When you ping people, give them all the context they’ll need in order to get back to you when they can. Include links, docs, deadline, desired response time - anything that can move the conversation forward asynchronously.
- If you make a mistake in a message, edit your message rather than writing a new, corrected one. Remember to use threads to clarify.
- To help reduce text (or cut down on noise), consider responding with an emoticon if that makes sense - especially thumbs-up/thumbs-down votes and the like.

Remote Team Agreement Template

Purpose and Overview

The Team Agreement (TA) should include the purpose of the team. What is the team working towards, and how does each team member's role fit into the big picture or the overall company strategy? The document should also include an overview of how employees will execute tasks, reach desired results, and measure success. In preparing a TA, you might overhaul or revise job roles and titles.

Purpose: What is our current vision or cause? How will it change in 6 to 12 months?

Job roles: What are the key job roles and titles? What does each team member do? (You could add in Job descriptions here)

Objectives: What are the OKR – objectives and key results? What is the current and future strategy

Information

- What kinds of information do you need to share?
- What kinds of information do you expect to be shared with you?
- Is a communal task board such as **[insert options]** useful for the team?
- Do you have preferences re: tools for sharing how you can be reached? **[options]**
- Do you have preferences re: tools for knowing what everyone is working on? **[options]**
- Do you have preferences re: standup/retrospective software? **[options]**
- Do you have any preferences re: time tracking tools such as **[options]**

Communication

In the following chart, please note the *tools you prefer to use for work purposes (i.e. to get work done), and also for celebrations or socialising (for example the Personal channel or Dream channel [i.e. Slack channels]), which are not strictly work - but are a part of the team engagement.*

TOOLS	How do you like to use this?	What would you NOT use it for?	Any other comments
Email			
Group chat			
IM			
Text			
Phone			
Video conference			
Virtual office			
Other			

- Do you have preferences re: group chat tools? **[options]**
- Do you have preferences re: video conferencing tools? **[options]**
- Do you have preferences re: Virtual Office tools? **[options]**
- Shall we have an established forum for sharing and discussing ideas—such as **[insert some options here]**? Or just bring up ideas in our regular meetings?
- Which tool/forum should be used to acknowledge effort and celebrate achievement?
- Which tool or forum would you prefer to use for giving and receiving feedback?

Collaboration

- **[If your time spans more than one time zone]** Which time zone should we use when scheduling activities?
- Should we set (some) core hours for collaboration and meetings or rotate time zones?
- Which tools would you prefer to use to facilitate online collaboration include **[insert some options here]**.

Looking after your body during remote teamwork

Ever since people starting working remotely, there has been the likelihood of negative physical side effects. Those doing admin or office-based work often transform their homes into makeshift work spaces, but they may not have a home office which is purpose-built. The result of a home-made, ineffective workspace can be neck pain or back pain, stiff joints and headaches from staring for too long at the screen.

Often, people working remotely don't have an ergonomic chair, or a proper space, or even a flat surface or table that is suitable for working for hours at a computer.

If you don't have the right chair or desk or workspace, here are some hacks:

Correct your desk set-up

- Creating a better working space is key to preventing bad posture. So make sure your computer screen is arm's length away from you.
- The top of the computer screen should be at eye level.
- Have your feet flat on the floor with your knees bent at an angle of either 90 or 100 degrees.
- The back of your knees should be roughly three finger widths from the edge of the chair to maintain a good posture.

Get up and move

- Getting up and moving around every hour is important because sitting in the same position over a prolonged period of time can lead to back or neck pain.
- You can also feel psychologically tired or overwhelmed.
- Get up and move around every 60 to 120 minutes for at least 5 to 10 minutes and DON'T look at any screen.
- This might mean walking into another room, or walking up and down the stairs, or round the block.
- If you have to do lots of video calls, alternate each one by sitting for one, and then standing for the next one.

Use back support

Some people may already have proper back support for their chair, but if you don't then roll up a bath towel or sweatshirt into a makeshift form of back support. This can be placed by your lower back and will force you to sit up straighter and have a better posture.

Relax after doing hours of work, using Sophrology

What is SOPHROLOGY?

Sophrology is the study of the consciousness in harmony with the body; a healthcare philosophy which combines very practical physical and mental exercises to result in a relaxed and refreshed mind and body.

POST WORK EXERCISE

- De-stress at the end of the working day both physically and mentally.
- When you finish work, follow this activity for at least five minutes (although ten minutes is even better).
- Do it at least three times a week if you can.
- Or you can use it when you want to go to sleep.
- Make sure you have bare feet and then lie down, back on the floor, knees up, with feet flat on the floor.



- Place a thin cushion/towel behind your head if you need to - so your head is comfortable. Or lay your head flat on the floor.
- Place a rolled-up hand towel, secured with a rubber band at each end, behind your back as you lie on the floor. This towel should lie across your back at the level of the bra strap.
- Place your hands on your chest so your elbows are flat on the floor and your hands are resting lightly on your rib cage.
- Lie there for at least five minutes – breathing in and out slowly and deeply. Ten minutes is even better. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth.
- This will open up your chest to improve breathing, relax your back and give you a time-out. It also supports the positive function of the set of Vagus nerves in your body.
- After five minutes (or even 10), get up slowly, by rolling on to your side, then getting up on to your knees, and then standing up slowly. (Your blood pressure may have dropped so you don't to surge up from a prone position too quickly).

How to move from work time to personal time

You've heard the expression about someone at the dinner table or in a meeting? "The body is here but the brain is elsewhere!" That's what can happen when we don't physically and psychologically stop work. As remote team members, everyone needs to learn how to make the transition from work mode to personal mode. Here are some practical hacks to help you move into work time and then back into non-work mode:

When you want to work

- Get up at the same time every day, shower and get dressed and wear work clothes. It doesn't have to be a suit, but it shouldn't be your pyjamas either! This is about priming your brain and body to recognise that this is work time.
- Have a regular work plan and To Do list and avoid mixing personal and business stuff together. Instead, carve out time when you take a break, to do personal things, rest, eat or relax.
- Take regular breaks throughout the day – doing your best or hardest work when you are most awake and full of energy.
- Aim – for most days during your working week – to finish at approximately the same time every day (unless you are on shift work, in which case, do your allotted hours and then stop).
- During the hours when you want to focus on the job, try to reduce your personal communication. For example, you could group together answering nonurgent personal texts to a few times during your work day and, in general, avoid long stretches on social media. After those hours, do the opposite.

When you want to have non-work time

- Stay away from work email and only answer work calls and texts in the evening if they are absolutely necessary.
- Finish your working time period with a few rituals which start to get your body and brain to be primed that you are ending your work. For example, make a new To Do list to start tomorrow. Organise your desk with the elements you are going to be using first thing tomorrow.
- Check your emails or other comms tools one last time, then close the system down.
- If you have to work in the evening, make sure you have a break without screens for at least 2 hours before you start work again.
- If you have to work, avoid sending emails after 8 pm. Instead get the emails written and then batch mail them early the next day. respect others' out-of-office status messages.
- Once you have decided to go into home phase, aim to switch off phones, iPads, computers and other work equipment. If you work a 9 am to 6 pm day, aim to have it all switched off by 8 pm latest every day. If you are a team leader, you can set this rule and live by it.

- If you don't need to work again, get some exercise. (Note, if you want to burn fat, then exercise first thing in the morning. However, research shows that later in the day, when the body temperature and muscle strength are at their peak, tends to be best for exercises that require substantial physical effort. But skill-based exercises, or activities that require fine motor control, are better performed in the morning.
- If you are someone who needs to mentally relax, and you are working remotely, you can't use your former commuting/travel time to unwind with a book or music or a video. Instead, have a leisurely walk by yourself to unwind, or go into another room (not associated with work) and do something else (i.e. not work).
- Some people need to fire-gaze. This a term used by Dr Allan Pease for people needing to spend some time alone, on their own, without others intruding or interrupting. So, for example, once you have finished work, you might need 30 minutes alone, just to be with your own thoughts. If someone else is nearby, negotiate with them for this time alone to relax and chill. But do make sure that – after this time period – you re-engage with whoever is living with you.

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Intergenerational Expert
& Generation Game-Changer

Director, Talentio

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