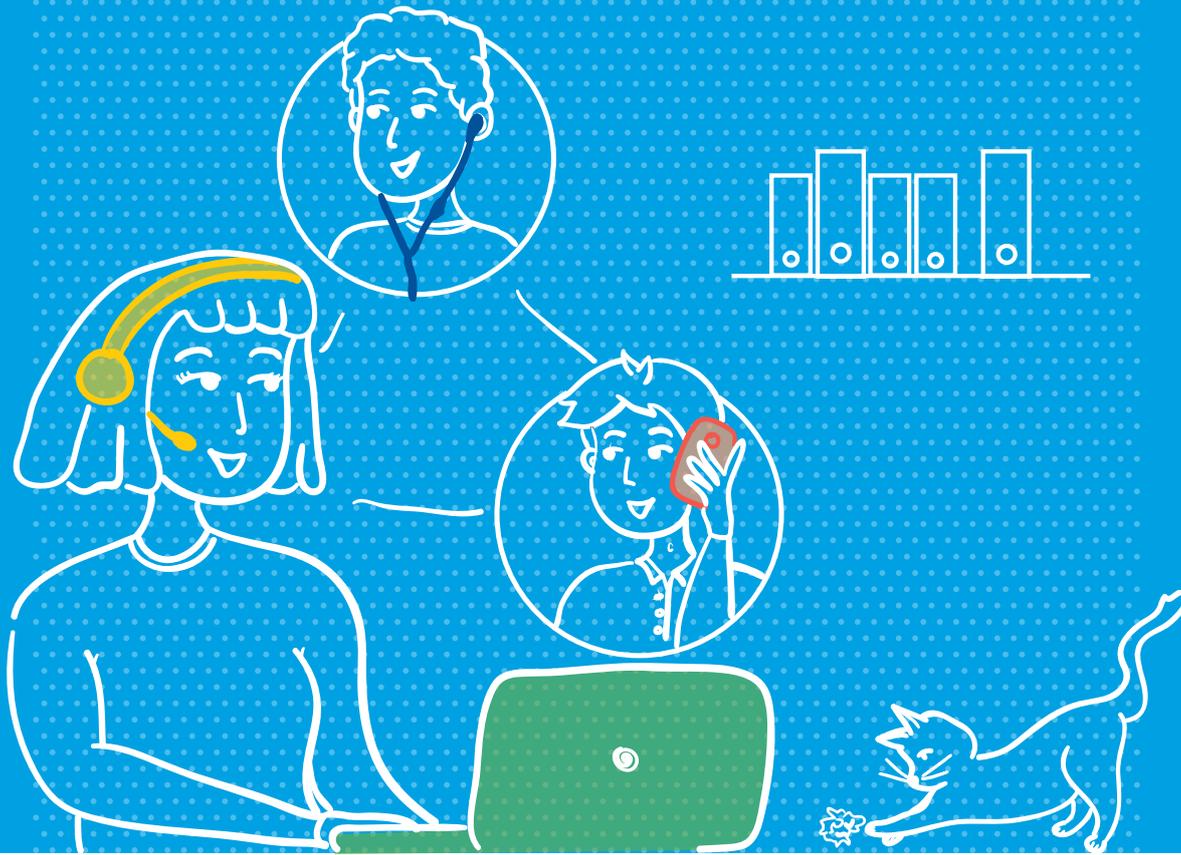


Long version

Work from home CHECKLIST



Working from home is a particular type of remote working. Upon prior agreement with their employer, employees perform their roles in a private setting on a temporary or occasional basis. In principle, remote work is subject to the regulations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (ArbSchG) and Working Hours Act (ArbZG). There are currently no specific regulations as there are with contractually agreed telecommuting work [1].

This checklist serves as a guide for employees to help them make their home working environment safe and healthy and can be used for the assessment of working conditions.

The checklist is also available as a short version in A3 format.

www.dguv.de/publikationen

Work equipment

Display

- Large, anti-glare display (at least 17" LCD display¹) is available.
The size of the display should be appropriate for the work assignment.
- Display is slightly lower than eye level.
- Distance between eyes and screen is 50–80 cm.
Capital letters should be 3.2–4.5 mm tall at a viewing distance of 50 cm and 5.2–7.3 mm tall at a viewing distance of 80 cm.¹
- Characters are displayed black on a light background (positive polarity).
Positive polarity improves the legibility of the characters, reduces interference from unavoidable reflections and glare and means that your eyes do not have to constantly adapt to different brightness levels (screen and surroundings).
- Night light mode is activated in the evenings, at the latest two hours before bed.
Computer screens emit light in the blue light wavelength range, which increases alertness. Late in the evening, this can have a negative effect on sleep. In night light mode (under "Settings"), you can set times when this blue light is filtered out.

Keyboard and mouse

- Separate keyboard and mouse are available.
The use of a laptop without separate input devices is possible for short periods. From an ergonomics perspective, a separate monitor, keyboard and mouse are preferable in order to enable a flexible working space set-up, even for temporary work-from-home assignments.
- Distance from keyboard to desk edge is 10–15 cm.
The heels of your hands should be resting on the desk in front of the keyboard to relieve the shoulder and neck muscles.
- Keyboard has an anti-glare surface.
- Keyboard has light keys with dark symbols.
Keyboards with light keys and dark symbols (positive polarity) are more legible and mean that your eyes do not have to adapt to different brightness levels. Furthermore, dark keyboards tend to develop an unpleasant shine after prolonged use.
- Mouse can be used with a relaxed posture and arm position.
The mouse is close to your body; shoulders are relaxed by your side.

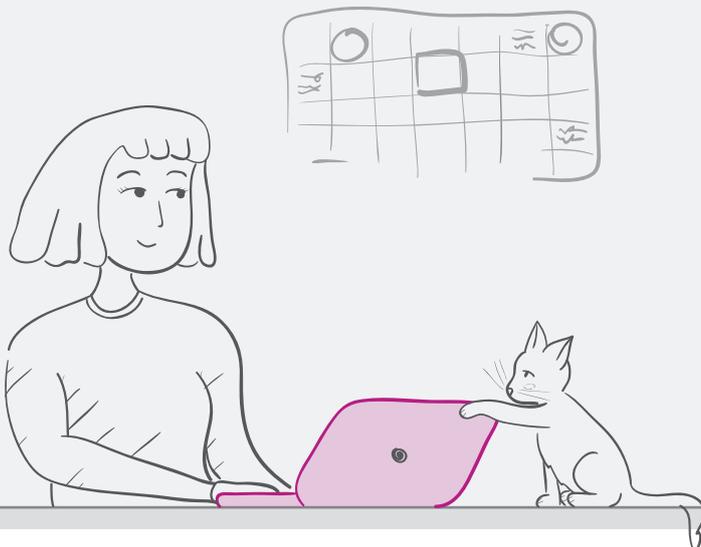
Technical requirements

– if necessary for work assignments

- Fast, powerful internet connection is available.
- Software and hardware are available for online meetings.
- Access to server is available.

Arrangement of work equipment at the workstation

- Frequently used equipment is set up in the central field of view.
This avoids awkward head movements and postures.



Workstation

Desk

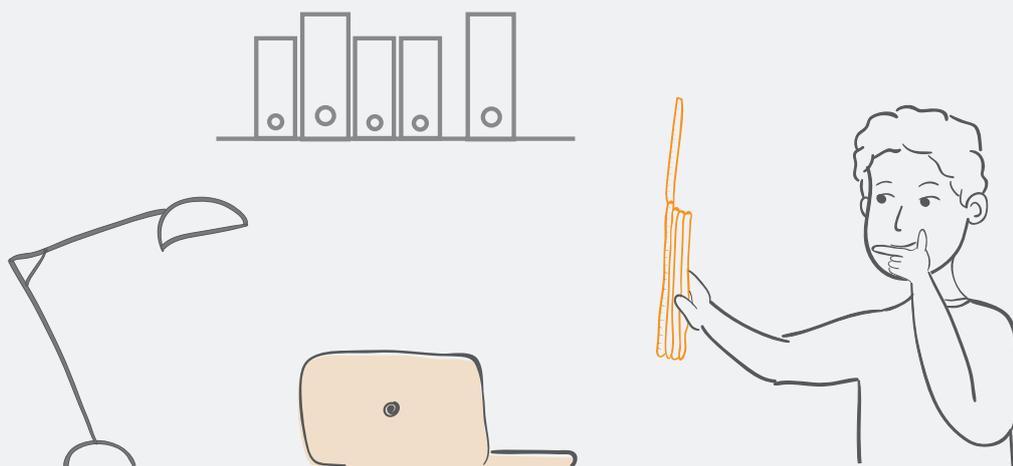
- Desk and screen are positioned to avoid disruptive reflections and glare; daylight is coming from the side.
Setting up a screen with a window behind you is to be avoided, because this can cause glare. If the screen has a window behind it, the brightness contrast between the screen and the background will be too great.
- Sufficient working space is available.
 - » optimal² – 160 cm × 80 cm
 - » functional³ – 120 cm × 80 cm
 - » minimal⁴ – 80 cm × 60 cm
- The desk height allows your elbows to form a right angle when your forearms are resting on the tabletop.
 - » optimal² – height-adjustable
 - » functional³/minimal⁴ – not height-adjustable (74 ± 2 cm)

If the desk and chair are height-adjustable, start by adjusting chair height (see “Desk chair”). When your forearms are resting on the desk, your shoulders and upper arms should hang relaxed at your side. If the desk cannot be adjusted in height, a footrest may be necessary for shorter individuals while taller individuals may require a higher desk.
- Sufficient forward/lateral leg space is available.
 - » optimal² – 120 cm × 80 cm
 - » functional³ – at least 85 cm × 80 cm
 - » minimal⁴ – at least 60 cm × 60 cm

Objects such as bags, shoes and paper bins should be cleared away and cables safely routed.

Desk chair (optimal²)

- Swivel desk chair has five wheels, adapted to the floor.
Five wheels prevent tipping over. Wheels for hard floors (e.g. parquet) have a soft coating; wheels for soft floors (e.g. carpet) have a hard outer layer.
- Active sitting is possible due to moveable backrest.
To ensure comfortable movement of the backrest in synchrony with your body, the desk chair should be adjusted to your personal bodyweight – if such a mechanism is available.
- Seat depth is adjustable and the full seat surface is used.
The distance between the front edge of the seat and your lower leg should be around a hand's width.
- Seat height is adjusted – feet are on the ground, knees bent at an angle slightly greater than 90°. *If your feet are not on the ground, you can use a footrest.*
- Backrest or lumbar support is height-adjustable.
The curve of the backrest (lumbar support) should be set to around belt height.
- Armrests are height-adjustable (same height as the tabletop) and forearms are resting on them.
The use of armrests can prevent neck and shoulder tension when working at the desk.



Work environment

Space requirements

- There is sufficient space to move around at the workstation.

- » optimal² – 160 cm × 100 cm
- » functional³ – 120 cm × 80 cm
- » minimal⁴ – 80 cm × 80 cm

Space to move around is important so that you can vary your posture at the workstation, move while seated (active sitting) and also alternate between sitting and standing on occasion.

- Tripping hazards are removed.

Tripping hazards are a common cause of accidents. Typical tripping hazards when working from home include cables and children's toys.

Lighting

- Workstation has sufficient lighting; additional floor or desk lamps are used if necessary.

The lighting levels required for office workstations are hard to verify at home – a little brighter is preferable to too dark. A desk lamp on its own without general room lighting speeds up eye fatigue.

- There is a line of sight to the outdoors.

Looking into the distance lets your eyes rest and recover from constantly looking at the screen.

- Suitable sun protection is installed to prevent reflections and glare.

If the sun reflects off the computer screen or other surfaces, it is unpleasant for the eyes and causes them to fatigue.

- Warm white light is used in the evening, at the latest two hours before bed.

Light with a high proportion of blue can impede the production of the "sleep hormone" melatonin. This type of light keeps the body awake and can disrupt sleep. This also concerns the light from screens like those on computers or mobile devices.

Room climate

- Air temperature is 20–22°C/max. 26°C.

If it is too hot at the workstation, fatigue increases and concentration drops.

- Disruptive draughts are avoided.

Cold draughts can contribute to muscle tension including neck pain.

- The work room is ventilated regularly.

The more the percentage of CO₂ in the room air rises and the percentage of oxygen drops, the more fatigue will increase and concentration will drop. Regularly ventilating the room also reduces the virus concentration in the room air.



Work organisation

Separating work from private life

- Work and living areas are separate.
Ideally, separate rooms will be used. In the case of a single room, plants, shelves etc. can form a partition and a visual barrier.
- There is a clear line between work and private life.
Working times are agreed with house mates and co-habitants. Work documents are cleared away at the end of the working day.
- Company/organisational data is protected when working in a private setting.
For instance, house mates and co-habitants do not have access to work documents. The computer is locked when left unattended, or files are password-protected.
- Employee data is protected.
E.g. private telephone number is protected.

Work routine

- Concentrated, targeted work is possible.
There are no distractions caused by house mates, co-habitants or household activities.
- Time windows are agreed for when you can be reached by superiors and colleagues.
- Screen work is interrupted by alternating work tasks.
Variety promotes concentration and sometimes also motivation.
- Active movement or small exercise breaks are encouraged.
For instance, phone calls can be held standing up (e.g. standing at a counter or windowsill) or while walking. Exercises to relax the shoulders and neck prevent muscle tension.
- There is sufficient access to company communications and information.

Working time

- It is possible to arrange working times flexibly.
The beginning and end of the working day and breaks can be arranged flexibly – in compliance with the Working Hours Act and in coordination with colleagues and superiors.
- (Short) breaks and statutory rest breaks are observed.
According to the Working Hours Act, breaks must total at least 30 minutes for a working time of 6–9 hours and 45 minutes for a working time over 9 hours. Additional short breaks at shorter intervals also help promote concentration. After the end of the working day, an uninterrupted rest period of at least 11 hours is required.
- Work-related availability outside of working times is avoided.
- There is a system for documenting working time and overtime.

Communication

- (Regular) professional and social exchange with superiors and colleagues is possible.
Different types of media (e.g. phone, video conference) and formats (e.g. team meetings, virtual coffee breaks) can be used.
- The relationship of trust between manager and employees is promoted through appreciative, fair treatment.
- There is plenty of opportunity for feedback and communication in the case of problems or employee requests.
- There is frequent communication regarding duties, workload and successes.
This prevents overworking and recognises employee performance.

Work assignment

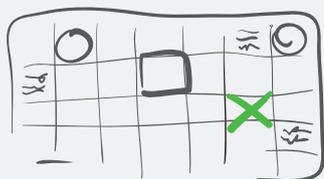
- Work assignment is suitable for working from home.
Examples include desk work, screen work and phone calls.

- Scope for decision making and area of responsibility are clearly defined.
If possible this should be cleared up both with superiors and with colleagues.

- Software is suitable for the work assignment.

- Employees have work structuring skills. Support is provided by the employer.
For instance, there are seminars or practical aids on offer on the topic of time management.

- Information and offers on the promotion of individual safety and health competence are provided by the employer.
Employees with this competence have the ability and motivation to protect, maintain and promote their own health when working from home.



Literature and links

References

- [1] Fachbereich AKTUELL – Sachgebiet Büro: Arbeiten im Homeoffice – nicht nur in der Zeit der SARS-CoV-2-Epidemie, FBVW-402, Stand 03.11.2020, www.dguv.de/publikationen – Webcode p021569
- [2] DGUV Information 215-410 – Bildschirm- und Büroarbeitsplätze – Leitfaden für die Gestaltung www.dguv.de/publikationen – Webcode p215410

Further reading and links

- » Heitmann, C.; Fietz, T.; Zieschang, H.: Sicheres und gesundes Arbeiten von zu Hause aus: Informationen und Empfehlungen zu Homeoffice und Vertrauensarbeitszeit. In: DGUV Forum 5/2020. <https://forum.dguv.de/ausgabe/5-2020>
- » Weitere Literatur zur Arbeit im Homeoffice in DGUV Forum, Ausgabe 08/2020, Schwerpunkt „Homeoffice“ <https://forum.dguv.de/ausgabe/8-2020>
- » VBG-Info – Mobil arbeiten mit Notebook & Co. – Tipps für die Arbeit unterwegs
http://www.vbg.de/SharedDocs/Medien-Center/DE/Broschuere/Themen/Bildschirm_und_Bueroarbeit/Mobil_arbeiten_mit_Notebook_Faltblatt.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=12
- » VBG-Praxis-Kompakt – relax & work – Kleine Spannungshilfen für zwischendurch
http://www.vbg.de/SharedDocs/Medien-Center/DE/Broschuere/Themen/Gesundheit_im_Betrieb/Relax_and_work_VBG_Praxis_Kompakt.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=10
- » Video „Gesund arbeiten im Homeoffice“ (VBG)
<https://www.certo-portal.de/arbeit-gestalten/artikel/video-gesund-arbeiten-im-homeoffice/>
- » Herausforderung Homeoffice – Material der Kampagne kommitmensch
<https://www.kommitmensch.de/corona/herausforderung-homeoffice/>

Footnotes

- ¹ Measurements in the checklist are taken from [1] and [2]
- ² optimal: well-set-up computer workstation, also suitable for full-time telecommuting work [1]
- ³ functional: suitable for several days of work [1]
- ⁴ minimal: suitable for sporadic/occasional and sometimes also daily work from home [1]