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Take Control Of Your Commute

It's a staple of office small talk, one of the first things we check when considering a new job, and a necessary evil for an overwhelming majority of American workers: the commute. While more and more companies are offering remote positions and flexible work-from-home options, the U.S. Census Bureau recently announced that the average commute is still hovering around 25 minutes. The fact that this hasn't decreased significantly with the rise of telework tells us that while more Americans are working from home, more are also hunkering down for longer trips to and from the office.

For many of us, commuting makes up a considerable portion of how we spend our time, and thus has a serious impact on our quality of life. It's no secret that poor commutes can affect our mood, but it can also disrupt your work/life balance, strain personal relationships, and even negatively influence your physical health.

If your commute is bringing you down, here are a few easy steps you can take to help make the most out of a tough situation.

Double-check your options. Do you really know the quickest way to work? Or are you trusting the GPS? By comparing both the time and cost of different methods of transportation, as well as different routes if you're driving, biking, or walking, you might be surprised to discover a way that's cheaper, faster, or simply more enjoyable. If you want to take it a step further, experiment with leaving work or home at different times—even a ten-minute adjustment can make a difference.

Quick Takes

Tips for Your Trip to Work

Even though commuting can just *feel* like forever, it still takes up more of your time than you realize. It's no secret that poor or lengthy commutes can affect our mood, but it can also throw off our work/life balance and impact our physical and mental health.

Read on in this newsletter to learn a few tips to make the most out of the trip to and from the office.

Ask your employer about scheduling. If you've tried different routes, methods, and departure times, and your commute is still a slog, it might be time to broach the topic of flexible work scheduling with your employer. A significant shift in your clock-in or clock-out time can work wonders for your commute. Assuming you can still complete all of your expected duties, many employers are open to the idea of starting earlier or later, or even allowing different days in the office. For example, many companies allow their staff to work four ten-hour workdays, instead of five nine-hour ones.

Get a commute companion. Whether it's a buddy that works nearby, or a coworker that lives in the same neighborhood, sharing your commute with a friendly face can make the trek a bit less painful. Besides the obvious benefits of companionship, you can both cut costs by splitting gas, tolls, and other travel expenses. And if your carpool gets big enough, you can even use high-occupancy vehicle lanes on some highways to slim down the time.

Give yourself a head start. If you take public transportation to work, you may be able to be productive on your way to and from the office. Check with your employer if the time spent working during your commute can count toward your workday—it could help you spend less time in the office and improve your work-life balance.

Take time to unplug. If you already feel your work-life balance is tipped in the "career" direction, consider using your commute in the opposite direction as time to unplug, unwind, and focus on any and all things not work-related. With streaming services offering an endless amount of music, audiobooks, and podcasts, your once-stressful drive can be a time of relaxation and enjoyment.

Commutes aren't anybody's favorite part of the workday. But with these tips, you can optimize your daily travel and help calibrate your work-life balance.

Source: Ingraham, Christopher. "Analysis | Nine Days on the Road. Average Commute Time Reached a New Record Last Year." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 7 Oct. 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/10/07/nine-days-road-average-commute-time-reached-new-record-last-year/.

Chicken & Cucumber Salad With Parsley Pesto Makes 6 servings

This hearty supper salad is a lean-protein powerhouse thanks to chicken, chickpeas, and edamame; the parsley pesto delivers bone-boosting vitamin K. Pick up frozen shelled edamame to make this meal extra speedy.

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup crumbled blue cheese
- 2 cups packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves (from 1 bunch)
- 1 cup fresh baby spinach
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon toasted pine nuts
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 medium garlic clove, smashed
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cups shredded rotisserie chicken (from 1 chicken)
- 2 cups cooked shelled edamame
- 1 (15-oz.) can unsalted chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup chopped English cucumber
- 4 cups loosely packed arugula

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine parsley, spinach, lemon juice, pine nuts, cheese, garlic, salt, and pepper in bowl of a food processor; process until smooth, about 1 minute. With processor running, add oil; process until smooth, about 1 minute.
2. Stir together chicken, edamame, chickpeas, and cucumber in a large bowl. Add pesto; toss to combine.
3. Place 2/3 cup arugula in each of 6 bowls; top each with 1 cup chicken salad mixture. Serve immediately.



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

482 Calories
 26 g Total fat
 4 g Saturated fat
 18g Unsaturated fat
 465 mg Sodium
 22 g Carbohydrates
 7 g Fiber
 2 g Sugar
 40 g Protein

This newsletter contains general health information and is not a substitute for your doctor's care. You should consult an appropriate health care professional for your specific needs. Some treatments mentioned in this newsletter may not be covered by your health plan. Please refer to your benefit plan documents for information about coverage.