Manage your time while working from home with help from Outlook

*Preview card description:* Maintaining a work life balance can be difficult with all the recent changes around the world. Learn how to share your calendar in Outlook and manage your time across work and personal commitments.

A lot has changed in the last few weeks.

You, and many more, may be working from home, blurring the lines between your work and your personal lives. Your daily routine has changed, and you are spending more time inside, more time connected to the digital world, and with additional personal responsibilities.

The nature of how and when you do your work and when you dedicate time to personal matters may have changed. You have likely increased your “digital interactions” with your friends and co-workers, are ordering more things online, and sharing your attention with your family during the workday.

With so many changes, it can be tricky to separate when your work day begins and when it ends, making it increasingly challenging to stay organized and on top of what matters while trying to also balance your personal commitments. As your personal organizer, Outlook can help you balance that blurring line.

**Take control of your (whole) day**

Managing your commitments along-side those of your friends, family, and colleagues is a little easier when you can see their availability next to yours. Whether it’s your manager’s, a co-worker’s, or your kid’s calendars, it’s easy to [add or share calendars] in Outlook so you can see it all together.
See your schedule next to or combined with the calendar from someone in your organization

Add your colleague’s calendar from your organization’s directory

You can also share your schedule with someone that is not in your organization or they can share their personal calendar with you. This is very useful if you want someone in your family to have access to your work schedule so they know when you are available or if you want to create events from your Outlook calendar in that person’s calendar, like adding your kid’s online classes to your partner’s calendar. Either way, you are in control of the amount of information you share about the events on your calendar.
Now you likely have personal commitments that happen during typical work hours and you might need to stay on top of work items while not at your home desk. To help you with that, Outlook allows you to keep your important information in one place in a helpful way for you to organize all your commitments and communications and stay in control of the time you do have. With all your personal, work and school accounts together in one app, you have easy access to your emails, contacts, files, and calendars at your fingertips so you can choose how you manage and view your day almost anywhere you are.

Manage your commitments across all your accounts in one place
Dedicating time for yourself and to your friends and family is a priority for most people, but that can be difficult, especially when you’re constantly right next to the digital tools that help you stay connected – which can cause distractions. You can manage those distractions by scheduling focus and quiet times by setting your working hours and silence notifications when you need to, and you can do this for both your personal communications and your work commitments. Control the time when you don’t want to be disturbed with notifications of new emails and also let your colleagues know when you are available for meetings in Outlook by setting your meeting hours in “Events and invitations”.

Do you tend to behave in a way similar to how gas fills a container and fill meetings for the full time allotted? To help you get time back in small increments, you can routinely schedule shorter meetings. You may be surprised how much more efficient they can be and how the snippets of time can add up. In Outlook, set the default duration of your appointments or meetings to end 5-10 minutes earlier. This way you have scheduled time to stretch, check on the kids, or grab a bite.

**Stay on top of what matters**

On top of everything you are already doing, you also need to juggle working from home with all-day parenting and being a part-time teacher, so there’s a lot you need to stay on top of, many lists to manage, emails you need to follow up on, tasks you need to complete, packages to track, or new calendars to need to adhere to.

Managing your tasks and to do lists can be a little tricky, but now that Microsoft To Do and Outlook are connected, it’s a little easier. Here are a few ways how these connected experiences help you stay organized.

Create your shopping list in Outlook and manage it there or in the To Do app. You can share it with someone else and even assign them a task to lighten your load.

You can assign tasks in a list and they will show up in their “Assigned to you” list

Turn an email into a task or an event by dragging and dropping it into My Day or flagging it in your email message list. In To Do, you will see a “Flagged emails” list among your tasks to help you prioritize and check things off.
Drag and drop an email message to create a task or an event in your calendar

You can also drop tasks from My Day into your calendar to create events which can help you plan and carve out the time to complete them.

Book time to complete a task in your calendar

Many of the things you need to stay on top of come to your email, and there’s a way to catch up with what’s new in your inbox when you are busy doing other things. Play My Emails in Outlook mobile lets you keep your hands free while you listen to and respond to new email messages. This way you can get
other things done such as cleaning the dishes, walking the dog, exercising or other activities while staying connected to what matters and on top of changes to your day.

But sometimes it’s just better to plan to respond to certain emails at a later time, or read a document for a specific meeting, or take the time for a more detailed response to the email message your manager sent you. To avoid losing track of that kind of message, you can **Snooze** it and schedule it for when you have more time. Snoozing an email will remove it from your inbox (but you can still search for it) until the time you schedule it to come back to the top of your inbox as an unread email with a new “received” timestamp and an icon indicating that it was snoozed.

*Snooze in Outlook on the web or customize swipe action in Outlook on your phone to snooze messages*

Being connected to what’s going on out in the world or down the street is also worth staying on top of so if you like getting your news from a TV program, **add that schedule** to your day so you don’t miss it.
Choose your preferred show and add the schedule to your calendar

To minimize your trips to the stores, you are probably doing more online shopping. Turn on your event summaries in email or calendar in your calendar Settings under Events from email, and Outlook will keep track of your packages for you on your calendar as well as the Search home page in Outlook on your phone. Now you won’t need to go look for that email confirmation to track it.
Track deliveries with the same account in Outlook as the email address for shipping confirmations

Some meetings require preparation so having quick access to related emails and documents can help you get ready but taking time to search for what you need may take you away from more important things, with Meeting Insights Outlook gathers the information you might need for your meetings and
brings it together for you in the meeting event on your calendar, in My Day, or in the meeting reminder. No need to spend time looking for what you need.

Find Meeting Insights when you scroll down on the meeting event in your calendar

Stay connected
Whether it’s at work or with your favorite people, staying in touch is important. Get your team on an informal video call or organize a video get-together with your friends. You can use Microsoft Teams, Skype, or most 3rd party providers.

In the coming weeks we are making online meetings even easier. When you create a meeting event with someone, Outlook will automatically make it an online meeting. No more asking to add a Teams meeting after the invite was sent.

Easily add online meeting to any event or adjust settings so they’re added by default
Or you can manually create an online meeting using Teams, Skype, or any supported audio and video provider. When you use your work account and have Teams or Skype, you can easily add an online meeting and Outlook can even suggest a time when everyone is free.

In your work account you can easily add a Teams meeting

If you are using Outlook.com, you can choose to use Skype or something like Zoom.
Use add-ins in Outlook.com to add your favorite video-calling service

There are people from whom you don’t want to miss a message. You can create rules to deal with those important people in Outlook, or you can add them as favorites. It’s a simple way to always have quick access to their messages and easily set your preferences so that you get email notifications only from your favorites. Just add someone as a favorite from the People card in Outlook or by clicking on “Add favorite”.

Most of us receive and send a lot of email messages in a day. Some are important, some are meant as information only, and in some we are asked or ask someone to do something. You can easily get someone’s attention in an email message by tagging them with @theirname, that way they will quickly know there is an action item for them. You can also save time and stay connected to what’s important by filtering your inbox for messages where someone @you and get a preview of which messages require your attention.
If you want to learn about additional capabilities in Outlook, please check out the short instructional videos for [Outlook for iOS and Android](https://www.outlook.com) and [Outlook on the web](https://outlook.com) or find more training tools [here](https://www.outlook.com).

We understand how important it is to balance your work and personal commitments during these extraordinary times. Start now by downloading [this CHECKLIST](https://www.outlook.com) of the time management tips we’ve outlined here in this article and continue to use Outlook as your personal organizer.

We will also continue to explore additional opportunities to help you further manage your time, but in the meantime, we would love to hear from you. Give us your feedback in our [UserVoice channel](https://www.outlook.com) and let us know how we can help you even more.

Thanks!