

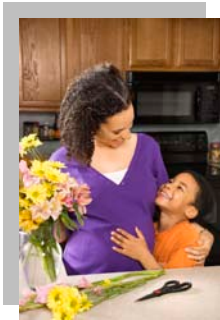
My Accidental Assistant

Working from home with a busy preschooler

After becoming a virtual assistant, I encountered a slight snag that many VA's may run into. While working from home, I had to try to keep my four-year old entertained. Here are a few things that were a great help to me that kept interruptions to a minimum.

1. ***Make the preschooler your little business partner***

Make a few changes in your workspace to accommodate your preschooler. I set up a small desk and chair for my "new assistant" right beside mine. I provided drawer space for my preschooler's "office supplies" complete with crayons, pencils, safety scissors, and a toy cell phone.



2. ***Pack Your Gear***

My preschooler has a backpack (courtesy of Grandma) that gets packed each morning with a few favorite toys (each day I hope it will be the more quiet ones) and it gets carried into the workspace like a briefcase would. These toys provide hours of learning and play for my preschooler while I work. Occasionally, it gives me a chance to get on the floor and play too!

3. ***Get dressed!***

While it is so easy to wear sweats, bunny slippers, or even pajamas while working, make sure you and your preschooler get dressed and ready for the day as if you were heading out to work and day care. It is amazing how different your attitude and your little assistant's attitude will be! Plus it makes field trips that much easier! (See the next tip!)

4. ***Schedule "meeting" times with your little assistant***

I schedule meetings that include daily snack times, lunches and small field trips. This will give the preschooler a change of scenery to help with boredom while giving you an opportunity to take a break as well. It could be as simple as a trip to the post office or a local park or to pick up office supplies. Maybe you could check the schedule at your local library or bookstore for story time. If your preschooler is like mine, any car trip is welcomed!



5. ***Find activity sheets and workbooks that will give your preschooler something to do***

My local teacher's supply stores and Walmart carry many workbooks and activity books that I used to keep my preschooler occupied while preparing for Kindergarten. This time I used to complete a task or two, or reply to an email. Also, there are many free resources on-line that provide a variety of age/grade-appropriate materials in subjects from reading or writing to science or bible study. A few minutes once a week planning and printing those resources may

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give you back hours of productivity!

6. ***Include a reading area in the workspace***

A small bookcase with your preschooler's favorite titles will provide the preschooler a chance to read while you work. In my workspace, I constantly hear "Green Eggs and Ham" in the background. If you can work with a little reader reading out loud around you, this will be a great way to keep your preschooler busy plus it re-enforces the importance of reading to your little one.

7. ***Make sure your have snacks readily available***

If you have a small fridge in your workspace, make sure you have space for juice to refill that juice cup or some juice boxes. Save a little space on top of your filing cabinet or in your bookcase for a little basket of snacks. Small boxes of raisins or an apple or two in your workspace will save time with less frequent trips to the kitchen. Just like how you make sure you have your office supplies each day, make sure your little assistant has all the supplies they need as well!

8. ***Be flexible!***

As you know, a child's needs constantly change. Be ready to reschedule a few tasks to match naptimes or to avoid doctor's appointments. Prepare back-up plans for when you need more quiet time to complete a project or to talk to clients. My local parks and recreation has half day programs that provide a little socialization for about six to 12 hours a week for an economical price. One option that is increasing in popularity is the drop-in care center. Without a reservation, you can drop off your preschooler for a few hours of play with other children while you meet with clients or make cold calls.

Working from home with a child (or two) may make things a little more difficult. With a little planning and flexibility, the experience may be more enjoyable than you ever thought!

Much Success!

Anjie



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Precise Assistance is a North Carolina-based virtual business services company. Her "Assistant" of almost five years is her son, Jefferson.