

Once you've mastered the art and science of being a new mum, you are thinking about utilising those career skills that have been languishing since you quit your job. If you don't have the inclination or the support system to get back in the saddle, we give you some insider tips on how to make the most of your me-time while still being a stay-at-home mommy...

Words Arundhati Nath

Homebound?

7 great work options for you!

After nine long months of patient and often difficult wait, the lucky day has eventually dawned! You've finally returned home with a little angel in your arms. Stepping into the magical phase of motherhood, you can't seem to take your eyes off your newborn.

As days filled with happy moments pass by, you're haunted at the thought of going back to your day job. Leaving your kiddo at home with a nanny is an option, but you'll agree that most mums feel very insecure and guilty doing so.

Are you experiencing sharp pangs of guilt because you aren't spending quality time with your kids? Did you leave your day job after childbirth and have often wondered how you could use your free time without going outside your home?

Worry no more! Today, hundreds of mums all over the country are working successfully from home while looking after their children. An increasing number of new mums are bidding goodbye to their full-time corporate jobs and are working professionally from home.

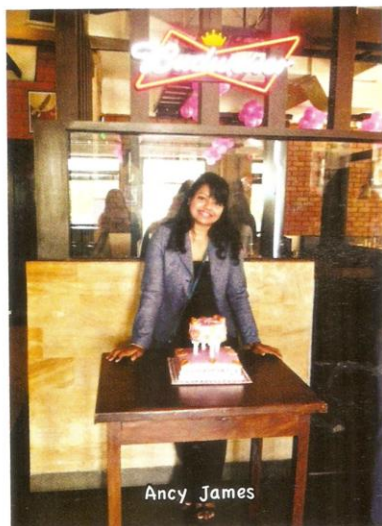
A work-from-home option gives you flexibility and control over working hours and usually does not involve any travel time. What's more, you can work

at your own pace, choose your clientele and eventually earn good money too! All of these benefits can be savoured from the comfort of your home, without a domineering boss, while you watch your child grow up.

THE SEVEN GREAT WORK-FROM-HOME OPTIONS

1 **START A HOME-BASED BUSINESS:** A home-based business can be anything from designing jewellery, crafts or clothes to cakes and nail art! You can have a catering business, a boutique or even an online platform to sell your handmade crafts to the world. New Delhi-based Ancy James, mum to three-year-old Suhana, is a cake artist and runs a business with the name Ancy's Sweet Art. "I was working

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Ancy James

full-time with NDTV in 2010, when I took a course in cake decoration. I discovered that my interest towards this art was intense and I started doing it on as many occasions as possible. Before taking the plunge into doing it full-time, I completed an advanced training in sugar craft at Malaysia," she says. Ritu Maheshwari, mum to two-year-old Aarna, is an MBA in Finance, based in Mumbai. She quit her job at a multi-national bank in 2012, when she was blessed with her baby daughter and



Ritu Maheshwari with her husband and daughter Aarna

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Aditi Gupta and her Let's Create Club

started an online jewellery business named NJewels. "While I was having fun raising my little munchkin, I did realise I needed to do something to keep myself motivated and occupied. So, I joined hands with my sister-in-law, a jewellery designer, to start our own jewellery business. We focused exclusively on online selling as it has various benefits," Ritu says.

2 MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR FAVOURITE HOBBY: Many of us have a hobby in which we have completed a diploma or degree in. Different forms of art, music or dance can be taught to young children during the evenings or at weekends from home. Gurgaon-based mum to three-year-old Ayaan, Aditi Gupta has banked upon her passion and expertise in fine arts and set up the Let's Create Club, with her friend Shefali. "At the Let's Create Club, we conduct theme-based educational workshops for children in fine art and craft to keep them gainfully occupied, while making the process fun and creative," Aditi says.

3 BE A FREELANCE WRITER: Do you have a passion for the written word? With the Internet bringing in a revolution, there has been a great increase in the need for talented and dedicated writers. You can write for magazines, e-zines, blogs, newspapers, businesses and more. A great site to learn about all forms of writing is <http://www.writing-world.com/>. Goa-based freelance writer, Chryselle D'Silva Dias, is mum to five-year old Manuel. She has written for several Indian and international publications and has been a freelancer since 2005. "Working from home allows you to set your own hours and work around family

commitments. I sometimes work late into the night, but that is a small price to pay for the joy of being your own boss," she says. Building a good writing career needs hard work and patience. "Have fixed working hours where possible (even if it is 10pm-11pm after the kids are in bed), have a plan to grow your writing business, take courses and talk to other freelancers," she advises.

4 WEB DESIGNING FOR THE TECHIES: If you are tech-savvy, know web design or have left a job in the software industry to look after your family, you could do a great job as a freelance web designer. Most institutions, businesses and other organisations need websites which you can design with your creative skills and technical know-how. Chhavi Sharma, mum to two adorable kids, Rhea and Rian, left her job at IBM to be with them. She is working from home as a web designer and has founded TorukSoftware. "I do web-based technical as well as project management work from home and also engage other women," she says. Get the first few clients through word of mouth or Facebook and LinkedIn profiles; build a portfolio of clients and you can do wonders working from home!

5 OPEN UP A COACHING CENTRE: If you're good with kids and have a sound educational background, you could be a good home tutor. You can teach kids from home or conduct classes online. In the former case, you'll need a separate room, whereas teaching through the online mode can be better if you have a space crunch. Bengaluru-based Sanghamitra Potharaju, mum to school-going boys, Sahaja and Roshan, has started the world's first and



Chhavi Sharma with Rian and Rhea

exclusive portal for Olympiad preparation. "My website, www.olympiadtester.com, is a single-stop shop for Olympiad exam preparation and our mentoring process is completely done online," she says. She feels that working from home has the three key elements – flexibility, productivity and cost-effectiveness. You can specialise in foreign languages, entrance exam preparation, spoken or written English skills or can teach school or college students.

6 TAKE CARE OF THE LITTLE ONES: If you have the luxury of adequate open space, you can put that to profitable use by opening up a childcare centre, crèche or fitness centre for young children. However, be careful to take in only as many children as you can manage because it is not as easy as it seems to constantly look after little kids! And you have to ensure their safety and well-being at all times.

7 OFFER COUNSELLING: All of us need good advice at some point of time. If you have any specialist knowledge in

nutrition, healthcare, exercise, beauty or make-up, psychology, human behaviour, astrology or numerology, you can counsel others and help them solve their problems while earning some good money. Deepika Aggarwal Katyal is mum to two-year-old Kashika. She quit her job as Senior Nutritionist at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital to look after her newborn. At present, she is working as a dietician from her home at Noida. "I provide online diet charts and nutrition-related advice to sports persons, renowned models and other clients. I generally get clients



Sanghamitra Goutharaju

through word of mouth and previous contacts." She is happy to work from home now and look after her first and most valuable priority – her little daughter!

HOW DO YOU BEGIN?

Choose a work option which is in line with your interests and personality. Once you've evaluated the kind of work from home option you want to go for, discuss it with your family. You'll always need their support in any home-based work you do. Working from home requires one to be able to work with dedication without getting distracted while meeting the needs of family members. Shivani Manchanda, renowned career counsellor and Director, Career Track, says, "To work from home foremost you need to have self-discipline as distractions are many. It is easy to start watching television, or try out a new recipe or just chat with a friend who just dropped in because she thought you were at home." You'll need to set up a home office, fix your own working hours, mark your priorities and make a to-do list each day to be sure to meet the goals set. "You need to have kick-ass time management skills to ensure that you define your working hours. Managing crisis and emergency as something is bound to encroach upon your time whether it is house-guests or the maid wanting instructions just when the deadline is due," Shivani adds. You can have a look online for ideas on setting up a home office (we like <http://www.entrepreneur.com/homeoffice/>). You also need to make a financial plan and get your firm or company registered as you grow your venture.

Start some research on the web about available work-from-home options. A great site to begin with is www.sheroes.in, an exclusive portal for women working from home.

So, work out what's best for you and reap the dual benefits of being a mum and an earning member of your family! **M&B**



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