

# How to work well, anywhere

WITH WORK LIFE SET TO BE SPLIT BETWEEN OFFICE AND HOME FOR THE FORESEEABLE, HOW CAN WE ENSURE OUR HOME OFFICE SET-UP HELPS US NAVIGATE THE HYBRID?

If 'you're on mute' is beginning to get on your nerves, get ready for a new buzz phrase – 'hybrid working'. After months of home working, many of us are beginning to trickle back into the office, but only part-time. Centre for Cities – a think-tank dedicated to improving towns and cities – predicts the five-day office week will return within two years, but that's a long time to continue grappling with office clutter and a poor work/home divide... Aside from working out the best deal with your employer, there are things you can do at home to help ease the transition and make hybrid working as stress-free as possible. The key is in good organisation, and luckily, you can do this in a sustainable manner, too.

## Declutter...

'Working from home can put a squeeze on our lifestyle,' says Tanya Lewis, The Eco Organiser. 'The office may be a corner of the dining room table or a purpose-built area, but either way it's important not to waste space.' One simple way to avoid this is 'ethically decluttering' – but first we must define what clutter is. 'We see clutter as things that served us well once, but are no longer useful or add value to our lives,' says Lewis. To effectively declutter, Lewis suggests asking yourself some key questions: 'Do I need it? Is it relevant to my task? Is it practical, does it warrant space in my office?' Remove anything (yes, even those gifts you feel guilty about parting company with) where the answer is anything but a resounding 'yes'. Not sure how to dispose of certain items? Check [recyclenow.com](http://recyclenow.com) for advice.


## ...but hold on to the things you love

When working at home part-time, it may feel redundant to keep up our artfully arranged desk-scape (complete with mini cactus), but it's important to cultivate a workspace you're happy in. 'Surround yourself with beautiful things,' says Lewis. 'Invest in quality over quantity such as a beautiful pen and stylish bag to transport essentials. It's your opportunity to create the office space of your dreams, to put your designer hat on and add touches of your personality.' Research shows that additions like plants and artwork boost productivity and help you feel more positive. 'Allow space for things that motivate and inspire you every day.'

## Get clever with space

'When our homes become stuffed, they become uncomfortable and don't function well,' says Lewis. If you're short on horizontal space but have plenty of vertical, Lewis suggests stackable storage, which 'occupies a small horizontal footprint while utilising your vertical space.' You can also use hooks to keep frequently used items close to hand, but off your desk. 'Choose light-weight portable storage, so you'll actually use it,' says Lewis. 'The key to sustainable storage is to use what you have; repurpose things that may be cluttering your space; or embrace the 'buy nothing new' movement to create order. Also, a converted cupboard or wardrobe makes a great hidden space to work.'

## Pack your desk

It's important to identify which items you really need in both your working spaces. 'Luckily, in our digital world, there are very few physical items we need to carry,' says Lewis. 'Generally speaking, we carry a laptop, mobile phone, pen, USB, paper and a few personal items. To ensure you don't leave anything behind create 'essentials' bags – sealable zip or clip bags like a pencil or cosmetics case. Select colours that will stand out against your bag lining, and store like with like – for example cables with cables, pens with pens.' 

## STRIVE FOR SEPARATION

According to the Office for National Statistics, those who worked from home last year did an average of six hours' unpaid overtime each week, while research from LSE found that working at home 'causes people to fail to switch off'. Going back to the office offers an opportunity to rebalance, but might make it harder to visualise your home as a workspace on non-office days. To ensure you keep up a healthy work/home divide, Lewis suggests the following:

- **Use visual barriers** 'Closing a door on or drawing a curtain across your workspace blocks out the visual reminder of work and indicates that the office is closed for the day, allowing the mind to shift towards downtime.'
- **Hide work paraphernalia** 'Pack things away into opaque containers – they help to reduce visual reminders of work.'
- **Furnish wisely** 'Look for options that fold or slide away, and storage that blends into your décor.'
- **Switch off and slow down** 'At the end of the working day, take a moment to reconnect with your inner self and allow time to focus on what's in store for the rest of your day.'

## THE EXPERT



TANYA LEWIS, aka The Eco Organiser, is a clutter-free lifestyle teacher, and author of *STUFF OFF!* and *Ethically Declutter Your Home in 30 Days* ([ecoorganiser.com.au](http://ecoorganiser.com.au))