

Tips for Working at Home¹

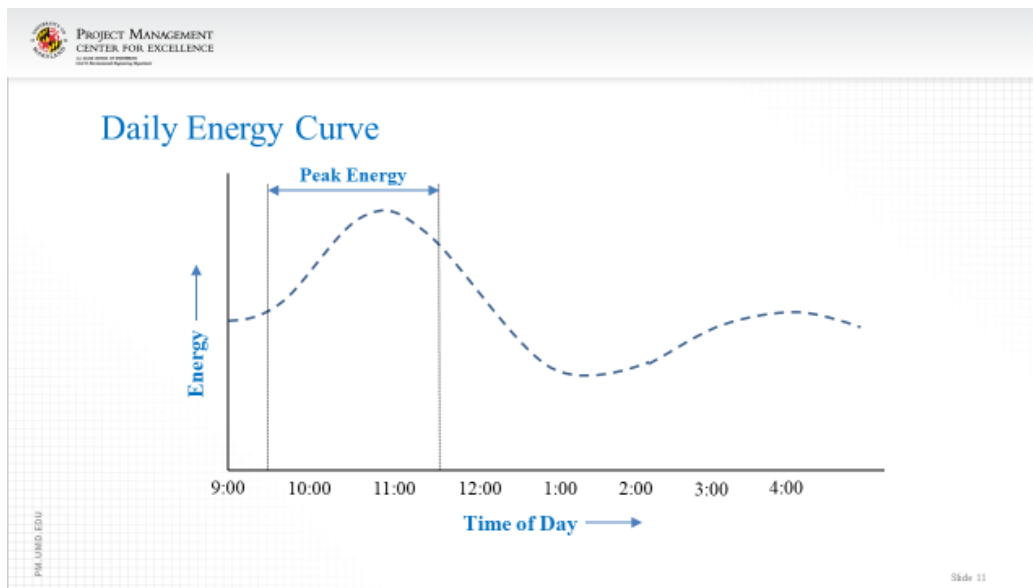
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If you are generally new to working from home on a full-time basis, we at the University of Maryland's Project Management Center for Excellence have put together a few ideas that may be useful.

ROUTINE

It is best to develop a schedule and routine that works for you. Treat the day like a workday and get up on time, dress for the office (even if it is casual) and try to keep a regular schedule.

- Plan your day to work with your natural energy cycle. We all have one and they are different. Maybe you are a morning person or a night owl or something in between. Your curve may look something like this:



In any case, schedule your focused work during your peak energy cycle and do things that require less focus during low energy times. This is a natural cycle but can be influenced by diet and exercise. Eat some protein when you need to push through a low energy time to finish a task.

- Take breaks at whatever interval works for you, even if it's just getting a fresh coffee and walking around the house for a minute.

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- Be sure to change your field of vision and focal length when you take a break. If you are sitting at a computer doing your work, make sure to look out the window or go outside so you are looking at a distance.
- Forget the 8-10 hour typical day in the office and don't be afraid to take breaks for personal things you need to get done. Working from home means you actually have a much longer workday!
- Stay in contact with work colleagues and friends by scheduling video conferences. We actually do virtual cocktail parties with friends a few times a week to stay in touch and schedule regular "catch-ups" with work colleagues.
- Coordinate with family members so they understand and accommodate.

ENVIRONMENT

You need a regular place to work. So, even if you do not actually have dedicated office space at home it is important to create it. Some things to consider include:

- Find a quiet room with a door that closes.
- If you are sharing workspace or have other noise distractions, noise cancelling headsets are very useful.
- Have comfortable seating and lighting and do your best to create a pleasant workspace.
- If you don't already have it, spend the money to have an excellent internet connection, laptop or desktop computers with camera for video conferencing. We like the Logitech HD Pro Webcam C920. I find that having at least two monitors improves production significantly. Having a good quality printer & scanner saves a lot of time. Get a wifi booster if needed to keep a strong signal. We like the eero home wifi system but there are several good ones on the market.
- Find a place to store extra supplies such as paper and print cartridges so you don't have a crises when something runs out. Make sure you order replacements way before you think you will need them. We have separate guidance on video conference etiquette and facilitating video conferences.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Lastly, it is very important to continue to do the basics. Make sure you exercise regularly, even if it is only going for a walk, but hopefully something more like stretches and light weights. Make sure to eat well and do not revert to junk food, and certainly get enough sleep. Finally, block out some time for yourself for reflection. I hope these tips trigger some ideas for you.

About the Author



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John Cable, MArch, R.A., PMP is Director of the Project Management Center for Excellence in the A.J. Clark School of Engineering at the University of Maryland, where he is also a professor and teacher of several graduate courses in project management. His program at the University of Maryland offers masters and PhD level programs focused on project management. With more than 1,300 seats filled annually with students from many countries, including more than 40 PhD students, the program is the largest graduate program in project management at a major university in the United States.

John Cable served in the newly formed U.S. Department of Energy in 1980, where he was involved with developing energy standards for buildings, methods for measuring energy consumption, and managing primary research in energy conservation. As an architect and builder, Mr. Cable founded and led John Cable Associates in 1984, a design build firm. In 1999 he was recruited by the University of Maryland's Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering to create and manage a graduate program in project management. In his role as founder and director of the Project Management Center for Excellence at Maryland, the program has grown to offer an undergraduate minor, master's degrees, and a doctoral program. Information about the Project Management Center for Project Management at the University of Maryland can be found at www.pm.umd.edu.

In 2002, PMI formed the Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Educational Programs (GAC). Mr. Cable was appointed to that inaugural board where he served as vice chair. In 2006, he was elected as chairman, a role he held through 2012. As Chair of the PMI GAC, John led the accreditation of 86 project management educational programs at 40 institutions in 15 countries in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and the Asia Pacific Region. John was awarded PMI's 2012 Distinguished Contribution Award for his leadership at the GAC. He can be contacted at jcable@umd.edu.