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Title:

Is Working At Home Right For You?

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Summary:

If you've just begun your search for a work at home job, you probably have a beautiful concept of what working from home is like. You probably imagine yourself waking up whenever you want, sliding your feet into fuzzy slippers and shuffling to the kitchen to get some coffee, then shuffling along to your office to put in another wonderful day at work, then later going to the mailbox to pick up your weekly paycheck of several thousand dollars. I hate to burst your bubble, but i...

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Article Body:

If you've just begun your search for a work at home job, you probably have a beautiful concept of what working from home is like. You probably imagine yourself waking up whenever you want, sliding your feet into fuzzy slippers and shuffling to the kitchen to get some coffee, then shuffling along to your office to put in another wonderful day at work, then later going to the mailbox to pick up your weekly paycheck of several thousand dollars. I hate to burst your bubble, but it doesn't work that way. Actually, let me clarify that and say it doesn't always work that way.

The truth is, working at home is usually a lot harder than working in an office somewhere. Scammers and hyped-up business opportunity ads have given us the belief that working at home is oh-so-easy. We just relax on a tropical beach, then go collect our paychecks. I'm sure you've seen ads like that. Those of us who already work at home know better!

Here are some things you should consider before jumping into a work at home job:

How much do you want to earn? - If you want to work for an employer as a telecommuter, be prepared to earn less than you would at a job outside the home. A job that pays $11.00 an hour in the regular workforce might pay $7 or $8 an hour at home. There are exceptions of course. Some jobs, like virtual assisting, web design and graphics, medical transcription and coding and other professional jobs will probably pay more than a simple data entry or customer service job. Many work at home jobs don't pay hourly either. For data entry work, you might get paid per piece, and for telephone jobs you might get paid per "talk minute" (only those minutes you are actually on the phone with a customer.)

Do you need benefits? - The majority of work at home jobs do not provide benefits like health insurance or life insurance. Again, there are exceptions.

Taxes - There are companies that will hire you as an actual "employee" and they will take taxes out of your pay. But some will only hire you as an "independent contractor," and you are responsible for paying your own taxes.

Work availability - If you are hired as an independent contractor, it's important to understand that your employer is not obligated to provide any work for you. Most companies have busy seasons and slow seasons. During a busy season, you might be working 40-50 hours a week, and then the slow season arrives and suddenly you're fighting to get even 10 hours of work per week. If your income is especially important to your household, definitely keep that in mind. However, many people choose to work more than one job at a time. If one slows down, they simply start working more for the other.

How motivated are you? - If you are the type of person who usually needs a kick in the rear to get moving, working at home will be very hard on you. You have to be extremely disciplined to sit down at the computer, log in and actually WORK each day. There are so many distractions in the home that will pull you away from work if you let them. You have to be very focused and set a schedule for yourself, just like you would at a job outside the home.

Do you mind solitude? - Working at home can be lonely. If you thrive on social interaction, working alone can be difficult to adjust to. However, you can ease this by spending time with friends frequently, or joining some online groups to chat with like minded people.

Flexibility - Some employers require you to work a specific set schedule, while others might be more flexible, allowing you to choose your own hours. Give some thought to which type of schedule would work best for you. When I first decided to work at home, I made the mistake of choosing a job that had a rigid schedule, and I hated it! I had forgotten that that was one of the things I disliked about working outside the home - living by someone else's schedule. Think about how you work best, and choose accordingly.

Childcare - So many mothers want to work at home so they can raise their own children, rather than sending them to a daycare. However, working at home with small children underfoot is no easy task! It's not impossible, and it depends greatly on the ages of your children and what type of work you are doing at home. If you work a telephone job, most employers will require a very quiet background, which is impossible if you have small children. You also can't stop working every few minutes to entertain the kids, unless you want to put in a very long day at the computer to make up for all the interruptions. There are certainly things you can do to make it easier, like have a neighborhood teenager come in for a few hours to watch your children while you work, or work only when your spouse is home and can keep an eye on the kids.

Choosing work that fulfills you - This is SO important! Right now you're probably thinking, "I don't care what type of work I do, as long as it brings in a paycheck." I guarantee that attitude won't last long. Like I said, you will need to be extremely self-motivated and self-disciplined to work at home, and your job will be a lot easier if you actually like what you do! Think about the type of person you are, and the type of work that suits you best. Are you creative and free-spirited, or nose-to-the-grindstone efficient? Give some thought to your "vision" of working at home, and try to find a job (or business) that will complement that.

Do you even want a "job?" - When some people decide they want to "work at home," they don't want a regular J-O-B at all. What they want is the freedom to set their own schedule and do work they love. It's certainly possible to find those qualities in a job, but it can be difficult. If this describes you, consider starting your own business instead, focusing on your existing talents and abilities. I think many people shy away from this idea because it seems so overwhelming. But people do this every day! It's not hard at all. If you don't know much about business but have an interest, start learning! There are so many great resources on the internet today. If you're still not sure what type of work at home is best for you, get out a pad of paper and a pen. Write this sentence along the top of the page: I want to work at home because . . . and then write down as many endings to that sentence as you can think of. If most of your answers have to do with freedom and passionate, fulfilling work, a "job" might not be the best thing for you.

Regardless of what type of work you decide on, understand that working at home can be difficult and challenging. But for most of us who do it, it is also wonderful. Personally, I wouldn't trade it for anything! And once you find the right job or business, you will probably feel the same.

If this article has given you the impression that working at home might not be for you, remember that you can change if you want it badly enough. If you're not very motivated, work on that. Give yourself little challenges every day and strengthen your level of self-discipline. If you need health benefits, keep searching for a job that provides them, or research other possibilities like affordable health insurance for the self-employed. If your resolve is strong enough, you can make it happen! Never give up on your dreams.