



Red River

**TOP 5 TIPS FOR  
ORGANIZING YOUR HOME OFFICE**



By 2025, it's possible that 70 percent of employees will be working from home some or all of the time. But while the vast majority of employees do prefer working remotely, it comes with some challenges. Employers spend a lot of time ensuring that their offices are designed for productivity, efficiency and organization. Many employees have not put time into creating a "dedicated working space" and so find themselves struggling with a disorganized, hectic home office.

*According to McKinsey, employees spend nearly two hours every day searching for information.*

Here are five tips to help at-home workers create productive, effective home workspaces.





## 1. START WITH THE RIGHT FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

First, start with your physical space. Do you have a big enough desk? A secure enough file cabinet? These are all critical components to a home office.

In terms of organization, it's important that "everything has its place." This includes:

- An "in-tray" and an "out-tray" to track what you have and haven't done.
- Filing cabinets for paper documents, which can lock to secure them.
- Organizer trays for things like paper clips and staples.
- Binders and folders for important documents.

In terms of furniture, everything must be ergonomically friendly and comfortable. This includes:

- A desk that's large enough to feel comfortable working at.
- A chair that's well-built and ergonomically friendly, with adjustable supports. (Don't neglect lumbar support!)
- Decor that makes your space feel more welcoming and open.

In terms of technology:

- A desktop or laptop computer that is sufficient for your work.
- A monitor or dual monitors, depending on the work you do.
- A keyboard and mouse that is comfortable to use.
- A wired internet connection or wireless mesh/booster.
- A printer (if working with printed documents).



Ideally, your physical space gives you everything that you need to operate. You never have to wonder, “where does this go?” You never have to struggle with piles of paperwork or other things on your desk; you can focus on your work.

Disorganization frequently happens when you don’t have enough space or don’t have a well-organized space. You put things in hectic, haphazard places because there’s nowhere else for them to be. You place something down temporarily because it’s too much of a hassle to put it away, but then you forget to ever return to it.

By creating a complete setup for yourself that feels comfortable and that functions well, you will greatly reduce the likelihood of things ending up “just anywhere.”





## 2. KEEP YOUR SPACE CLUTTER-FREE

Clutter is the enemy of organization. Often, when you feel disorganized, it's because there's just "too much stuff." The better organized you are and the less you have, the better.

Work makes this a little easier. You spend eight hours a day at work. But when you work from home, you could spend sixteen hours a day in essentially the same space. That's a lot more time to accumulate clutter.

- **Hide away your cords and go cordless as much as possible.** Cords aren't just a messy distraction; they can also reduce the amount of actual "workspace" you have for other things. Consider getting a desk that has holes for cords already in it — and using peripherals that are cordless.
- **Get rid of paper and go digital.** As much as you can, try to go digital rather than keeping paper copies. Not only is it more secure to have only a digital copy of most documents, but it reduces the amount you need to organize.
- **Use filing cabinets for the paper you need.** Never keep anything in piles. Everything you have should be neatly organized, even if it has to go under "miscellaneous." The fewer things you have out, the better. This lets you keep what you need immediately available and present, letting you focus on it.
- **Shred anything that you don't need.** When you've scanned something to digitize it, for instance, just shred the paper copy. Anything unnecessary should be shredded or thrown away immediately, so you don't need to wonder about it later.
- **Keep a wastebasket nearby.** Do you ever find yourself accumulating trash on your desk? It's probably because the trash bin is across the room. Keeping trash bins around is the perfect way to make sure the trash makes its way to the basket.



Why does it seem like your home office gets so much messier than your at-work office? Often, it's because of a lack of structure. At your "work office," you walk in, you work four hours, you go to lunch, you work four hours, then you leave. But when you work from home, your schedule is often more flexible. You may find yourself returning to your desk multiple times between breakfast, lunch, dinner, time with children, time with pets and more. Every time you return to your desk is another chance for something to become misplaced or disorganized.

But by keeping yourself clutter-free and generally surrounding yourself with "fewer things," you can conquer the chaos.





### 3. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR DIGITAL MEETINGS IN ADVANCE

A digital meeting is a lot like someone walking into your office. Are you prepared for a guest? Rather than being caught unaware, it's a good idea to prepare yourself for digital meetings in advance. You are essentially creating a "digital conference area," through which you can meet your supervisors, colleagues and clients. You should always appear professional and polished, especially in the era of video conferencing.

- **Invest in a good webcam and a good mic.** These really matter. A bad webcam is going to be low-resolution and difficult to use, especially in low-light environments. A bad mic is going to be static-filled and quiet. Ask your work for a discretionary budget when it comes to these two things, especially if they expect you to be video conferencing frequently.
- **Consider using a wired internet service.** Wired internet is simply inherently more stable. But if you can't get wired internet in your office, consider a mesh device or a booster; this will ensure that your Wi-Fi is being extended into your area.
- **Use video chat backgrounds for a "cleaner" office.** Most webcam software and video conferencing software today will let you set a background. Find out your company's policy first and make sure to choose something that's professional.
- **If you can't use a background, position your camera correctly.** Test your webcam in advance and make sure that any clutter that you do have is off-screen. Ideally, you should be fully in frame of your camera, in the center of the camera and not too much of your office should be visible.



- **Test your camera and your mic in advance, not “live.”** Always test your camera and mic before you have an important call. It can be very unexpected what will or won't work, and you don't want to spend a lot of time troubleshooting.
- **Make sure your environment is quiet.** You'd be surprised how sound can travel. If you have children or pets in the house, make sure you're in an enclosed space where sound isn't going to interrupt and intrude. Don't forget to set yourself on “push to talk”; this can help you avoid a lot of issues.
- **Don't panic if things go wrong.** In the work-from-home era, Murphy's law is as present as ever. If a toddler bursts into the room chasing after the family cat, don't panic — deal with the issue, return to the conference with good humor, and nobody will fault you for it.

It can take some trial and error to make yourself “meeting ready.” Join up with some colleagues to test out your tech — or have a friend or family member help. By preparing yourself for digital meetings in advance, you can make sure you don't miss a thing.





## 4. GET YOUR DIGITAL LIFE TO MIRROR YOUR PHYSICAL LIFE

Your home office organization doesn't end at your home office. Frequently, people today are using their digital devices to interact with their work. That could include your smartphone, your home tablet, your personal laptop or your personal computer.

And that can lead to some issues, especially when it comes to securing and organizing your data.

- **Keep your data on your work laptop, work computer and work phone.** The more your personal data and work data become mixed, the more vulnerable you become. This isn't just an organizational problem, but also a security-related issue.
- **Make sure all your devices are locked when not in use.** Otherwise, someone could simply log into your email account from your device. If your account is properly secured, it's unlikely to be hacked remotely. But someone could just steal your phone.
- **Turn on two-factor authentication on all your accounts.** Two-factor authentication ensures that someone will need both your password and something that belongs to you (such as your email or your phone) to get into one of your accounts. and efficient.



- **Follow up on any potential breaches of your data.** Today, most security systems will update you if they think your password has been breached. If you get any alerts, immediately change the passwords to all your accounts, and never use the same password twice.
- **Keep all of your data centralized rather than decentralized.** In other words, don't download your files onto multiple devices. If you have a corporate cloud, all your files should be going into it, rather than being placed in multiple areas.

In reality, most people are doing their work online on cloud-based systems. That means that your online files are just as important as your physical files, and your digital desktop is just as important as your physical desktop. Take the time to organize your virtual office, and it'll make it much easier for you to remain productive and efficient.





## 5. KEEP YOUR HOME LIFE FROM INTRUDING

The last thing you want is for your files to be buried under a pile of laundry. It's very unlikely to happen in the office, but a home office can feel like the wild, wild west.

Even though you're "at home" in your home office, you're not really at home. It's important to draw boundaries, or you'll increase the level of disorganization both at home and at work. Often, this is going to require some cooperation by your family.

- **Put up signs when you're working.** Your signs should tell people not only that you're working, but also when you'll be available to them, just to head off any questions. It should be a hard rule that no one interrupts you for anything that they wouldn't interrupt you for if you were physically at work.
- **Make sure your workspace is clearly delineated.** You should have a space that is just for work that is away from your "living" spaces, so it's easy to see when you're "at work" and when you're actually present.
- **Have a "threshold rule."** When you walk through the doorway of your home office, ask yourself whether everything you're bringing in belongs there. If not, organize it in your home before you go into your home office — you don't really need the TV remote, do you?



- **Don't allow anyone else in your workspace.** The more people interact with your workspace, the more likely it is to become disorganized. Also, it can be a security hazard. Keep your workspace separated.
- **Clean up at the end of every day.** Take some time at the end of the day to re-organize anything that became disorganized. It will save you time the next morning and prevent the clutter and disorganization from building up.

It can be challenging if your home office is in another space. If you have your home office set up in the kitchen or the living room, for instance, it's going to be hard convincing people that you shouldn't be interrupted. But you must keep yourself both physically and mentally organized, and that means that everyone needs to understand: When you're working, you're working!





## CREATING THE BEST HOME OFFICE FOR YOU

Over 70 percent of employees believe they are more productive at home.

Working from home has been a tremendous breath of relief for many people. It has some incredible advantages: no more commute, more time with family and friends, greater levels of comfort and higher levels of productivity. But to really take advantage of the benefits of working from home, you need to make sure you have what you need — you need the appropriate space.

Your physical setup, organizational design and technology are critical factors when creating an efficient and productive space. You need to feel relaxed and comfortable and know where everything is in both a physical and digital space.

But organizational skills also come from well-developed habits. You may not feel well-organized when you start working from home, but that's because you need time to build back habits that you first developed in the office. With the above tips, you can slowly work toward becoming an organizational maestro — and making sure that you can achieve your best wherever you are.



## ABOUT RED RIVER

Red River brings together the ideal combination of talent, partners and products to disrupt the status quo in technology and drive success for business and government in ways previously unattainable. Red River serves organizations well beyond traditional technology integration, bringing 25 years of experience and mission-critical expertise in security, networking, analytics, collaboration, mobility and cloud solutions. To learn more, visit [redriver.com](http://redriver.com).