

Personal README Template

Introduction: what is a personal README?

Technology Transformation Services (TTS) is proud to be a remote-first organization at the U.S. General Services Administration. Many of us work on multiple projects in a given year, so we form and join new project teams regularly. The ability to quickly form strong remote-first teams is important to our success.

We have lots of great tools in our toolbox for making distributed teams work. Recently, we've been experimenting with a new practice: writing and sharing personal READMEs.

In software, a README is the documentation that tells you how to start using and understanding a new piece of software. In an organization, a personal README is a way to tell your coworkers how they can best communicate with you, work with you, give you feedback, and support you.

Your README can start small and grow over time. It doesn't have to be complete or perfect from the very beginning. Since we are always learning about ourselves and growing, your README will always be a work-in-progress document.

Want to try writing your own personal README? Starting on the next page is an outline; feel free to take this as a starting point and replace the italicized words with your own.

README for your name here!

Introduce yourself! Include your pronouns so that your teammates know which pronouns to use. This could also be a good place for a name pronunciation guide.

Who am I?

Non-work

Who are you outside of work? This could include things like which city you live in, your hobbies and interests, or quirks about you that your teammates might not immediately guess.

Work

Tell your future teammates about you at work. What is your career background like, and what are your career interests? What are your skills? What are a few of your biggest strengths? You'll go into more detail later in the document.

Goals

Learning goals

What do you want to learn? For example — if you are a software developer and want to learn more about a particular area in software, like performance or security, let your team know that. This could help your project lead assign you tasks that fit your goals.

Career goals

What are your career goals? If you want to grow into a certain role or area at your organization, why not let people know that? At 18F, many of us are in term-limited positions, which can make it easier for us to talk about career goals after our time at 18F. Writing out these out can be hard, but if you feel comfortable letting your team know about your career goals, they can think of you for future opportunities.

You can lean on me to ...

List your strengths here! What can your teammates lean on you for? If you find it hard to come up with examples here, why not ask a former teammate or supervisor?

How to support me as we work together

What are your growing edges? Are there areas you've noticed where you could use extra support? Again, if you find it hard to come up with examples here, you could ask a former teammate or supervisor.

How to support me as a person

This section requires a degree of trust. It's up to you if you want to include this section or not, and what you want to put here.

People have different needs. Work isn't the only responsibility on our shoulders, whether we're caring for children or for elderly parents, or dealing with illness or other life stressors. While you don't need to share all the details — or any details — with your coworkers, consider letting them know how they can support you, if you feel comfortable.

Examples: "I generally need to take a quick break from work on these days of the week to pick up my kids from the bus stop." Or: "I have an allergy to gluten — if we go out for lunch as a team, let's make sure that we pick somewhere with good gluten-free options."

Your teammates can help and support you when they know what you need, and this section gives them that chance.

Ways of working together

What practices did you find effective in past work experiences? Maybe you have a favorite way to run team meetings, or a favorite method for team decision-making. This section is a chance to share those practices up-front with your team.

Teamwork preferences

How do you tend to work on teams? Do you need a push to speak up in group settings, or do you need a prompt to step back and make more room for others? Do you appreciate when teammates ask for your opinions in meetings, or does that make you feel put on the spot?

Technical preferences

Share your favorite technical tools, frameworks, choices and approaches in this section, if applicable.

Feedback preferences

How do you like to receive feedback? Do you prefer feedback in writing (email, Slack, over video call, or in-person if possible? Does it take you a while to process feedback? How do you prefer to get positive feedback versus constructive feedback?

Giving and receiving feedback is essential to good teamwork, and giving and receiving feedback can also be very hard to do well. Make it as easy as possible for your teammates to give you feedback by letting them know your preferences.

Giving feedback on this document

Let your readers know how they can ask questions or give feedback on your README.

And thank your reader for making it all the way to the end!