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Out of the Office, Into the Home

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Q. *You recently spent a day working from home, and you can't believe how much you accomplished. How do you persuade your boss to permit this arrangement on a more permanent basis?*



Illustration by Chris Reed

A. It may not be easy. Jeff Davidson, president of the Breathing Space Institute, a time management consulting firm in Chapel Hill, N.C., said that unless your boss already managed a number of employees who worked from home, he probably would not embrace your suggestion right away.

“Corporate cultures are steeped in ritual,” he said. “If working from home isn’t part of that ritual, you need to deal with the fact that it may take time to get what you want.”

Q. *How do you know if working from home is right for you?*

A. The arrangement obviously doesn’t fit every job. If you operate heavy machinery or work in a laboratory, fulfilling day-to-day responsibilities outside the workplace may be hard. Sales, management and other positions that require face-to-face interaction with other people may also prove challenging if you’re home alone.

Personality is a factor, too. Dean Simpson, program manager for economic services at the Wake County human services department in Raleigh, N.C., said that only the most disciplined and organized employees benefited from working at home. “If you are easily distracted or you are someone who procrastinates, working all by yourself isn’t the best kind of work setting,” she said. Ms. Simpson, who oversees 19 telecommuting workers and 148 employees in the office, said that she would be a “terrible” candidate because she would “do things like mow grass and wash clothes all day.”