

- **What is the definition of telework?**

The Telework Enhancement Act defines telework or teleworking as a work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of such employee's position, and other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work. In practice, telework is a work arrangement that allows an employee to perform work, during any part of regular, paid hours, at an approved alternative worksite (e.g. home or telework center).

- **Can I use my own computer?**

The answer will depend largely on the requirements of your individual agency, the agency telework policy, and your manager. The telework agreement should specify what equipment and/or expenses will be covered by the agency, employee, or shared. Many employees find the opportunity to telework is so worthwhile they will choose to use their own personal equipment when equipment is not available from their office. Many agencies also have computers that people can take home.

Which employees are ideal for teleworking?

The ideal teleworker is self-motivated, well organized, a problem-solver, and someone who can work independently with minimal supervision. Successful teleworkers have a high degree of job skill and knowledge, and strong time management skills. Teleworkers like working at home or away from the office for at least part of the week and do not mind working alone. Teleworking is not ideal or desirable for every employee.

- **Does an employee who uses a portion of his/her home for business qualify for any Federal Tax deductions?**

The Government wide Telework Office is not qualified to provide tax advice on the question of whether a telework arrangement qualifies for a Federal tax deduction. For more specific information about the tax implications of telework, please consult with a qualified tax preparer.

- **Is telework an employee benefit or entitlement?**

No, telework is not a universal employee benefit or an employee right. Federal law requires agencies to establish telework programs but does not give individual employees a legal right to telework.

To obtain a copy of your agency telework policy, first go to your agency's intranet. If you are unsuccessful, please contact your agency [telework coordinator](#) or TMO or visit your agency HR Department.

- **Can telework help an employee with child or other dependent care needs?**

Telework is not a substitute for dependent care. However, in keeping with the objectives of the [Presidential Memorandum - Enhancing Workplace Flexibilities and Work-Life Programs](#), telework is a valuable tool to individuals with caregiving responsibilities. Time saved commuting can be spent with family members, and the flexibility of being closer to home may enable caregivers to take less time off for activities like doctor's visits, school programs, etc. A teen-aged child or elderly relative might also be at home with the teleworker, after school or during the day, as long as they are independently pursuing their own activities.

- **Can a manager suspend or terminate a telework agreement?**

Yes. The Telework Enhancement Act allows for termination of a telework agreement if an employee does not comply with the terms of the written agreement and/or if the performance of the employee falls below a certain standard (usually fully successful). Telework denial or termination decisions should be based on the operational needs of the organization and/or performance in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the agency's telework policy.

When deciding to terminate a telework agreement, a manager should be able to document and demonstrate that:

- The employee's teleworking directly and negatively impacts the employee's performance or the performance of the work group/organization
- Continuation of telework will interfere with remediation of the standards such as the employee's ability to attain or return to a fully successful performance level.

Also, as a general rule, a manager's termination of a telework agreement should follow some basic principles:

- Be in writing
- Provide an explanation
- Be timely
- Follow agency policies and procedures for denial/termination of telework requests
- Include any appeals/grievance procedures available to the employee

- **Can a manager deny a request to telework?**

Yes. Denials should be based on the requirements of the Telework Enhancement Act, individual agency telework policies, applicable collective bargaining agreements, and the business and operational needs of the organization. Remember, telework is not an employee right or entitlement. Although the intent of the Act is to promote the use of telework, agencies have the flexibility to determine participation based on the specific

needs of the organization. Decisions to deny a request to telework should be based on sound business management principles and not for personal reasons.

Also, as a general rule, a manager's denial of a telework request should follow some basic principles:

- Be in writing
- Provide an explanation
- Be timely
- Follow agency policies and procedures for denial/termination of telework requests
- Include any appeals/grievance procedures available to the employee
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- **Is the agency required to check the safety and security of a home-based telework office?**

No. It is the employee's responsibility to maintain a clean, safe and productive home office environment. Depending on the requirements of the agency telework policy, a manager may ask the employee to complete a safety checklist self-certifying the home office is free from hazards. The checklist generally provides a description of the agreed upon alternative worksite or designated work area, a self-certifying assessment of its overall safety, and if signed, assumes compliance.

- **How does teleworking affect morale and productivity among workers who continue to work in the office?**

When a telework program is implemented properly and the teleworker selection process is clear and objective, any possible negative effects on the morale and productivity of non-teleworkers can be minimized. It is important to clearly communicate to all employees that teleworkers are selected on the basis of their job functions and their work performance characteristics. It is also critical that an employee's telework arrangement does not increase other employees' workloads. When management does not handle the transition carefully, objectively and transparently, jealousy and resentment can arise from non-teleworkers who mistakenly believe that teleworkers are not really working. In other instances, co-workers are not interested in teleworking, but respect those who do. Managers need to ensure that all employees are treated equitably when it comes to expectations and performance, regardless of where they are working. Employees who telework more than two or three days per week should be encouraged to visit the office in order to maintain personal relationships with colleagues and supervisors. As with any organizational change or shift, communication is the key to its success!

- **Is there telework training available for employees?**

Yes. OPM provides [web-based employee training modules](#), in accordance with the requirements of the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010. Agencies may offer additional

training or require additional training. Check with your [agency telework coordinator](#) or Telework Managing Officer to find out about any training your agency may offer.

Who is eligible to telework?

Subject to the limitations specifically described in the Act, the agency eligibility requirements and any applicable collective bargaining agreements, the law applies to all Federal Executive agency employees, regardless of geographic location.

In the definitions section of the Act ([Sec. 6501](#)), the law refers to [5 USC 2105](#) for the meaning of the term "employee." If your agency is considered to be an Executive agency and if all of your employees fall within the definition in 5 USC 2105, the law applies, regardless of the location of any given employee's permanent duty station.

- **Does an employee have a right to telework?**

No. Telework is not a universal employee benefit or an employee right. Federal law requires agencies to establish telework programs but does not give individual employees a legal right to telework.

- **What role do unions play?**

Agencies should allow pre-decisional involvement to the fullest extent practicable as provided in Executive Order 13522 and satisfy collective bargaining obligations by working with labor when developing their telework policies and agreements.

- **If Federal offices are closed due to inclement weather or some other emergency, are teleworkers excused from work as well?**

The answer depends on the specific language and requirements of the agency telework policy. The Telework Enhancement Act requires each Federal agency to incorporate telework into its Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP). To meet the objectives of the Act, many agencies have adopted policies that expand the usage of telework to allow a greater number of their telework-ready employees to be productive during Government closures in response to severe weather, special events and other emergency situations. Consequently, if the agency telework policy requires telework-ready employees to work during agency closures and that requirement is clearly communicated by the agency to the employee in the written telework agreement, then the employee would be required to work. The bottom line is employees should follow the guidelines as outlined in their agency telework policy. For more information, please refer to your agency telework policy, contact your agency [telework coordinator](#), or visit your agency HR Department.

- **Can teleworkers follow an alternative work schedule?**

There is no current prohibition in Federal law or regulation that says an employee who engages in telework is not eligible to participate in an alternative work schedule. Agency telework policies establish the basic guidelines for telework eligibility. Within this framework, managers and supervisors generally have the discretion to implement telework to fit the business needs of the organization. For more information, please refer to your agency telework policy, contact your agency coordinator, or visit your agency HR Department.

- **If I am a new Federal employee, can I start teleworking immediately?**

The answer depends. Agency telework policies establish the basic guidelines for telework eligibility and the application process. Within this framework, managers and supervisors generally have discretion to implement telework to fit the business needs of their organizations. Some agencies may impose additional eligibility standards around tenure that may limit when an employee is eligible to participate in telework. For more information, please refer to your agency telework policy, contact your agency [telework coordinator](#), or visit your agency HR Department.

- **If the manager denies an employee's telework request, can the employee appeal that decision?**

Yes. A manager's decision to deny a request to telework should be based on sound business management principles and not for personal reasons. As a general rule, a manager's denial of a telework request should follow some basic principles:

- Be in writing
- Provide an explanation
- Be timely
- Follow agency policies and procedures for denial/termination of telework requests
- Include any appeals/grievance procedures available to the employee

How do I know an employee is really working at home?

Some supervisors express concern that when their employees are teleworking, they will not be able to monitor that employee's work effort. But when approached correctly, supervisors discover they are better able to monitor the work by shifting the focus from how much work the employee looks like he/she is accomplishing to how much he/she actually is accomplishing. By focusing on the work product instead of the work activity, many supervisors find they are better able to communicate clear expectations to their employees. The resulting agreement on job expectations often leads to increases in employee productivity and job satisfaction.

- **What if telework does not work out?**

Sometimes there may be instances in which both the employee and manager have made a good faith effort to make a telework arrangement work without success. Both the teleworker and the supervisor should understand that if telework does not work out for an individual, it does not in any way reflect on that individual's ability to perform his/her job. Your telework agreement should include a clause stating either the manager or the employee may terminate the telework agreement for operational or performance issues. For more information about your agency's policy for terminating telework agreements, please consult your agency telework policy or [agency telework coordinator](#).