

Telecommuting or Flexible Schedule Handbook

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Telecommuting or establishing a flexible worksite can be done with any number of hours depending on factors such as the nature of the work to be done, the needs of the unit, and if possible, the needs or wishes of the employee. It is expected that the employee maintains their current hours of work per week for the College regardless where the work is being performed.

Telecommuting

Telecommuting is the relocation of an employee's worksite either to their home, or to another, closer to home worksite provided by the College. The term telecommuting usually involves some type of computerized or electronic communication with the original on-campus worksite.

Flextime

Flextime or flexible work hours usually begin with an 8-hour workday but include a starting and quitting time different from the standard 8:00 am to 4:30 pm workday. It usually includes a core period of time in which the employee is required to be in attendance at the worksite. For example, an employee may have an 8-hour workday which starts sometime between 6 am and 10 am. They are required to be at the worksite from 10am to 2pm (with a scheduled lunch hour), and may leave between 3pm and 7pm (depending on the starting time). The core period may vary, depending upon the requirements of the position as well as the needs of the department and the employee. This may also include a 4/40, that is, four 10-hour days that comprise a 40-hour work week.

Employees and supervisors utilizing telecommuting and flextime work arrangements are expected to follow all College Policies and Procedures.

Advantages of Telecommuting/Flexible Work Schedules

The experiences of other organizations that have tried telecommuting and flexible schedules have shown that both have the benefits described below. Only your experience with such programs will ultimately demonstrate whether such benefits occur in your area or department.

1. Increased productivity.

Other organizations have noted productivity increases after implementing telecommuting and/or flexible schedules. There are several possible reasons: elimination of commute stress; working at home can allow employees to avoid interruptions and distractions that often exist in the office; increased morale may serve as a motivator; and work schedules can be arranged to take advantage of the employee's most productive work periods.

2. Lower use of sick leave.

Telecommuting and flexible scheduling can reduce the amount of sick leave used by employees in three ways: escaping the pressure of commuting or tight daily schedules can make some employees less susceptible to illness; and sometimes employees who are injured, ill, or otherwise not inclined to dress for work and make the drive to the office, may still feel able to work, if at home; flexible schedules give employees an opportunity to conduct personal business during the day and reduce the amount of time off work.

3. Improved employee morale and empowerment.

Employers who have instituted telecommuting programs have noted some increase in employee morale. This may be due to the increased flexibility and time for personal business; improved work environment; ability to schedule work around “personally productive” hours, rather than adhering to an organizational norm (8 am to 4:30pm); reduced expenses (e.g., commute, clothing, lunch), and/or the employee’s appreciation for the convenience, independence, self-direction, and supervisory trust shown by such programs.

4. Expanded service hours/reduced traffic and parking pressures.

Among the benefits of flexible schedules are the opportunities for expanded hours of service by the department, including coverage during the noon hour. For example, one employee may work 7am to 4pm, another 9am to 6pm. This arrangement allows departmental services to be available from 7am to 6pm, rather than the normal 8am to 4:30pm; and with alternate schedules, lunch hours will be staggered. Increased services can be directed to the public served or to departmental demands. It can also provide uninterrupted work time when fewer people are present and phones are quieter. A further advantage can be the maximizing of equipment use. An employee working 11am to 8pm can utilize equipment for additional hours that is otherwise only available on a shared basis when everyone works the same hours. Additional advantages accrue to the College through a lower demand for access and parking at peak working hours.

5. Improved recruitment and retention.

It is important for the College to be able to recruit and retain the best employees possible. Telecommuting and flexible scheduling can help in these areas. By increasing flexibility and autonomy, reducing commute time and work expenses, and by allowing employees a more pleasant work environment, telecommuting and flexible scheduling can make your department a more attractive place to work for both current and future employees. In addition, telecommuting and flexible arrangements can make working for SLCC more convenient and attractive to people living in outlying areas, thus giving all of us a broader base from which to draw new applicants. These functions can also assist in delaying retirement by allowing an ideal way to continue to earn income without the hectic daily commute.

Disadvantages of Telecommuting/Flexible Schedule

In making a management decision about whether or not to implement a departmental program for telecommuting or flexible schedules, you must also consider the disadvantages, which could arise.

1. Staffing, Vacation and Leave Coverage.

Having employees who do not work at the central work location, or who do not keep the same hours as others, may make vacation, sick leave, and other types of leave-coverage somewhat more difficult. It may be necessary, at times, for a manager to temporarily alter a telecommuting arrangement if staff coverage is necessary in the central work location. It may also take some adjustment for department staff (including managers and supervisors) to learn new schedules, and adjust to not always having everyone there. Routinely posting telecommuting days and flexible hours would provide information to other staff.

2. Scheduling meetings.

As with coverage, scheduling meetings can become more complex. Trying to accommodate meetings to days in the office or flexible work schedules, reduces the core period of time employees will be in the same place, at the same time. It may, at times, be necessary for an employee to adjust their schedule in order to be available for a meeting.

3. Loss of cohesiveness/interpersonal dynamics.

Altering the dynamics of the work place, and the relationships that have been established, can have consequences (though not always negative). There can be a loss of “team” feeling; there may be feelings of increased isolation and loss of social contact for telecommuting employees; hard feelings can develop among employees whose positions or personal circumstances do not allow them to telecommute or have flexible schedule. Being aware of these possible consequences will allow you to address them as they arise.

4. Safety, Security and Liability.

Supervisors and managers need to be cognizant of safety issues when employees work outside of the traditional work hours. It is important to make certain that security matters are understood by employees who work alone or who work early or late (e.g., doors locked, lights on, proper identification prior to allowing access). The SLCC Campus Police should be made aware of employees who consistently work in isolated or remote areas, or whose schedules include particularly early or late hours for safety precautions.

5. Parking.

Parking can be more difficult for individual employees who drive to work at a later hour. Current demands are such that parking lots fill quickly during the early morning hours.

Other Considerations:

1. Supervision and Feedback

Working at a remote location decreases the amount of supervision and feedback immediately available to an employee. For telecommuting to be possible, some amount of work must be done at home without feedback or approval. In many cases, the employee will benefit from spending time alone. However, if an employee plans to work at home over 50% of the time, they should be confident and empowered about making independent decisions.

2. Social Interaction

Telecommuters will have to adjust to being isolated. Eventually people must compensate for social breaks and by keeping in contact in other ways (phone, Email, etc.) or by catching up when in the office.

3. Organization and Time Management Skills

At the office, there are many subtle cues to keep a person on track. However, at home it is more difficult to manage time and stay organized. Some people might tend to talk with friends or family or do things around the house, and the work area may not be as structured as the office. The more organized an employee is, the more productive they will be as a telecommuter.

4. Self-Motivation

It can be difficult for some employees to work when no one is checking up on them, or when co-workers aren't passing by the office to see them working. Telecommuters must develop regular routines and set deadlines for completion of work. Successful telecommuters are people who can reward themselves for being productive.

5. Performance

Telecommuters should be good performers. Are there specific problems or developmental needs that are evident in the employee's work ethic and behavior? Think about how these might relate to telecommuting.

6. Length of Service

Employees who have been on the job a long time are naturally more familiar with their tasks as well as their coworkers. If coworkers are unfamiliar with the telecommuter they are less likely to call then they need assistance or input. The telecommuter may also be less likely to contact people that they do not know. Additionally, a telecommuter should be a full-time rather than a part-time or temporary employee.

Managing a Telecommuting Employee

Remote management is not much different from managing people on-site. It involves basic management skills, which include setting goals, assessing progress, giving

regular feedback, and managing by results. In fact, managers of telecommuters have reported that their own overall management skills increased.

Management by Objectives

You probably have already managed by objectives in one form or another by:

1. Setting goals or objectives;
2. Action-planning to work on objectives;
3. Corrective actions; and
4. Periodic reviews and performance appraisals.

For a telecommuter this may involve dividing the objectives into smaller parts and reviewing them more frequently.

When setting objectives and giving performance feedback, remember the following:

1. Employee participation promotes acceptance of the manager's observations, and employees who are allowed to voice opinions will be more satisfied with the feedback.
2. Set specific performance objectives rather than general ones. This will clarify exactly what is expected of the employee.
3. Productivity is more likely if problem areas are discussed right away.
4. Criticism triggers defensive reactions. Talk about how something can be improved, rather than spending too much time on the downside of an employee's work.
5. Reward the employee for work well done! Employees respond much better to positive feedback than to criticism.

Measuring Performance

Before you can review objectives, they should be clearly defined, with measurable output such as completed reports or written codes. These can be measured in quantity, quality, and time to complete. Measuring productivity and performance should not be different for on-site and off-site workers. If you have a good system for measuring output, it should be equally effective for an employee working at home. If you feel the current measurement criteria are not sufficient, this is a good opportunity to develop them. Be careful not to over-measure; not every task can be evaluated in quantitative terms. Evaluate individual work as well as group work.

How to Implement Telecommuting

In order to determine if a telecommuting arrangement could benefit the department and accommodate appropriate staff requests, you will need to consider the following issues:

1. Evaluate Organizational needs.

All programs require management approval. Therefore, before giving specific approval, it is important to assess the particular request in light of departmental programs and needs, as well as budget and staff, when making

a decision about telecommuting or a flexible arrangement within the organization.

2. Consider Positions/Employees.

In deciding whether or not a particular employee and their position is suitable for telecommuting, you should consider each employee's job responsibilities, and each employee's past work performance.

- The positions responsibilities: Review the position description of the employee being considered for telecommuting. Are there functions/tasks, which can be performed at home, or performed at a time when other employees are not available? Does it involve writing, reading, research, thinking, editing, data entry, word processing or coding? Is it project oriented? Does the position provide immediate response to a request for services (e.g., does it provide a service either in person or by answering phones)? Does it require use of equipment or services that are only available at the central work location? Does it require use of confidential files that cannot be taken from the central work location? Does it provide backup to any other position (backup that cannot be provided by another employee, e.g., special skill or training)? Can accommodation be made to any areas of concern?
- The employee's previous work performance: Review the employee's previous performance and other pertinent records in the employee's departmental file. You are probably familiar with the work habits of the employee being considered for telecommuting. Telecommuting requires self-motivation and self-discipline. It also requires an employee who works well without direct supervision, has good time management skills, a good understanding of her/his duties and responsibilities, and is well organized.
- Trail Period: One option is to allow the employee to begin telecommuting on a trial basis, perhaps one day a week. If you determine after a sufficient period of time that the employee is not effective at home, or that it is not organizationally effective for the employee to be away from the central work location, you, as the supervisor, have the right to terminate the telecommuting arrangement. This must only be done with prior notice to the employee.

If you must deny or terminate a telecommuting arrangement, be sure it is for business reasons only, and be clear in your explanation to the employee that it is neither a personal nor an arbitrary decision. It should be remembered, too, that many hardworking employees may experience problems working in a telecommuting arrangement. Some employees, who work well in an office setting, find working at home to be isolating. It also reduces visibility to co-workers and can result in not being available for office social activities. Some employees miss the lack of immediate

accessibility to supervisory input and/or support services (copy machines, fax, supplies). Some just find too many distractions at home.

3. Determine Budget and Equipment Needs.

Based on the functions/tasks that would be performed at home, you must determine what budget impact or equipment needs are required for a successful telecommuting arrangement. Perhaps the answer to both budget impact and equipment needs is none. However, you should consider the following questions:

- Is any equipment needed for the telecommuting arrangement that is under consideration (phone, voice mail, telephone credit card)?
- Is there equipment available from the department that can be loaned to the employee working at home (computer, printer, software, modem)?
- Is this equipment needed at the central location by the employee when they are not telecommuting?
- Is this equipment usually shared by other employees who would need it when the telecommuting employee has it at home?
- What is the departmental cost, if any, of one or more employees telecommuting (equipment, modem, voice mail, telephone credit card)?

4. Set schedules.

The next step is to determine how often the employee will be working at home. This will be determined by such issues as those already mentioned above: functions/tasks to be performed; the percentage of time represented in the position by those functions/tasks; the performance history of the employee being considered; the availability of equipment; any need for the employee to attend regularly scheduled meetings or provide backup to other positions in the central work location, etc.

It is imperative that work days and work hours be established to ensure proper Worker's Compensation coverage for the employee, and to properly limit the College's liability for any work-incurred injury by an employee to those hours.

5. Set Goals and Timetables.

It is critical for you and the telecommuting employee to set goals and timetables by which you both can determine if the work is being done in a satisfactory manner. Carefully managing the work output of your telecommuting employees is the most important task you will face. Some employees may be involved in projects that will vary from week to week or month to month. In these instances, each project should have a time frame, a format, and an end product by which you will measure productivity and the

quality of the work performed. Does the employee have a work plan with assignments and products understood? Are your expectations clearly outlined to the employee? Is the employee willing to be accountable for the results and the work performed under such an arrangement?

6. Establish Performance Criteria.

It is important that you be clear with all employees on the performance criteria by which they are evaluated. In managing by objectives, the focus will be on the product and not the process, that is, what is accomplished and not the direct observation of it being done. The measure will be results. Some of the questions to be answered are: What is the required product (report study, budget, outline, or forms to be processed)? Is there a quantity that is reasonable to expect? And if so, what is the expected time frame (when, how often) for completing the assigned product? Whatever the functions/tasks, you should use the same standards for determining the telecommuting employee's work performance that you would use if the employee were working in the central location.

7. Determine Communication Arrangements.

Once the goals, objectives and performance criteria are set, you should meet with the employee on a regular, predetermined basis to discuss progress and any problems.

There should be a commitment to maintaining that communication schedule whether daily, weekly, or whenever agreed upon. You should make yourself available between meetings, in case the employee needs assistance to continue the work. You may also wish to specify how often the employee is expected to call in for messages (e.g., every hour, once or twice a day, etc.). And it will be important for other employees to know how to reach the telecommuter.

Since telecommuting reduces the amount of face-to-face contact, it is important that you be active in maintaining communication and keeping those lines open. All employees perform better and remain loyal if you remain available, recognize their contributions, and keep them feeling like integral members of the group. Remember, too, that it may be necessary to publicize the new hours of service, or the availability of certain staff members to those "clients" or "client departments" your telecommuting or flex scheduled employees serve.

8. Discuss home working arrangements and any family care issues.

Each supervisor should discuss with the employee what the home worksite will be like. Each participant is required to designate a certain part of their home as their at-home worksite. Discuss this area with the employee to make certain that it will provide a good, safe working environment. You may, with sufficient notice, ask to inspect the home worksite if you have any concerns

about the appropriateness or safety of the employee or any College equipment.

If the employee has children or adults at home during the established work hours, it is appropriate to ascertain what arrangements have been made to ensure that the employee will have a work environment free of family disturbances. It is important to remind them that telecommuting is not an alternative to family care arrangements; flexible work schedules, however, may be.

Telecommuting – Questions Managers Ask

The following are frequent questions and concerns expressed by managers and supervisors when considering a telecommuting arrangement.

1. Who can telecommute?

The supervisor may wish to consider employees who:

- Hold positions with functions/tasks which can be performed away from the central work location;
- Have passed their probationary period;
- Have maintained satisfactory work performance (e.g., have demonstrated self-motivation,
- Good organization and time management skills).

This consideration can only be given after the supervisor has determined that a telecommuting arrangement is appropriate to the overall organizational needs of the unit, the job assignment, and departmental budget and staffing needs.

2. If an employee telecommutes, who pays for costs related to working at home, e.g., supplies, equipment, phone?

Supplies are to be provided by the department. Telephone calls may be reimbursed by the department or charged to a department telephone credit card. If the employee is to take College equipment home, the department must document, in writing, which equipment is on loan to the employee, and under what conditions it must be returned. The employee must have homeowner's or renter's insurance coverage to cover College equipment on their premises.

3. How often should employees telecommute?

The supervisor may wish to begin with a minimum telecommuting assignment for the employee (e.g. one day a week) and then increase the assignment depending upon the amount of time allowed by the position and the needs of the department. Telecommuting assignments may be part-time and require that some time be spent at the central work location. The amount of time acceptable may also be dictated by space available. It is not inconceivable that a position would be recruited primarily to telecommute.

4. How will I know if the telecommuting employee is really working?

The most common concern expressed by managers is that if they can't see their employees, they have no way of knowing if they are really working. One response has been that, even when an employee can be seen, a supervisor can't be certain that the employee is working. Telecommuting may bring about a change in the way you, as a supervisor, supervise. To effectively manage a telecommuting employee, the supervisor must manage what the telecommuting employee produces. The important question becomes can the employee turn out a good product in a reasonable period of time? Decide what tasks the employee will be performing, and when each of those tasks will be completed. Make certain the goals/timelines are discussed with the employee, and that the standards are reasonable, and would be reasonable if the assignment was being performed in the central work location.

5. What if the telecommuting employee doesn't seem to be getting the job done?

If you permit an employee to work at home, and the work is not being done in the time or manner you have outlined, discuss your expectations with the employee again. Remind the telecommuter that the hours of work are those that were set in the telecommuting arrangement, and the work expectations are the same as those of an employee in the central work location. If discussion with the telecommuting employee is not successful in improving unsatisfactory work performance, you as the supervisor, must determine the alternatives available.

6. What constitutes overtime if an employee is on a flexible or alternate work schedule?

Non-exempt employees are eligible for overtime for hours worked over 40 hours per week. Overtime must be approved in advance by the supervisor and hours worked must be reported.

7. What if an employee is scheduled to work a 10-hour day (e.g., is on a 4/40) but is off work due to personal illness or family care?

Employees submit absence records for the number of hours that they are off.

8. What if an employee is scheduled to work a 10-hour day (e.g., is on a 4/40) but schedules a vacation day off?

The employee would then submit 10 hours of vacation.

9. Do any of the working arrangements discussed have an impact on an employee's eligibility for merit increases, Special Performance Awards, Professional Development or Achievement Awards, Reduced-Fee benefits, or Staff Development programs?

The telecommuting/flexible schedule arrangements do not have an impact on the employee's eligibility for any of the above-mentioned programs. The employee is treated as any other non-telecommuting employee.

10. Wont it hurt our communication to have an employee telecommute?

Telecommuting does not necessarily hurt the communication between manager and employee. The telecommuting employee is still available by phone during their work hours at home, and face-to-face communication is available on those days when the employee is working in the office. Maintaining face-to-face communication is important and is a major reason why most employers limit either the number of days or the number of hours an employee may telecommute. Another issue is the telecommuting employee's availability to co-workers. Co-workers must also be able to reach the telecommuter and should be aware of scheduling and how the telecommuting employee can be reached, if necessary.

11. Will telecommuting employees lose their loyalty to the department if they work at home rather than in the office?

Telecommuters see working at home as a great benefit and realize the trust that is expressed in such arrangements. It can actually increase loyalty to the organization.

12. How do new employees learn their jobs if they're only here once in a while?

Telecommuting should not be available to employees in their probationary period (unless they were hired specifically as a telecommuting employee). Neither should telecommuting be available to employees who transfer or are promoted into new positions, until any necessary training has been completed. It is critical that an employee have proper training and orientation to functions and tasks, policies, procedures and practices appropriate to their position before beginning a telecommuting assignment. It is also important for the supervisor and employee to establish good patterns of communication before such arrangements are made. As noted above, the exception to this policy would be when an employee is hired to be an essentially full-time telecommuting employee. It is expected that such positions will be an exception to the standard part-time telecommuting arrangement.

13. What do I tell employees who want to telecommute but don't have the right kind of job?

Some employees will not be able to telecommute due to the nature of the position. This issue can be addressed to some extent by making known the types of positions that do and do not allow for telecommuting. However, in reviewing a particular position with an employee, there may be functions and tasks, which allow one day a week of telecommuting or working at home. If that is not possible, explain the reasons to the employee and that the decision is not an arbitrary one. If it is a performance-related decision, that too should be explained, basing your discussion on previously documented and discussed employee performance conversations.

14. What do I do if a telecommuter doesn't want to work at home anymore?

Telecommuting may be a work arrangement begun in response to a request by an employee. It may also be a condition of employment, at the time of hire,

which cannot be altered due to a lack of space at the central work location. If it is a request to return to the central worksite, every effort should be made to accommodate the employee's return as soon as possible. If it is a condition of employment, whether such an arrangement can be changed will depend upon the circumstances of the unit and management's evaluation of organizational needs.

15. What do I do if a telecommuter is injured while working at home?

The telecommuter's at-home work area is an extension of their office workspace while the employee is performing job duties. Injuries occurring in the workplace during agreed upon work hours are covered under Workers' Compensation, just as an injury would be if it occurred at the central work location. The telecommuter should be instructed to notify the supervisor immediately. The supervisor shall, upon being made aware of it, immediately refer the employee to a preferred Worker's Compensation Facility and provider. All appropriate injury reports shall then be completed.

16. Will this take a lot of management or supervisory time?

At first, you may devote a certain amount of time to assisting employees in establishing their telecommuting schedule and setting performance goals for them. However, once initial issues are resolved and communication pattern established, telecommuting employees should not require more supervisory time or attention than other employees.

17. Can I as a supervisor/manager also telecommute?

Some managers and supervisor assume that they must be in the office every day, even when their employees are not. That is not necessarily true. Supervisors and managers also have functions/tasks that can be performed at home (e.g., organizational planning, budget proposals, report writing). It may, in fact, be the case that such functions/tasks can be better accomplished at home without the usual interruptions that can take place in the office. Telephone communication can also be established between the office and telecommuting manager or supervisor.

Considerations for the Telecommuting Employee

1. How many hours will you work at home each day and week?

You can limit your tendency to overwork or motivate yourself to work harder by deciding this up front.

2. Which hours will you work?

When working at home, 8-4:30 may not suit your needs. Set a schedule for your work-at-home days and inform those people who will be affected by that decision.

3. How many breaks will you take during the day?

Figure out if you work best with frequent short breaks or longer breaks at longer intervals, but do take breaks. Telecommuters tend to be disciplined and self-motivated. They often get so engrossed in their work that they forget to take breaks. Severe headaches, eyestrain, neck and back pain are the result of working too many hours without a break. If you have this problem, try setting an alarm clock to go off every two hours or so. When it goes off, force yourself to get up and stretch, look away from the screen, or do some neck and back exercises. You can still think about work while you're stretching, but give your body a break.

4. When will you do your household chores?

Some people feel they cannot work in a house that is less than spotless, so they spend some time cleaning instead of working. This is a good reason to have a separate room for your home office. Try keeping just that room clean. Beware, the people you live with may expect you to do more housework "now that you're home anyway". Remind them that you are at home to work. You may find that doing one household chore per work-at-home day is a good compromise.

5. When will you eat when you work at home?

Make a conscious decision about this. Schedule regular lunch breaks to avoid excessive snacking or not eating at all.

6. When and how will you dress when you work at home?

Some people like to wear jeans and a T-shirt, but others find that if they dress too casually, their attitude seems too relax and they can't get down to work. Dressing for work at home the same as you do for the office may be the best solution.

7. If you have kids, when you will be available to them?

Telecommuting is not a substitute for childcare. Children need a lot of attention, and have a right to expect it from you. But your work needs attention, too. Make arrangements for childcare, and set boundaries on your availability to kids and others.

8. What interruptions will you allow?

There will be phone calls from friends as well as co-workers, plus deliveries, repair service calls, neighbors, etc. It's better to define a policy in advance so you don't have to make individual decisions at each distraction. Setting a schedule for your work-at-home days and making careful decisions will help you be a successful telecommuter. Working at home can improve your productivity, but not if you let distractions or lack of organization get in your way. The flexibility of working at home a few days a week can be stimulating. Harness that flexibility and make it work for you.

9. **How will you communicate with your Colleagues?**

With today's technology there are multiple ways to communicate (e.g. email, phone calls, video conference, instant messenger etc.). You should provide a phone number where you could be reached during your scheduled working hours. In cases where you will be attending virtual meetings, the office dress code should apply.

Technical Considerations

An important step in deciding whether to telecommute is the consideration of the work you will perform when not in the office. Think about the computing resources you use in the office and the types of applications you use each day in your job. Perhaps you access a central computing system which provides the applications you use or you have a dedicated workstation with commercial application packages such as spreadsheets, word processor, etc. In many cases you probably use a combination of internally developed applications and the resources of your workstation. To successfully telecommute, you must have access to the computing resources you need to do your job. Today's technology provides a wide range of solutions that can help you be an effective telecommuter.

Don't automatically assume that you need exactly the same workstation at home as you have at the office. Check with the information technology department to ensure the proper workstation you choose will allow you access to the software and applications necessary to complete the functions/tasks as you telecommute. Things to consider include screen size, the speed of the workstation, disc space, and whether you regularly need to print information. If you have to store information on the disk of your home workstation, remember that you need to back it up.

Application Software

Once you have decided on the workstation, determine which software to use. If you have the same workstation as the one at your office then obviously you will use the same software packages. Before simply copying the software from the office, carefully read the vendors' license agreements. Most license agreements today recognize that people use the packages both at the office and at home and so permit you to treat the software as a "book". In other words, you are permitted to install the software on both your office and home workstations as long as there is no possibility that two people will use the software at the same time. If someone is using your workstation at the office while you are telecommuting, you must purchase additional copies of the application package.

Large companies often "site license" the application packages adopted as company standards, so check with the support department before you buy. If your home workstation is different from your office workstation, your choice of software depends on whether you emulate some form of terminal or run application packages that support different platforms.

Printing

Whether you need a printer or not depends on how much you print, what kind of information you print, and what percentage of time you telecommute. If you intend to telecommute one or two days a week, then you can probably manage without a printer. On the other hand, if you find yourself printing many large reports every day, telecommuting may not be viable for you. Remember that the big, fast printer you might select probably costs the same as several workstations and requires a fast communications link. If you need to print only occasional information, you can probably defer printing until the next time you are at the office. Printing at the office not only reduces the cost of equipment you need to telecommute but also reduces the space you need for equipment. If you absolutely must print while telecommuting, you have many different printers from which to choose. The printer you use will probably be slower and have reduced print quality compared to the one you use at the office. Choose a printer based on print speed, quality and cost.

Communications Link

The choice of communications link depends on what kind of information you access and how frequently you access it. Technology has evolved to the point where one has a tremendous variety of choice in terms of link and speed and cost. Start by thinking about the type of access (file transfer, terminal emulation, etc.), the volume of data transferred, how far you are from the office and how long you will need the link established each day.

The access and the volume of data you need to transfer will determine how fast a link you need, while your distance from the office and hours you will be using the link will determine the most cost-effective technology.

The following sections provide examples of how you can use different types of communications technology to telecommute. Each example describes the communications technology required and gives examples of the different jobs that might use the technology to telecommute. You can consult with your computer support department and telecommunications provider in order to select the right technology for your situation. As you read through the examples, think about the number of hours a day you will need access the computing facilities at the office. You may find that you need a normal telephone for talking with colleagues, calling customers, etc., in addition to the communications link.