THE WFH GUIDE TO ENERGY

Keep your home office comfortable, affordable and low-carbon

severn wye

A comfortable home-working environment doesn't have to cost the Earth

According to a report from the Office for National Statistics, in January 2023, 16% of working adults in the UK were working entirely from home – and another 28% have a hybrid working pattern.

Reducing or cutting out the daily commute has many benefits – more time in your day to do other things, as well as cutting energy use and carbon emissions from transport and workplaces. But on the flip side working from home increases domestic energy use and instead of one office there are now many.

Home offices may differ, but there are some simple steps that most people can take to help reduce energy use – and carbon emissions – when working from home.

Calling all employers
There are some things good employers may consider supplying to help create an energy-efficient office for their home-based workers. Look out for the office symbol for some ideas.

Getting set up: choosing your space and arranging your workstation

Sit near a window if possible, so you benefit from natural light – it's free and sustainable.

Make sure you use LED bulbs for any extra lighting you need.

Heat the space you are working in, not the whole house. TRVs (thermostatic radiator valves) enable you heat your rooms individually.

Set a lower temperature in rooms you are not using.

Even better – heat yourself, not the whole room:

- Layer-up – including a thermal base layer and woolly socks.
- Put a rug under your feet, especially if you have a hard floor.
- Wrap up with a hot water bottle – special elongated ones can be draped over your shoulders – or a heated throw.

Consider using a standing desk, at least for part of the day. It's easier to keep moving while standing, generating some heat for yourself.

Make sure your desk, chair and equipment set-up is as ergonomic as it would be in the office.

During the day

Plan ahead for breaks and food

It might be tempting to snuggle down with your hot water bottle but moving around regularly will boost your circulation, keeping you warmer as well as awake – try setting an alarm for a quick break every 20 minutes.

Even if you use a standing desk, take regular breaks to move around or sneak in a few minutes of exercise.

Hot drinks are a great way to warm up but don't fill the kettle – only boil what you need each time.

Plan and batch-cook your lunches – that way you'll save energy by only heating them through, instead of cooking from scratch each day.

Use equipment efficiently

Does your monitor need to be so bright? Turning it down from 100% to 70% can save 20% of its energy use.

Use power-saving settings on your computer and set a timer for it to go into sleep mode if it's idle for more than five minutes.

Put your computer into sleep mode when you take a break.

Not using your printer or scanner? Turn it off at the wall – standby still uses energy.

Only plug in your laptop when it needs charging (this will help the battery live longer too).

Signing off: a checklist

- Make sure all your equipment is turned off fully.
- Consider a power-down switch to make sure ancillary equipment like printers are turned off automatically when you switch off your computer.
- Switch off any lights you no longer need.
- Turn down the heating in your office if it's a separate room.
- Think about whether to close window coverings or leave them open depending on which way your room faces and the time of year.

Beating the heat

Winter brings its own challenges, but if you've been used to an air-conditioned office then hot weather can be hard to manage too.

Work in a north-facing room if you can so you're not heating up in the sun.

Open the windows fully first thing in the morning to clear built-up heat – but keep windows and curtains or blinds closed on the sunny side from mid-morning or when it's warmer outside than in.

Air-conditioning units use a lot of energy and can be expensive to run (unless you have solar panels). Fans or evaporative air coolers use much less energy.

A small USB fan on your desk will cost only a few pence a day to run – and a bowl of ice in front of a fan can increase the cooling effect.

Open lower windows on the upwind side and upper windows on the downwind side to benefit from nature's aircon. If you have sash windows, open the top and bottom parts to let warm air out at the top and cool air in at the bottom.

Reduce sources of heat – insulate your hot water tank and hot water pipes; cook in the evening when it's cooler and you can open the windows to let the heat out.

If it's cooler outside than in, keep windows open (or in half-lock position for security) overnight.

With more of us working from home regularly, our home energy bills and carbon emissions are rising.

This guide offers some simple tips for making your WFH day easier on your pocket and the planet.

For more energy saving tips on draughtproofing, insulation, central heating systems and more, visit severnwye.org.uk/household-energy-advice

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