

Remote Collaboration Tips & Tricks

Here are some starter ideas for easing the transition into long-term working at home and doing remote collaboration with colleagues near and far. Please add your own! There are 4 main categories - Self-care, Synchronous Collaboration, Asynchronous Collaboration (pretty thin as of 3/19/20), Tools & Resources. But if you think additional categories need to be made, go right ahead!

Self-Care

Everyone is different in their needs and habits, but here are some things to keep in mind when working from home for prolonged periods.

- Stick to a schedule that works for you
- Get ready like you are going to leave the house. Show up for yourself just like you would for anyone else! While it's fun to work in sweats or pyjamas for a few days, for some people it's more effective
- Try to have a separate location for work time vs rest of life. Avoid habitually working from the couch or bed if you can.
- Schedule meetings as video conferences to increase accountability.
- That said, embrace changes in scenery when you get in a rut
- Take breaks to stretch, relax your eyes, take a walk - whatever works for you
- If you have family or room-mates, it's going to mean new routines, roles and responsibilities. Have conscious conversations about how these are playing out and make adjustments as time goes on.

Synchronous Collaboration

- Some good practices for video calls:
 - **Turn on your camera** :-) Having the visual helps a lot.
 - On Zoom, Alt/Opt-V toggles video on and off.
 - Full list of [Zoom keyboard shortcuts >](#)
 - Try to **get good lighting** so people can see you and the picture is clear. Avoid being backlit otherwise you just look like a black shape!
 - Put yourself on **mute when not talking**
 - On Zoom, Alt/Opt-A toggles audio on and off. When on mute, if you press and hold the space bar it will unmute you until you release the spacebar, walkie-talkie style
 - Many laptops also have microphone mute keys on their keyboards, and earbuds or headsets often have a mute control (though this usually mutes the earbuds rather than Zoom itself).

- **Actively participate** - contributing to the conversation is even more important when virtual, because your body language and posture won't communicate your engagement as they do in real life.
- **Exaggerate your body language** and practice "active listening" techniques where you are visibly engaged in what others are saying. E.g. Nod vigorously when others are talking so it shows up in the small thumbnail :) This requires conscious effort at first but becomes a habit after a while.
- If you need to step away for a minute to deal with kids, pets, get some water, have a bio break etc. just drop a note in the chat.
- **Presentation tips**
 - Zoom and Google Meet let you present whole desktop or just an application so you can keep other materials private.
 - Zoom has a built-in whiteboard function
 - On Windows, right click on desktop and select View -> Show Desktop Icons to toggle desktop icons on or off for privacy.
 - If you're using 2 monitors, make sure you're presenting using the right one :)
 - Lots of nuts and bolts tips here, particularly for collaborative workshop sessions: <https://medium.com/@stephenanderson/specific-things-ive-learned-running-a-fe-w-remote-workshops-b68305e00d1e>

Asynchronous Collaboration

- General principle: **Over-communicate!** When not able to get together in person, it's vital to go overboard on more communication in order to maintain team/class cohesion.
- **Create a shared photo album** (e.g. on Google Photos) for team-members to post photos of sketches, whiteboards, post-it notes etc. and mimic that persistently-available pin-ups you'd have in the studio. If you do some collaborative online whiteboard sessions, save off pictures of those and put them in the album also.

Tools and Resources

- [Lucid Chart](#) - Tool for flow-charting, mind-mapping, wireframing, brainstorming. There's a free account with some limits. Adam has a business account, could set up some starter docs for each project and invite you, if you run into limits with the free plan.
- [Mural](#) - Visual collaboration tool - stickies, images, whiteboarding, etc. You can get started for free but doesn't look like they have a perpetual free plan.
- [Miro](#) - Another whiteboard/post-it collaboration tool, has a basic features free tier
- [Microsoft Whiteboard](#) - Collaborative whiteboard tool for Windows (if have touchscreen/pen) and iOS (best on iPad)
- [Loom](#) makes it easy to do short videos that can be shared with a team, e.g. do an end-of-day handoff to a remote team in another timezone - instead of an email giving an

update on what's changed in a design or project, do a quick video with annotated screens shots.

- Good article on experiences [running sprints remotely](#)
- Other ideas? Put them here!