

**Namely**  HR for Humans

# Ergonomic Checklist & WFH Best Practices

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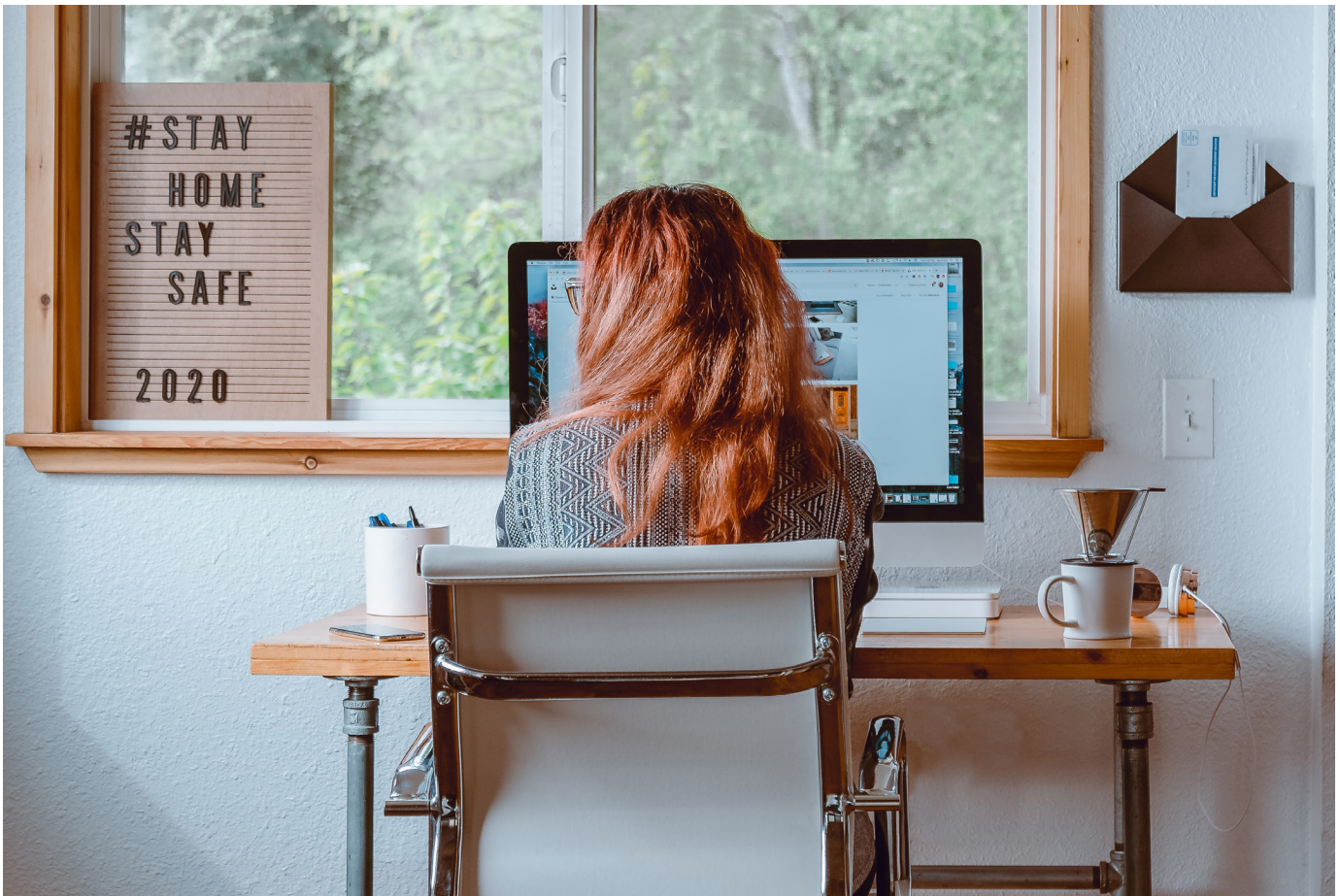
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# INTRODUCTION

As the world continues navigating the challenges of remote work during a pandemic, it's critical to ensure your employees have all of the resources they need to create a safe, productive, and peaceful work environment. With the remote employee experience continuing indefinitely, employees can truly benefit from health-conscious and innovative ideas for their work-from-home arrangement.

In light of this, we've created the Namely Work-From-Home Best Practices and Ergonomic Checklist. We hope you find this guidance useful for reducing fatigue, increasing engagement, and helping your employees refresh their work-from-home spaces and routines.



Ergonomics is the process of designing or arranging workplaces, products, and systems so that they fit the people who use them. Ergonomics aims to improve workspaces and environments to minimize risk of injury or harm. The goal is to create safe, comfortable, and productive workspaces by bringing human abilities and limitations into the design of a workspace—including the individual’s body size, strength, skill, speed, sensory abilities (vision, hearing), and even attitudes.

Adhering to basic ergonomic tips will go a long way in reducing the risk of injuries and musculoskeletal disorders, and increasing comfort level, without compromising productivity.



- 1 Adjust the chair or seat height so that the thighs are approximately parallel to the floor with the feet resting flat on the floor or on a footrest. The seat pan should not compress the back of the thighs.
- 2 Adjust the seat back so the lower back (lumbar area) plus mid-back is well-supported. Adjust the seat back height, angle and tilt tension accordingly, and sit back in the chair.
- 3 Ensure that the ASDF row of the keyboard is at the elbow height for a sitting or standing workstation.
- 4 Ensure forearms are approximately parallel to the floor; adjust the keyboard and mouse tray or desk height accordingly.
- 5 Ensure wrists are straight and the hands are in line with the forearms; adjust the height and position of the keyboard tray to keep wrists flat.



- 6 Keep elbows near to the sides; adjust armrests so that the weight of the forearms rest on the arms rests. Avoid hunching the shoulders forward.
- 7 Reduce strain on the neck by placing the monitor at or slightly below the height while seated or standing.
- 8 Ensure the monitor is placed 20-40 inches (about an arm's length) away from the eyes. The monitor distance should be about 20 inches when using a small screen or a laptop screen and further away as the screen size gets larger. Dual monitors should be positioned closely together and at the same height and distance so that the eyes do not have to refocus, and the head does not turn significantly when looking between the monitors.
- 9 Take micro-breaks and follow the 20-20-20 rule. The 20-20-20 rule is to take a 20 second break every 20 minutes by looking at things at least 20 feet away. This will help reduce eye strain.
- 10 Change your posture and take stretch breaks throughout the day. Schedule work and strategically place peripherals so you avoid the prolonged seated position (i.e. placing the printer in another room would require a micro-break to get up and walk).
- 11 Frequently used materials and equipment should be located close to the front of the body (primary work zone) to avoid twisting and reaching.
- 12 Create good task lighting when working on printed materials, and use focused, diffused light for computer work. If the monitor is placed next to a window, the window should have a covering that prevents direct light on the monitor screen, or the monitor should be placed at a right angle to the window. To avoid eye fatigue and dryness, adjust the tilt of the laptop screen to minimize screen glare. Use an anti-glare screen only as a last resort.

## Seating

The objective of ergonomic seating is to facilitate proper posture, reduce fatigue, and improve individual efficiency. Seats without any adjustability can lead to poor working postures, which increases the risk of musculoskeletal disorders or body discomfort. Some degree of static muscle loading, where the same posture or position is held for an extended period of time without proper support, will occur due to lack of adjustability.

**Therefore, it's important to consider a few questions when selecting the right seating:**

Does the chair allow a neutral seated posture?

How easy is it to make these adjustments?

Does the seat provide lumbar support?

Is the lumbar support of the chair adjustable to the necessary height?

Does the seat have adjustable armrests?

Do the armrests adjust so they support the arms in a neutral posture when the shoulders are comfortably at the sides?



## Table / Desk

The workstation should be capable of holding the equipment needed to perform the work. There should be adequate room for a laptop, external keyboard, and mouse, as well as a monitor or any reference material that may need to be easily accessible. The working height of the desk or table should be stationed so that the ASDF row of the keyboard is at elbow height. When seated, the feet should be flat on the floor or on a footrest. Avoid glass topped tables and desks due to the glare. When using a laptop, place it on the desk surface and adjust the arm rests on the chair to fit the seated elbow height. Raise the seat of the chair to ensure the elbows are even with the desk. Arrange the desk lamp so that the light is not directed to the eyes. Stay away from the sharp edges of the table to avoid pressure points on the wrists and arms.





## External Accessories

When working on a laptop for more than twenty minutes, an external mouse is probably the single most important accessory.

When using an external keyboard, there is flexibility to move the laptop monitor to an ideal position for a neutral neck posture. This allows more comfort for the arms, wrist, and neck, with the independent adjustment of both the laptop screen and the external keyboard.

Make sure the top of the monitor screen is aligned with the user's seated eye height (when the user has no glasses, wears computer glasses, or wears single prescription lenses). If progressive, bi-focal, or tri-focal lenses are worn, position the monitor so that the neck is neutral (straight) while looking through the glasses to view the monitor.

Proper monitor alignment can be achieved with a laptop-stand or monitor riser. Position the monitor between 20 to 40 inches away from the face. Ensure the top of the screen is at or below eye level. Give the eyes frequent breaks.

If the feet do not rest completely on the floor once the chair height has been properly adjusted, a footrest may be necessary. It should be adjustable in height and inclination and provide adequate area for the feet on the face surface. Make sure the surface is non-skid bearing so that the feet do not slip off the footrest.

**Smartphones, tablets, iPads, and other devices have their own considerations. Below are some tips to keep in mind:**

Use both hands to swipe, scroll, and select items.

Hold the device properly using a straight wrist.

Keep the neck as close to upright as possible.

Move and take frequent breaks.



During these extraordinary times, individuals working from home can use the following recommendations to continue work safely and productively. Although proper ergonomic setup can be accomplished, it is important for individuals who have a history of related injuries (such as musculoskeletal disorders) to seek the assistance of a certified professional ergonomist (CPEs).

## Seating

Choose the best and most comfortable chair possible. The back and lower extremities will not be supported well by a hard chair. Adding a cushion will provide support to keep you comfortable and allow for a breathable fabric interface. In order to achieve a neutral posture, a cushion or memory foam can be used to raise the seat height so that the elbows are closer to the work surface. A pillow or a rolled-up towel can be substituted if the seat does not have lumbar support. If your chair does not have arm rests, consider pushing the keyboard and mouse back slightly to use the work surface for forearm support.



## Table / Desk

Select a proper work surface such as the dining table or kitchen countertop. If a sit-to-stand type of work desk is desired, use firm boxes or step stools to place the laptop or monitor on the work surface to attain the appropriate height for standing work. Ensure the edge of the work surface is not sharp. Sharp edges can cause pressure points on wrists and forearms. Lining the work surface edges with a table edge protector could provide a simple solution to this.

## External Accessories

Try connecting your personal computer monitor or TV screen to the laptop. Laptops or monitors that are positioned too low can be raised using books, boxes, or reams of paper.

Use a footrest if the feet do not rest flat on the floor. Footrests can be purchased or made by using sturdy boxes, reams of paper, step stools, etc. The aim is to have a right angle at the knees and hips with feet comfortably supported.

Use a headphone with a microphone for teleconference calls or to reduce outside noise while working. When possible, use the time during the calls to stand up, walk, and stretch.



The foundation of remote work is built upon mutual trust and respect between the individual and employer. Autonomy and time management are two major factors when considering the transition to a remote work environment. Employees owe it to themselves and their employers to show up as their best selves, which requires managing personal and family needs, while discovering the path to efficiency and achieving work-from-home success.

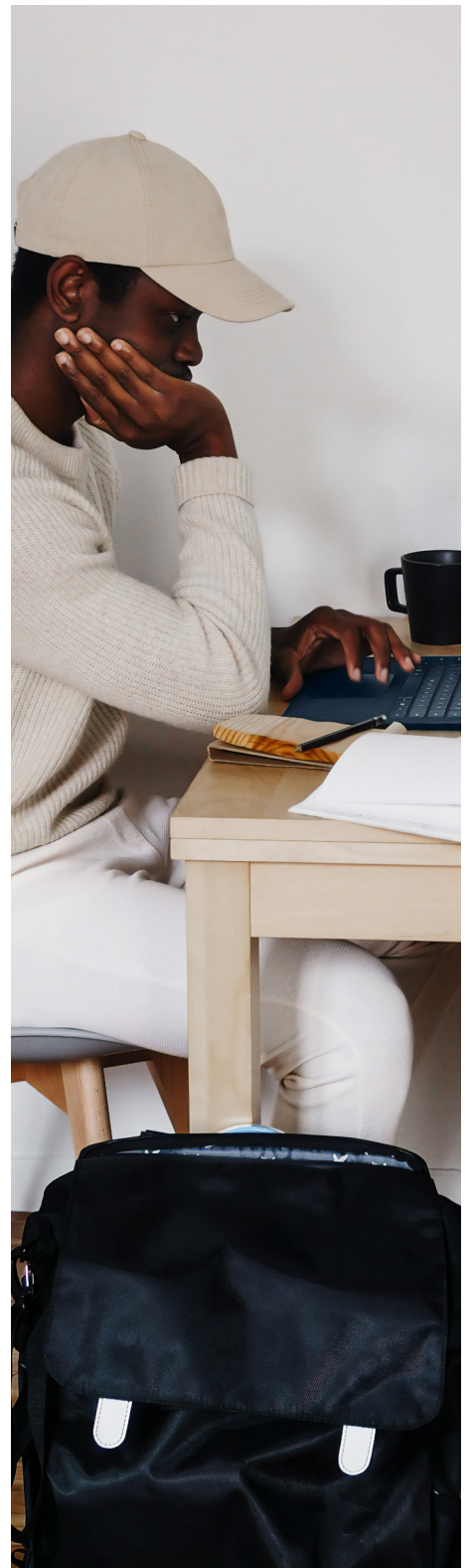
**Here are some useful tips to help maintain balance, well-being, and productivity while working from home:**

- 1** Get dressed each day. Try to dress in similar attire to what you would wear to the office. Shoes are optional unless you're headed to your secondary remote office. Shower, do your hair, make a cup of coffee, wear something that inspires you! Self care habits keep you happy and healthy even during difficult times.
- 2** Set a schedule. Organize your to-do list and strategize for the day to stay one step ahead. It could be helpful to distribute your tasks into the evening if that works for you, but set a specific time each day after which you consider yourself to be off the clock. Establishing clear guidelines for when to work and when to stop will help you maintain work-life balance and avoid burnout.
- 3** Create a dedicated workspace. Choose an area of your home where you separate work from leisure. Make sure the space is sufficient enough to operate your business, ideally a separate space where you can minimize distractions. If you live in a smaller environment, designate one area of the kitchen or bedroom that you can use for work, like a desk or table.
- 4** Leave home during the day. Getting out of the house can help combat the stress of confinement and help with productivity, so having an extra workspace option (i.e. coffee shop) might be just as useful as a carefully crafted home office. Switching up your location also keeps things interesting, and trying different set ups can boost efficiency.

5 Choose the appropriate tools and intentionally create your desired atmosphere. Purchase art for your office or flowers for your desk. Consider using a back pillow to make the seating more comfortable. You can also utilize desk organizers to store items like paper, pens, and files. Music players and white noise machines can also help to make a home office more calm and drown out any unwanted noise. Light a candle, put on your favorite Youtube or Spotify playlist, and get to work.

6 Collaborate and communicate frequently. There might be channels where remote employees can talk about common interests, meetups for people in the same region, and (after the coronavirus ends) in-person retreats. Many of your colleagues are facing similar challenges, with no opportunity for the typical office chat that allows for mutual assistance and brainstorming. Don't be afraid to reach out by email, phone, or social media to ask the kinds of questions that might be more appropriate given the distance.

7 Set boundaries with others at home. If needed, close a door or two to maintain adequate distance between yourself and pets or children. You may also need to negotiate with others working from home for equitable access to resources. Connect with other parents on ways they have set up workstations, play areas, or systems for their children to engage with them during the work day (i.e. signs that say shhhhhh....in a meeting/Ask Mom/Dad anything, scheduling movie times during projects, etc.).



8 Remember to prioritize taking breaks, and be sure to take them in their entirety. We are all human and function best when we allow our minds to take a break. When your day allows, try to schedule break time every 75-90 minutes or try working in 30-50 minute increments and take a break afterward. When you're on your own, it's easier to become absorbed and burn out before the end of the workday. Set alarms if you must. Here are a few things you can do during your break:

**Step outside for some fresh air**

**Do a few quick stretches**

**Get up and go for a walk**

**Text or call another human being if you feel isolated from others**

9 Set a 30 minute end-of-day timer to help prepare you for finishing your work day and transitioning into your free time. If you need to work overtime, set a time for the amount of time you will work to help hold yourself accountable.

10 Carve out time for professional development. Research courses and proactively seek out development and mentorship opportunities within the organization. This will keep you focused on a larger goal outside of your day to day responsibilities. Leadership and technical skills, especially those related to information management and collaboration, are essential for telecommuters who are looking to grow their career.



- 11 Mind your food habits. Make sure to eat lunch at a normal time and try to eat your meals away from your workspace. Prepping meals ahead of time can also be helpful. It can be tempting to snack all day or even skip meals, but sticking to a schedule can be useful if this is something you struggle with.
- 12 Play with lighting in your office space. Consider arranging your office to maximize getting the most natural light on your workspace without getting it directly on your screen. Low lighting makes the room feel dull and more closed off. Good lighting is key for making sure you and your space look camera-ready. Getting a desk lamp is a practical form of task-lighting that can also add a splash of color.
- 13 Get a plant. Plants take up minimal space and are aesthetically pleasing to be near. They also help with air quality in the house and give you something to tend to during the day and on your breaks. They can provide a visual mini-break that gives your eye a rest from the computer screen. This mental break can be just enough to regain your focus and get you back to concentrating on work. If your office is near a garden or has a view of trees, keeping the blinds open is a cheap and effective alternative.
- 14 Declutter. Remove any distracting material and mess to create an optimal mental state. Anything you are not using on a daily basis should be stored and put away neatly or discarded. Focus on keeping the bare essentials around your workspace. You can even make time for decluttering by scheduling ten minutes a day to tidy up your desk and surrounding area.



Maximize your team productivity through cultivating professional respect among colleagues. It is easier to empathize with a colleague's needs when they are close to you in physical proximity, because you can read their body language. Working from home means learning to elevate interpersonal communication with virtual methods such as the phone, messaging applications, and video conferencing.

## Here are a few suggestions for how to become a valued virtual team player:

Consider keeping online meetings and phone calls for the afternoon or early evening, as some remote workers prefer to ease their way into the day and others are in completely different time zones.

Turn your camera on if possible. Seeing coworkers on camera builds a stronger connection and can reduce the feelings of being “alone” all day.

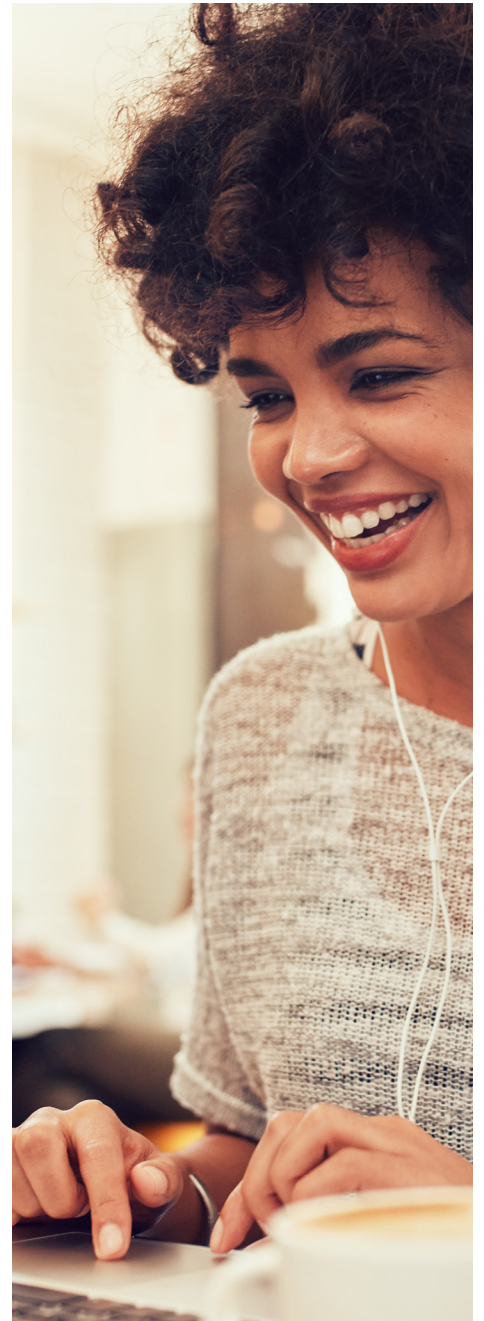
Look into the camera instead of searching for on-screen eyes during video conference calls. If you get distracted looking at yourself, try hiding the self-view.

Check your surroundings. On a video call, the last thing you want is something embarrassing behind you. Find a spot where you will regularly plan to take video calls. If you are unable to change what happens behind you, try out a background instead.

To stay focused during the day, only sign into the social media you need for interaction with co-workers. Avoid looking at your phone and try to keep it face down during meetings and virtual calls.

Listen actively and carefully instead of just bantering, because context is more difficult to interpret through a virtual medium.

Unless it's time-sensitive or you're dealing directly with a customer, try to send an email instead of calling someone directly.





Cultivating a strong culture with a dispersed workforce may seem challenging, but there are ways to ensure employees are thriving, productive, and engaged.

**Here are a few tips to help with remote team interaction and communication:**

As your team acclimates to remote work, encouragement and support are key aspects of management. Provide “as needed” access, and if the employee desires, daily proactive check-ins to reassure them during this time of transition.

Create a robust infrastructure for collaboration and information sharing, or upgrade the one that is already in place. Automate as many processes as possible.

Keep your team informed on memos and internal developments and events, so they won't feel outside the loop. Be sure to plan after-hours online activities to boost team morale, such as virtual happy hours or game nights.

Flexible work hours will help those employees balancing a household, childcare, or caring for a family member. Ensure the equipment each remote worker uses has secure access to the company network. Offer extra training on IT-related topics.

Communicate and encourage employees frequently. Update programs around inclusion and appreciation to reflect the remote work environment.





## ABOUT NAMELY

Distinguished by its intense commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, HR technology leader Namely is an employer of choice that helps mid-sized employers and their employees thrive. Delivering and streamlining the complexities of recruiting, onboarding, time & attendance, performance management, benefits administration, compliance, payroll and analytics from a single platform, Namely also offers Managed Payroll and Benefits services. The company further differentiates the client experience through personalized service and easy-to-use applications.

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