The Ultimate Guide to Flexible Working
for employees
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More flexibility, more productivity?

Over 82% of UK employees in our 2016 survey said that they are usually more productive when working flexibly. So, is it time for you to make the move to flexible working?

This guide has everything you need to know: your rights when it comes to flexible working, how to apply and how to be as efficient as possible – from the tools that will keep you in touch with your colleagues, to top tips about where to work.
By definition, flexible working is a way of doing your job that meets your particular needs, whether that’s opting to complete tasks remotely, having flexible start and finish times, or phasing in retirement.

Since 2014, all employees now have the legal right to request flexible working, be that anything from flexi-time to job sharing with a colleague.

More than 56% of employees surveyed said that flexible hours are their preferred form of flexible working.

Sign me up
To make the move to a formal flexible working agreement, you need to fill out and submit a flexible working application form*. You must have worked for the same employer for at least 26 weeks to be eligible.

Your employer must respond within three months of you submitting your application and if they agree to your request, your flexible working terms will need to be set out in your contract. After that, you’re good to go!

*www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-right-to-request-flexible-working-form
The state of flexible working

Over the last decade, flexible working has been on the rise. Giving employees the power to tailor their schedule and approach their workload how they choose lead to increased motivation and productivity – arguably making these types of arrangement a win-win situation for employers and their workforce. So how many people are reaping the benefits of flexible working?

Women are more nervous about asking for flexible working with more than 28% saying this compared to only 12% of men

Sector-by-sector

Perhaps unsurprisingly, due to the mobile nature of the industry, the IT sector is the one in which flexible working is most commonplace, with over 68% of respondents saying they work in this manner. When it comes to people’s preferred working arrangement, regardless of sector, flexible hours always comes out on top.

For those who work remotely, home comforts win, with 82% of employees in the Accountancy, Banking and Finance industry naming their place of residence as their favourite location to complete job-related tasks.
Where you work

Flexible working has been embraced particularly well in the South West, with 54.6% of respondents in this region revealing they have adopted this type of arrangement. If you’re located in Yorkshire and the Humber, chances are you prioritise flexible hours over remote working. Meanwhile, in the West Midlands, home came out on top again as people’s favourite work location.

The keenest sports fans are based in the North West, with more than 24% saying they would request flexible working patterns for the Olympics, and 4% planning to do so for Euro 2016.

Women’s main attraction for flexible working is to spend more time with children (30%), whilst for men it would be less time in traffic (42%).

A matter of gender

Flexible working is marginally more popular among females than males, with over 46% of women doing so, compared to 45% of men.

Women feel like they are very productive when working flexibly, with over 86% of those surveyed claiming they were more efficient under such circumstances, where as 78% of men consider that to be the case. Supporting this, women generally take fewer breaks while working remotely: 34% of women said this compared to 26% of men.

Meanwhile, when it comes to big sporting events, women are most likely to ask for a flexible working pattern to watch the Rio Olympics, while men would prefer to request for Euro 2016 games.
The benefits of flexible working

There’s a whole host of benefits that go hand-in-hand with flexible working, avoiding the rush hour, being able to get to the gym during quieter periods and enjoying more valuable family time.

On top of this, more than 40% of workers said that they would take shorter breaks when working flexibly. This suggests that flexible working may boost efficiency, especially as 50% of those operating remotely still do the standard 9am to 5pm.

44% of workers said that getting work done with no distractions was their biggest appeal of flexible working.
Use it to your advantage
Flexible working could be the key to leading the kind of life you want to. These bloggers certainly believe in the benefits of flexible working...

43% of workers said that flexible working appealed to them because they could work when they felt the most productive

Michaela
cardifforniagurl.co.uk
“I love the freedom of flexible working and that my home is my office. This means I can play whatever music I want, at whatever volume to really motivate me. I definitely find my most creative ideas come from being comfortable and motivated in my own personal space.”

Kara
karawillow.com
“The best thing about flexible working for me is being able to go to the gym around my work hours, meaning I not only save money on a gym membership, but can easily fit in a daily workout before or after work without my social or work life suffering!”

Helen
blogofbitsandbobs.co.uk
“The best thing about flexible working for me is being able to take my laptop to the lovely independent coffee shop down the road and deal with my emails on a comfy sofa with a constant supply of fresh coffee. Also being able to flex my lunch break around the spin class at my local gym and feeling like Supergirl when I’ve done it.”
Tips for flexible working

How to make it work for you

The reason flexible working is a success is very much in the name. It’s an agreement with your employer that you will get your work done in the way you choose. The trick is to choose the right setup for you, to let you show off your versatility and levels of efficiency. Where you choose to work, how you decide to split your time and the tools that help you keep in touch all play a major part.

68% of employees rely on email as their main communication tool

What the experts say

Bloggers know a thing or two about remote working and juggling their workload. We asked some of the UK’s best-loved bloggers to share their tips for flexible working and getting stuff done.

Amy
callmeamy.co.uk

“My most important tip for flexible working is making sure you stay organised. There are lots of pluses about flexible working (missing the rush hour every day keeps you sane for one), but not having a routine requires you to be a bit more organised. For me, this means my diary is my best friend and Sunday evenings are spent making to do lists planning for the week ahead. Make a plan for each day and it’ll ensure productivity!”
Caroline

carryoncaroline.com

“My top tip for flexible working would be to make some me time in your diary, whether it’s a whole Sunday or shorter evening sessions, treat it as you would organising to meet a friend. Make the time, and if your plans change, make sure you reschedule yourself!”

Fran

frannymac.com

“Flexible working is a huge part of my work routine. Between working a full-time job and freelance writing, I often find myself working from home. Services such as Powwownow are a great help with managing my workload – I can schedule meetings with clients across the country (and even the globe) without leaving my desk (or if I’m lucky, the sofa).”

Mona

monaseyes.com

“Having a plan of action for each day, week and month is incredibly important for me; I need structure to be able to be as proactive as possible with each task. Embrace technology, it makes my life a whole lot easier. Smart phones and watches have made daily activities more manageable with push notifications and alerts for everything, making sure I don’t miss a thing and keeping me connected with the rest of the world.”

Roxii

studdedkissesblog.co.uk

“With flexible working you can work anywhere at any time; I find working from home great. There’s no dress code or rules. I have music on whilst I work, it just makes it a bit more enjoyable and relaxing. It’s important to take a break though – turn your email off for a while and chill out.”

54.9% of employees say their phone is their main communication tool

27% rely on instant messaging
Keeping connected

The truth about flexible working is that you might be working at different times (or in a different location) to your colleagues and clients. The growth of technology means the practicalities of this are no longer a headache, as it’s a simple case of knowing which tools suit your needs best, besides the basics of a laptop, an email address and a decent internet connection.

Best for video conferencing:

Exactly as it sounds, this is like a conference call, but with video. It’s great for holding meetings when everyone is working miles apart and for dialling those working remotely into gatherings in the office.

You can even give presentations to clients and colleagues with video conferencing, which, if nothing else, will save you money on travel and hospitality costs. For this, you will need a webcam, but as most laptops have them built in nowadays, this shouldn’t prove a costly option.

The Powwownow video conferencing platform iMeet* allows up to 125 participants at once and the web conferencing platform allows you to screen share with people too.

Men are more likely to communicate with their colleagues via video conferencing with 20% saying this compared to 15% of women.

*www.powwownow.co.uk/video-conferencing
Best for instant messaging:

Instant messaging has been in our social lives for a while now, and it’s making its way into the world of work. It’s great for remote teams who need to ask questions and get answers quickly, without going through the more laborious process of emailing. There are a lot to choose from, but Slack, SparkChat and HipChat are slick, modern and angled towards business use.

Best for online document sharing:

Even teams that are wholly based in the office need a document sharing tool, and using an online version means employees can access it anywhere, anytime. This helps to reduce stress by ensuring everyone has access to the same key documents. Dropbox, GoogleDrive and Box are all popular tools.
Finding flexible working locations

The key to remote working can be finding the best spot for you. For 69% of UK employees who work flexibly, home is their optimum location to complete work tasks, while 10.7% would choose a coffee shop; it’s all about discovering what is right for you.

Sophie
asablonde.com

“Working from local independent coffee shops means I get to explore the local area whilst getting valuable work done. Different locations also keep the dull moments of the working day at bay, when you need a break you can always people watch to pass the time!”

Laura
lovedbylaura.com

“My top tip for flexible working: avoid distractions by setting up a designated space in the house to work (whether that’s at a desk or your kitchen table) and make sure that it’s equipped with everything you need for at least a few hours’ work. This will help you to focus and make the most of your time.”
Flexible working in a café

The advantage of a local café is that it gets you out of the house, and gives you access to an unlimited supply of decent coffee, and potentially cake.

There’s something very refreshing about setting up camp in a café for the day, bringing only the necessities with you and letting the world pass you by while you tap away on your laptop.

Best for...

Wanting to disconnect and get your head down

28% find locations to work flexibly based on past experience
Flexible working in a co-working space

Work in a creative industry and like to run your ideas past other people? A co-working space might be the spot for you.

Growing in number with the rise of flexible working, co-working spaces offer a desk, Wi-Fi and the company of others. This is a great space for meeting other colleagues working remotely, or to check into a video conference call.

Best for...

A bit of creativity

Where to work?

**NearDesk** is a community of pay as you go co-working spaces across the country. Simply choose a location that suits you and settle down in a space with guaranteed speedy Wi-Fi and complementary tea and coffee.

**The Office Group** offers flexible working spaces for all sorts of people, from those in the creative industry, to finance or recruitment. Its network of offices are in the best locations, making travel, meetings and co-working as streamlined as possible.

*www.neardesk.com
**www.theofficegroup.co.uk
Flexible working at home

Working from home provides the ultimate perk: no commute! But it is important to set some ground rules if this is your location of choice.

Create a designated working space where you actually want to work, light and clean is a good start. Make it clear to others that during your chosen work hours you’re not available to do any chores...

This way, working remotely can be a dream, with 24/7 access to your fridge and no queue for the kettle.

More than 70% of women prefer to work at home

Best for...
Home comforts to hand
Our pick of the best flexible working spaces in London. For the lowdown on locations and tips for remote working, check out our Smarter Working Guide to London here*.

**North**

**Drink, Shop & Do**

☕ Café

A relaxed café offering a creative environment and monthly community events.

📍 **Find:** 9 Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, London, N1 9DX
📞 **Call:** 020 7278 4335
✉️ **Email:** mail@drinkshopdo.com

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**South**

**The Peckham Pelican**

☕ Café

Proud of its creative vibe, this café attracts students, artists and designers alike.

📍 **Find:** 92 Peckham Road, London, SE15 5PY
✉️ **Email:** info@thepeckhampelican.co.uk

*www.powwownow.co.uk/remote-working-guide*
East

Canvas

Café

Freelancers frequent this space, where creativity thrives. Add your thoughts to the canvas of others across the walls.

📍 Find: 42 Hanbury Street, London, E1 5JL
📞 Call: 020 7018 1020
✉️ Email: hello@thecanvascafe.org

West

Barossa

Café

With great food, drink and customer service, the mixed crowd here means a lively atmosphere.

📍 Find: 277 New Kings Road, Fulham, London, SW6 4RD
📞 Call: 020 7751 9711
✉️ Email: hello@barossafulham.com

Central

SoHo Labs

Co-Working Space

24/7 secure keycard access, bright spaces and the chance to collaborate.

📍 Find: Floor 5, 55 Wardour Street, London, W1D 6AD
📞 Call: 020 7183 1545
✉️ Email: info@soholabs.co