



BROWN CIS IT Service Center

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Working Remotely - A Telecommuting Guide

Donald Rogers - 2020-03-17 - [0 Comments](#) - in [Desktop Computing and Printing](#)

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(For Instructors, we have tailored advice for teaching remotely in our [Teaching Continuity Guide](#).)

There are many ways to keep connected and effective if you need to work from home. This guide provides faculty, staff, and students with some practical steps to perform your routine work and participate in the community, even while working offsite.

This guide covers how to:

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Plan ahead for remote work

- **Are you ready for Two-Step Verification offsite?**

If your only two-step option is currently a call to your campus phone, you can [add some additional verification options](#) to make two-step easier offsite.

- **Identify the computer you will use remotely**

Make sure it's updated and in good working order. Many Brown web services like Gmail, Google Docs, Canvas, Banner, Library services, Workday and even Zoom all work on [Chromebooks](#), iPads and other mobile devices as well. Regardless of

your device, we recommend Chrome or Firefox for most web services.

- **Know how to find your files**

Check in with your department's IT pro to make sure you know exactly where your important files are stored, and how to access them remotely from your computer, or with RemoteApp software. They'll know best how to connect to the files you depend on.

- **Take a dry run**

After reviewing this guide, try using all these tips at home in advance.

Work with others when offsite

- **Zoom is a great way to work remotely in real-time with others**

Zoom works on a large number of devices including computers and mobile devices, and has great quality for audio, video, and screen sharing. [Get comfortable with Zoom](#) by installing it and running your next meeting with it even if you're all on campus. It will help you learn the ins and outs.

- **Keep in touch with Google apps**

It's easy to collaborate with [Google Suite](#). Gmail, Google Calendar to schedule remote meetings [including Zoom connections](#), [Google Hangouts](#) to chat in real-time, and [Google Drive](#) to work together on documents, spreadsheets and slide presentations.

- **Use shared files**

You should still be able to reach personal and shared files on Brown servers from home, but make sure you know how. We have general instructions for [macOS](#) and [Windows](#), but some departments have different file system setups. Your IT pro can help if you run into trouble.

Keep in touch by phone

- **Publish your personal number for others**

You can publish your personal home or cell phone number as your Alternate Phone Number in [MyAccount](#), so others can find it easily when they search the [Brown directory](#).

- **Share directly**

You can also send your personal phone number to your most important contacts in advance.

- **Coordinate a phone list in your department**

Departments can coordinate a shared phone list with personal numbers using a Google Doc or Sheet, to easily keep it current and accessible to everyone.

- **Working with your Brown extension offsite**

Most faculty and staff can now direct your Brown phone line to a computer or smartphone, using the Jabber soft-phone app. This isn't just call forwarding! You can call Brown numbers as if on campus, access the full phone directory from the app, and otherwise act like your Brown phone is with you wherever you go. And then silence it when you're off duty! We have already set up the majority of single line desk phone users to work with Jabber. You can [download Jabber software](#) and [learn more about it from our help article](#). Note, if you currently use a desk phone to answer multiple lines, lines that are shared, lines that are not associated with your name, or departmental lines, you may have issues signing into the Jabber software. Any problems with setting it up? Fill out the quick [Jabber request form](#). If you have questions about remotely answering departmental lines or main numbers please send us an [IT support request](#).

- **Forwarding your Brown phone offsite is not recommended**

This method uses double the phone circuits for any individual call, and with enough campus-wide usage it could create a service outage for everybody. Use the methods above instead.

Connect to the Brown network by VPN, but only if you need to

- **What's the VPN?**

Our Virtual Private Network (VPN) is a way to securely connect to the Brown campus network from offsite. Our '[Get Started with VPN](#)' guide has everything you need to know about whether you need VPN for the services you use, and how to set it up on your own computer or other device.

- **VPN is also useful to protect Brown data in a public place**

If you're working from a public location like a coffee shop or library, using Brown's VPN encrypts all your web traffic and keeps it safe from snooping.

- **You may not need the VPN**

A few services like shared files, some licensed software titles, and installing new Brown software will only work remotely if you [connect to our VPN](#). But using it when you don't need to could slow it down for others. If you're not sure, check with your IT pro.

Get Brown software

- **You may only need your web browser (Chrome, Firefox, or Safari)**

Many Brown services are simply websites, like Gmail, Google Docs, Canvas, Banner, and Workday. You don't need to install anything on your computer to make these work. But you might also rely on installed software like Microsoft Office, Adobe Creative Cloud, statistical or research software, or others. If you need these at home, you can install them yourself.

- **Before installing new software, connect to the VPN**

[Connect to the Brown VPN](#) when you install any software. Many of our installers need a direct campus connection to work.

- **After installing, you might not need the VPN to use software**

Once installation is complete, [only a few software titles need an active VPN connection](#) when you're using them.

- **Where to get software**

If you are using a computer registered in the Brown management system, you can use the 'Software Center' app on PCs and 'Self Service' on Macs to [install most Brown software](#). On unmanaged or personal computers, you can install software yourself using the downloadable installers and instructions at <https://software.brown.edu>.

- **An alternative to installing: RemoteApp streaming software**

Many Brown titles are also available to use online through our [RemoteApp software-streaming service](#). You can use Microsoft Office and many research applications without installing anything. They run in a remote session from our datacenter servers, but they feel like a program running right on your screen.

Improve your home Wi-Fi connection

- Work close to your Wi-Fi router for best signal strength.
- Do not connect to the Brown VPN [unless you're using a service that needs it](#).
- Zoom works best on a strong connection. If Zoom seems to be faltering, try turning off your video, and only use audio to communicate. You can also have Zoom call your phone for audio, instead of using your computer's audio/Wi-Fi connection. Screen sharing in Zoom should be OK; it does not take that much bandwidth and remote participants will tolerate some lag in most screen sharing content.
- If you need to, consider asking others in your home to avoid streaming videos or gaming online while you handle important communications or file transfers.

If you didn't get a chance to prepare in advance...

- No worries, all the same setup of software and connections can still be completed from home once you're there. If you need some help, then we're here for you. All you need to do is:

Ask for help!

The Brown IT support community is at your service. You may find some quick answers to help yourself in our large online [Knowledge Base](#). If you need some personal assistance, you can contact your department's IT support pro directly, or [connect with the IT Service Center](#) by email, online chat, or phone. Please note that if everyone is working at home at the same time, we may need extra time to get back to you, but you'll hear from someone and we'll do our best. We have ways to help you no matter how you reach out, including remote support right on your screen, wherever you are.

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