



COVID-19: Remote Work Guidelines for Employees



Cornell Employees Working Remotely

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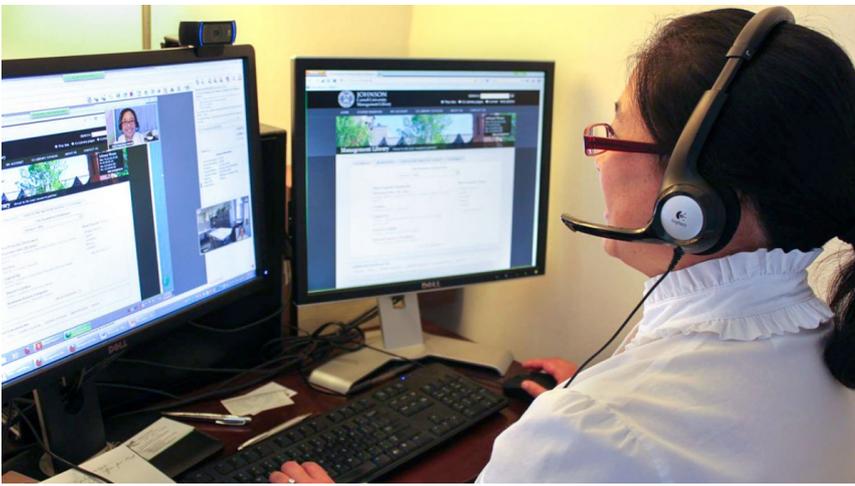
[University's Operating Status](#)

[University Coronavirus Updates](#)

Remote work can be helpful in urgent situations, allowing for continuity of operations. This guide outlines key considerations, best practices, and university guidance specific to COVID-19 remote work, including information that may be different from the [Flexibility In the Workplace Policy](#).

Review the [COVID-19 Employee Guidance](#) for information regarding working during quarantine or isolation, illnesses in the workplace, and workers at higher risk.

REMOTE WORK TIP SHEETS: [For Everyone](#) | [For Managers](#) | [For Families](#) | [For Technology](#)



Key Considerations Checklist

Priorities & Essential Work

Evaluate the responsibilities and priorities of your position, considering customer/collaborator impact and feasibility of completing some or all of it remotely (with or without adjustments). Share your thoughts with your supervisor.

Technology

At a minimum, employees need a computer, internet, and phone access. If you do not have a Cornell-issued laptop, but have a personally owned computer/laptop/iPad, you may use this. However, you are responsible for following all university practices and policies to maintain security on your device. Speak to your internet/cell provider about your plan(s) to ensure that you will not experience any overage fees. Cornell does not cover the cost of home internet and phone and does not insure personal technology. See *Technology* section for other considerations.

Home Environment

Consider whether your home environment is conducive to remote work. Factors include the demands of other household members, household construction, appropriate lighting, seating, and other basic conditions. Set expectations with others in your home regarding your interactions and availability. See *At Home* tab below for more tips.

Pay

All non-exempt employees who work remotely when the university is open should be paid for hours worked at their regular hourly rate of pay. Overtime must be approved in advance. Exempt employees will receive their regular pay. See "[Working During COVID-19 Guide for Employees](#)" for details.

Contact Information

Provide multiple forms of contact information to your supervisor. Update your emergency contact information in Workday, which is viewable to HR representatives and administrative managers.

Remote Agreements & Expectations

Due to the fast pace of evolving health regulations and the anticipated wide use of remote work, employees and managers are not required to complete the university's [Flexible Work Agreement Form](#). However, managers and employees are encouraged to put the agreement in writing (e.g. email) outlining duration and expectations. Request this confirmation from your supervisor.

Meetings

Your manager will likely define what tools you will use to hold meetings virtually. Within your purview, identify which upcoming meetings can/should be rescheduled if necessary. Practice holding meetings remotely before increasing remote work use. See *Virtual Meetings* tab below for more tips.

Time & Performance

Discuss with your manager how your time and performance will be managed. Communicate regularly with your manager regarding your work priorities, deliverables, timelines, etc.

[tabs]

At Home

Home Office Set-up

Cornell is not responsible for setting up home offices. While the university is striving to help employees work remotely, it may not be feasible if equipment and systems needed to conduct work are unavailable.

Your local unit may allow employees to take home computer peripherals such as monitors, keyboards, mice, and webcams as well as small furnishings that can be safely moved such as office chairs, footstools, etc. The unit may also opt to purchase MyFi service for an employee. However, the unit is not required to do any of these things (unless connected to a disability accommodation).

Local units can decide what items they will pay for and/or allow to be taken home from the workplace as long as they are being consistent in the decision-making process and prioritizing necessary items for positions that are dependent upon them. Please discuss this with your supervisor.

Remote employees should factor their wellbeing into their home office set-up.

[See this helpful video: Ergonomics Tips for the Home Office - Creating Effective Work Spaces](#)

[Ergonomics Tips for Working at Home](#) and information on how to request a virtual consultation (pdf)

If you do not typically work remotely, you may experience challenges adjusting to a different environment, especially if you are accustomed to working very physically. Build physical movement into your day. Loneliness can often occur with remote workers. Seek opportunities to connect virtually with your colleagues and others as much as possible.

Tips:

- Choose a location in the home that has limited distractions and ample natural lighting
- Maintain good posture where you sit
- Take regular breaks (5 min of every hour) to look away from the screen and improve circulation
- Stay consistent with your eating, sleeping, and exercise routine as appropriate
- Structure your day, building in social time with colleagues and others
- If you have peripheral devices, connect an external keyboard, mouse, headphones, and/or monitor to increase your comfort
- Maintain boundaries to prevent overwork – unplug at the end of your work time

Children and Other Dependents

Employees can use HAP time to care for healthy children during school or child care closures (an exception to existing policy).

Remote Work

The Cornell Flexibility In the Workplace Policy states that remote work cannot be a substitute for ongoing child care needs. In light of COVID-19, remote work may occur while dependents are present if their school or child care is closed and alternative care is unavailable, under the following guidelines:

- Cornell is not responsible or liable for the health and safety of your dependents while you are working remotely, or for your health and safety while you are delivering care to your dependents. It is up to you to determine whether work can be conducted safely.
- If a dependent is ill and requires ongoing attention, you may need to use Health and Personal (HAP) time away from work, as needed. In light of COVID-19, HAP rules are being relaxed to allow for care of healthy children at home due to school or childcare closures. Nonacademic employees may also be covered for NY Paid Family leave, which provides paid leave to care for a covered family member's illness. Please visit <https://hr.cornell.edu/new-york-state-paid-family-leave> for more information
- Employees are expected to determine what they can reasonably accomplish while dependents are under their care (whether healthy or ill), and the amount of time they expect to be able to work.

Alternative Child Care

If your child is healthy and you are seeking a care provider, you may use these resources to locate care, though options are limited. If there are no health limitations, consider sharing caregiving responsibilities with other families by rotating who provides care for the children. Also, visit the [Resources](#) page for additional family life support and consider joining a Cornell [Parenting e-List or Newsletter](#) for updates and connecting with other families who have care concerns.

- [Care@Work by Care.com](#) – Cornell provides benefits-eligible employees and retirees with a free membership to Care@Work to help you locate babysitters, pet sitters/walkers, elder/adult care providers, and individuals to run errands. You may post a job or search the directory for a care provider. Providers are not endorsed by Cornell.
- [Child Development Council of Tompkins & Cortland County \(other Counties\)](#) – advises area families on child care options. Ithaca – 607-273-0259, Cortland – 607-753-0106
- Cornell Work/Life Consultant – may advise you on work/life issues, especially related to caregiving. Phone, virtual, and email consultations available worklife@cornell.edu or 607-255-1917

Cornell Parenting Newsletter

Work/Life at Cornell's newsletter is sharing a wealth of practical information and resources to support families working and schooling from home during the pandemic.

- [Read the latest issue of Parenting News](#)
- [Sign up for Parenting News emails](#)

Agreements

Candidates for Remote Work

In general, any employee is eligible to work remotely. Your manager will determine if your position and performance lend itself to remote work or could be temporarily modified to integrate short-term remote work. If you have a role that is generally unable to work remotely, there may be creative ways to integrate remote work on a short-term basis. For instance, this can be an opportune time to catch up on work that often goes by the wayside. Consider what work this may be and propose it to your supervisor.

Examples include:

- Online training programs (related to safety, compliance, job skills, diversity and inclusion)
- Creating or updating documentation regarding job responsibilities, processes, etc.

You should be meeting basic performance expectations, have basic computer skills for email, internet browsing, and possibly Microsoft Word (and/or other Microsoft Suite software), and be able to commit to working productively from a remote location for the duration identified.

Consider testing remote work prior to using it in an urgent situation or emergency. This allows you and your manager to identify glitches, challenges, unanticipated questions, etc. and adjust accordingly. This reduces the amount of logistical challenges during an urgent situation as well.

Non-exempt (Hourly) Employees

Non-exempt (hourly) employees are eligible to work remotely with manager approval, however must adhere to the same accurate Workday time reporting requirements (including meal periods) and processes already in place with the manager and department. Non-exempt employees must receive advanced approval from the manager before incurring overtime.

Disability Accommodations

Due to the possible sudden and short-term nature of some remote work arrangements, the university may not be able to offer certain accommodations – for example, specific furnishings. When feasible, safe, and granted permission, an individual may transport disability accommodation related small, lightweight equipment home for the duration of a remote work arrangement (e.g. ergonomic keyboard, footstool, etc.). For guidance, visit the [Leaves & Disability webpages](#), or contact Medical Leaves Administration at 607-255-1177 or wcds@cornell.edu

Schedule & Workload

Have a realistic conversation with your manager about how much work you can reasonably conduct remotely. Factors may include the nature of your work, or limitations you may face as a result of your home environment (e.g. you have mildly ill children present who need care). Consider what hours make the most sense for your work and whether you need to propose non-traditional hours such as early mornings, evenings, and weekends to conduct work.

Communication Expectations

It is helpful to discuss with your supervisor what their communication expectations of you are. For example:

- How often they expect you to communicate with them (daily, every few days, weekly)
- How often they expect you to check email and/or AUDIX ([directions](#))
- Whether you need to be available via a messenger program (e.g. Skype for Business)
- The use of your personal cell or home phone and text messaging

Documenting Agreements

Due to the fast pace of evolving health regulations and the anticipated wide use of remote work, you and your manager do not need to complete the university's [Flexible Work Agreement Form](#). However, managers are encouraged to discuss the agreement with you and confirm it in writing (e.g. email), outlining:

- Approval to work remotely and duration of agreement
- Hours of work agreed upon and any flexibility with those hours
- Work responsibilities/areas of focus during remote work
- Communication expectations (with manager, team, and/or customers)
- If internet service (or other systems) become unavailable, how will you work or will you need to use paid time off

Remote Work Outside USA

Cornell is a U.S.-based employer and working remotely from a primary residence outside the United States is generally not permitted. Only for limited reasons (required on-site research, etc.) and for short durations does Cornell permit employees to work in another country. [Global Cornell](#) oversees such arrangements to assure compliance with the considerable legal, tax, and other employment-related obligations for both the individual employee and Cornell. If an employee changes work location, such change may also draw a need for different personal health care coverage, foreign worker's compensation insurance, and other licensing and registrations.

With consideration to the extraordinary circumstances our international students, faculty, and academic staff are facing with the pandemic, Cornell has put together a framework of conditions that if met will allow an individual to temporarily continue an appointment from his or her home country. Currently, Cornell is only able to support the exception for appointments which are critical to meeting our academic and research missions and for those individuals who meet all the criteria as outlined in the following guidelines. Employees who are impacted by travel restrictions, government-mandated stay-at-home orders, and or other government-imposed orders related to COVID-19 should contact their supervisors to discuss eligibility.

- [Faculty and Academic Staff Appointments](#) (*NetID required*)
- [Graduate Student Assistantships](#) (*NetID required*)
- [Undergraduate Student Academic Support and Professional Degree Student Appointments](#) (*NetID required*)

For related immigration questions, please contact International Services via [email](#) or by [phone](#). Information can also be found on the [COVID-19 Immigration FAQ's](#) webpage.

Technology

See Tools for Working Remotely from Cornell IT

Equipment

Everyone should follow the technology guidelines issued by their department. In general, employees are strongly urged to use a Cornell-owned computer, laptop, or other device when working remotely whenever possible. If the only option is to use a personally owned computer, laptop, or other device, the employee is still responsible for following all university practices and policies to maintain security on their device. Personally owned devices are not insured by Cornell. Employees are required to have their own internet and phone access.

Cornell does not provide, or cover the cost of, personal internet/cellular services ([policy](#)) unless required to do so by the applicable local labor law for employees who work outside of New York State. Please discuss your usage/data plan with your internet/cell provider to ensure you won't experience increased fees. See *At Home* tab for more details on home equipment and furnishings.

Log-In Capabilities

Consider what systems and accounts you use and how you can access them remotely. For instance, Dual-Authentication Log-in if you typically use an office phone to authenticate. Some Cornell systems can only be accessed when you are connected to the university campus network. When working remotely, you can access these systems through a [CU VPN connection](#). Note that some departments also have departmental VPNs.

Collaboration Tools

Many tools are available and employees are encouraged to use those endorsed by Cornell IT. Commonly used ones include Zoom, Skype, OneNote, and Cornell Box. Visit [Cornell IT – Tools for working remotely](#) for more information.

Service Interruptions

Service (internet, phone, systems) may be interrupted due to weather or system demand. Some employees may be dependent on the internet for their cellular connection, depending on the cellular coverage where they live. Discuss with your supervisor what work you should do if your internet service goes down.

[Options for Poor Wi-Fi or Cellular Service](#)

Cornell Phone Lines

Everyone can check voicemail left on university phone numbers using AUDIX ([instructions](#)).

Phone forwarding service ([My Extension Everywhere](#)) is available from CIT. This service allows calls made to a Cornell phone number to be received by a personal cell or home phone number. This service must be requested in advance by the telecommunications coordinator in the college/unit and has nominal fees. Once set-up, you may turn on/off the service as needed. Personal phone numbers remain private when using this service.

Confidential & Sensitive Data

Everyone must adhere to the [sensitive and confidential data standards](#) issued by Cornell University regarding transporting or transferring/sending written or digital confidential data. Access to [CU VPN](#) may be required for the work of some employees. Cornell's [Secure File Transfer](#) service should be used to exchange sensitive and confidential information. Employees who do not have a Cornell-issued laptop and do not have home access to the VPN may upload necessary files (without sensitive or confidential data) to [Cornell Box](#) – and access those files from their home computer to conduct work.

See [Security Practices When Working from Home](#)

Zoombombing

We are all learning about [Zoombombing](#) and receiving guidance on how to prevent it (link below).

It's important to note the emotional impact these situations can have. Imagery of any kind that shows the violation of basic human rights (of adults or children) or targets a community is deeply troubling and can be traumatizing. Re-traumatization of victims of sexual violence, assault, and/or discrimination is also possible.

There is also a risk of inappropriate exposure to children who are in the home environment of the remote worker. If an event is intended a child audience, consider recording the program instead of having it live.

If a serious situation does occur (regardless of audience), do not pretend that it didn't and power through the meeting - or even advise participants to simply to look away. Rather, end the meeting swiftly. Report the incident to Cornell Zoom Security at zoomsecurity@cornell.edu.

Then, follow up with the participants to:

1. apologize for the abrupt ending;
2. indicate what steps are being taken to prevent reoccurrence;
3. express care and concern for the participants; and
4. offer mental health resources that are available.

(See [mental health resources for employees](#) and [mental health resources for students](#))

Of greatest importance - reduce the likelihood of it occurring again by committing to (and holding your team accountable for) complying with [security settings](#).

Virtual Meetings

Arranging, Facilitating, & Participating in Meetings

Fully remote meetings tend to be easier to manage than blended on-site and virtual meetings. Consider which approach makes the most sense when designing a meeting.

Best practices

- Add a [Zoom](#) option to all meetings proactively.
- Add a secondary host that can start the meeting in the event the host is running late or their availability has changed.
- Log in early and test your audio/video settings.
- Use your webcam if appropriate to increase interpersonal communication and support those who rely on lipreading. If you expect distractions, limit your use of video.
- Use mute to reduce background noise when you are not speaking. The host(s) can also mute participants.
- For meetings where participation is essential, consider using the “raise hand” feature to help determine who will speak when. It can be difficult even with video to tell when someone is about to finish speaking, or is waiting to speak.

Using Video

When using video, be thoughtful about where you are participating from and the setup. For instance, what individuals can see behind you, what noises might they hear from household members and pets, the lighting, etc. If your background isn't something you want people to see, you can use [Zoom's feature to choose a standard photo to use as your background](#) instead.

Resources

Cornell Flexible Work Arrangements Consultations:

- Cornell Work/Life in Human Resources – worklife@cornell.edu, 607-255-5298

Online Learning

Working remotely is a great time to participate in online learning for job skills, leadership skills, etc.

- [LinkedIn Learning](#) – free for Cornell employees
- [SkillSoft](#) – free for Cornell employees
- [CULearn – Supervising@Cornell](#) – free for Cornell employees
- [eCornell Classes](#) - New! Free [On-Demand Courses](#) and keynote lectures. Certificate programs are just \$100 per class for Cornell employees

Technology & Collaboration Tools

- [Cornell IT – Tools for working remotely](#)
- [Cornell IT – Work remotely with Zoom](#)
- [Cornell Computer Purchasing](#)

Thriving Remotely

- [ProHabits](#): Sign up for free daily micro-actions to support working in remote and disconnected teams.

Remote Teaching

- [Cornell Center for Teaching Excellence](#)

Policies & Guidelines

- [Flexibility In the Workplace](#)
- [Remote Work Outside New York State](#)
- [Data Privacy, Security, and Handling of Sensitive/Confidential Data](#)

Working at Cornell Zoom Backgrounds

Level up your Zoom meetings with one of these Working at Cornell virtual backgrounds!

Note: the text will appear in reverse on your screen image of yourself, but rest assured, it reads properly on everyone else's monitors!

- [Learn how to use Zoom virtual backgrounds](#)



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[Evening](#)

[Red Seal](#)

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[Towers](#)

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