

## **How to Plan a Home Office that Works!**

published by

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## Table of Contents

What is the Role of Your Home Office: Work or Home Life? .....	4
How to Plan a Personal Office vs. a Family Friendly Office .....	5
Basic Functions of a Home Office.....	7
Where Can You Put a Home Office?.....	8
How Much Storage Do You Need in Your Office? .....	10
Tips for Managing Technology in Your Home Office.....	11
Tips for Organizing Paperwork in Your Home Office.....	13
How to Create a Meeting Area for Clients in Your Home Office.....	14
Style Ideas for Home Offices.....	16
Should You Build a Custom Office? .....	17
Tips for Creating an Office on a Budget.....	19
Tips for Defining Your Workspace in a Shared Room .....	20
How Color Affects Your Work Environment.....	22
Tips for Selecting Lighting in Your Home Office.....	24
Ergonomics - How to Make Your Home Office Comfortable.....	25
Great Ideas for Creating a Contemporary Home Office.....	28
Great Ideas for Creating a Traditional Style Home Office.....	29
Great Ideas for Creating an Eclectic Home Office .....	31
How to Create Attractive Display Areas in Your Office.....	32
Tips for Sharing Living Space with a Home Office .....	34
Tips for Sharing Den Space .....	36
with a Home Office.....	36
Tips for Sharing Kitchen Space with a Home Office .....	37
What Work Environment Do You Need to Create in Your Home Office?.....	38
Maximizing Space: How to Create a Closet Home Office.....	41
Maximizing Space: How to Turn a Niche into a Home Office .....	42

## What is the Role of Your Home Office: Work or Home Life?

When deciding on a home office, you might want to consider exactly what you will use it for. You will need to determine in which section of your house you will establish your office and what items you will place in the room. Will your family use your office? You and your family may all have digital cameras that require using your computer. Some of your family may want to spend time playing computer games on your computer -- while others may want to watch.

Perhaps you have an absorbing hobby that requires you to use a computer. If you have children, they will be probably need to use your computer in the evenings to do their homework. Your family-friendly office will need enough space for your family. You should have enough room for two to sit at the computer, because kids like to share things like playing games.

If that's the case, then you need to establish a central location in the house for your office so the whole family has access to it. Establishing a section of the lounge or sitting room might be a good place, unless you have another spare room. If the children are still young, you may want to keep your home office somewhere safe from curious kids, so using a central room away the from main playroom is an excellent choice. Besides a computer, you'll probably need a scanner and printer, some shelving or storage space for office supplies and equipment.



On the other hand, if you work a job, you might -- on occasion -- bring home work that requires you to spend long hours either at the computer or at a desk or table. Or maybe you will use a home office solely for running a home business; if so, then a more private place in your home would be best.

If you have a young family, they'll probably want your attention while you are trying to work. If this is the case, you really need a place where you can work undisturbed. You may also need a private office to interview prospective clients in person or on the phone.

## **How to Plan a Personal Office vs. a Family Friendly Office**

Your office will need plenty of space if you are planning a family-friendly office. If you plan to work in the office as well as let the family in there to play or share your time, then you may want to have a second computer for them to use while you are working on yours. They will be delighted with their own "space" and will often play there contentedly and quietly while you are busy.

Depending on how well you focus on your work, you may also want to install a television to entertain the kids while you get some work done. Make sure your office has plenty of comfortable seats, a sofa or beanbags so your kids will be less likely to sit on your lap all the time. If your children are older, they will certainly need their own computer and work desk. It's better to have their



# 6

## How to Plan a Home Office that Works

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computer in the general office so you can keep an eye on what they are doing while you are working.

You will need to have enough drawers or shelving for everyone to store their stuff; if each person "owns" a shelf, then their stuff won't get mixed up with yours. Open shelving can look untidy, so perhaps a cupboard with shelves in it will be good for storage. Otherwise you could use color-coded baskets or tubs on the shelves.

If you are using a spare bedroom for your family-friendly office, you could use the built-in wardrobe closet for storage space -- or you may prefer to use it to store your computer; this way you can shut the doors without having to turn off your computer if you need to leave the room with young kids still in there. Your work will be protected from curious little fingers.

If your children are older, you may simply use a corner of your lounge or rumpus room to store your office. But if your work office is solely for work and not for family, then you will certainly need to keep it in a room separate from the family room.

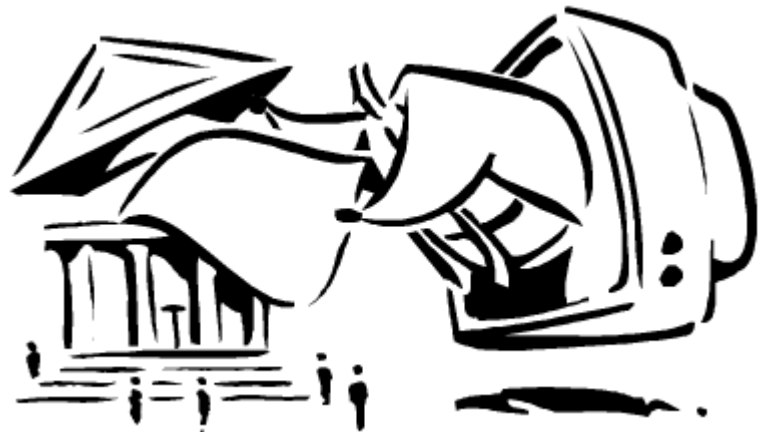
Apart from a computer, scanner and printer, your work office may need a filing cabinet with a lockable drawer, along with a phone line or two and a fax machine. Depending on the work you plan to do in this office, you may need a separate table and chair and a sofa chair for those times you need a break from the computer. If you plan on spending long hours at the computer, you will need a comfortable work chair, too. Don't forget the heating and cooling systems to keep you comfortable while you work.

## Basic Functions of a Home Office

No matter whether you set-up a family-friendly or a private-and-personal home office, you will need to use your office to perform some basic functions. An office is where you will perform most of your everyday tasks of your business, so you must set it up the right way.

You will certainly need a telephone (or two), even if you use a cell phone much of the time. It is still necessary to have a landline phone, because you can't send a fax via a cell phone.

You will need to write and answer emails in your home office, so you'll need the right facilities to do this -- a good computer with broadband for speed, if possible. What you do in your office depends on the business you have. If you need to pack and post items, then you will need table space apart from your computer to do this. You may even need to display and/or store products, so you will need the correct storage.



If you need to draft plans or make patterns, then you may need to expand your workspace rather than someone like a freelance writer who is at the computer most of the day.

A home office is also used for keeping records, and you may keep personal records as well as work records here. You'll need a good-sized filing cabinet for this basic function and maybe other shelves or drawer space. You may prefer to keep personal records in a separate filing cabinet for privacy.

You may have to interview or meet with people associated with your business, so your office will function as a meeting place. It's a good idea to have outside access to your office, and then you won't have to bring clients or customers through the rest of the house to get to the office. They won't be all that impressed with the baby screaming and kids' toys all over the floor.

You will need enough comfortable seating to deal with your clients, as your home office may function as an interview room. Are you likely to have one client waiting while you deal with another? Then you may need a small waiting room close by - you could even have tea or coffee making facilities in it.

## Where Can You Put a Home Office?

You have many places to set up a home office. The location will depend on your own circumstances. It may also depend on whether you need a private and personal office or one more orientated towards family use. What you intend to do in your office will also have some bearing on its position. If you only need space for a computer desk, then it will be easier to find a suitable spot than if you also need other tables.

You could install a family office in the family room or whatever you consider as the main room of your house. This way you can do what you need to do





# 9

## How to Plan a Home Office that Works

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without isolating yourself from the rest of the family. You may need to rearrange the furniture so you can fit your computer desk and assorted paraphernalia along one wall, or part of a wall.

If your family room is large enough and one wall is an external wall, you may consider dividing the room with a properly built wall, then you could have outside access if necessary. If you don't need outside access, then you could arrange the furniture to create a division.

Under the stairs is another space that is often under-utilized. With proper lighting, it could become your new office space. Shelving could be installed under the lowest part so you don't bump your head on it.

You may have a spare bedroom you could utilize -- or even a small storeroom, an awkward corner somewhere, or you could block off the end of a hall. To make more room in a smaller bedroom that holds two single beds, you could have bunk beds instead. If you don't need two beds in it, then a futon or folding sofa bed might be an alternative. This would free up enough space to hold a computer desk.

Some creative people use the space of a built-in wardrobe room to fit their home office into. The advantage is you can close it off when you are not using it and it is not intrusive. Nor is it a tempting to young kids. The room will look much tidier, too.

Other possibilities include the attic or the basement. Very often the space in these two rooms is not utilized at all, but kept for storage. If you decide on the attic, you may need to get a builder's advice about strengthening the floor and see about lighting and heating, while the basement may need professional treatment for dampness.

## How Much Storage Do You Need in Your Office?

How much storage you need in your office depends on your type of business. Most people find that a lockable cupboard with drawers or shelves is ideal. Other people need a filing cupboard with hanging files to make access easier. Whatever you decide, you certainly need some kind of storage space.

While you can store many files and folders on your computer, you will usually need to keep hard copy files in a certain order; if this is the case you need the correct storage facilities.

You'll also need storage for those items you will use every day. A hutch is often provided on computer desks and this may be adequate, but if it is not, there are many other storage options. You could have a bookcase in the corner or along the wall nearby. Or you may prefer to use stackable units so you can add to them as your storage needs increase.

Remember that open shelving can look untidy and will eventually gather dust, so you may prefer to use shelves in a cupboard of some kind.

For most businesses, you must keep business records for a certain number of years and



sometimes for as long as the business is operating. Your storage needs will increase over the years, so prepare yourself. If you don't think you can create any more storage space, then look up! If you don't have much floor space, a three-drawer filing cabinet could have another one set on top of it rather than along side.

There is plenty of room up high. You may need a footstool or steady ladder to reach it. While this may seem annoying, you can always keep the oldest files up there -- those that you don't need to access very often.

Make sure that the storage you decide to install is strong enough for the weight it will carry. Paper is actually heavy when it is stacked together. Sometime bookcases are simply not strong enough to do the job. Shelves sag and end up collapsing, so save yourself a lot of grief by using strong shelving.

Freestanding plastic and metal shelving is good because you can move it to another spot easily, but built-in shelving can be customized to use those spaces that are unique to your specific location.

## **Tips for Managing Technology in Your Home Office**

Modern technology has made using a home office much more professional, easier and faster. You can access many files with the



click of a mouse and do a host of useful tasks. Make sure you can manage all the technology in your home office -- don't let it manage you. Unless you are extremely computer literate, use the simplest software as long as it still fits your needs.

Technology increases every day. You can get software that will automatically back up all your files -- a wonderful thing to have if you accidentally hit the wrong key or suffer a power failure before you've had time to save. You can also get Shadow Copy software that will restore accidentally deleted files. You can have an automatic robot installed that will remember all those passwords you have and automatically log you in.

When you are really busy operating your business, you usually don't have time to learn new technology. But if that technology is going to save you a great deal of time and effort in the future of your business, it is worth spending time to learn how to use it properly.

You may need to take a training course online or offline, or have someone come to your office and show you how to do it. Do whatever you need to learn, even if you need to do it in small time-lots that don't take away from your business time. Six months down the track you'll be glad you did.

Always be sure you actually need that new software before you buy it -- this applies even to the free ones. It's no use getting bogged down with stuff that you rarely use or have no real need for, even if it does have cool features. If you do get software, get the latest and best version that you can afford, otherwise you will have to waste time to update the software.

Find out what sort of learner you are to facilitate the process of learning new software. If you are a visual learner, you will remember things best by seeing them written down before doing them. This allows you to visualize what will

happen as you do each step. A kinesthetic learner needs to have hands on experience to learn. Others can learn simply by being told what to do.

## Tips for Organizing Paperwork in Your Home Office

Do you have piles of paperwork littering every surface in your home office? Are you afraid to open a window or switch on the fan in case your papers will blow everywhere into a big mess. Here are some fantastic tips to organize your paperwork and how you can become the most efficient person ever.

Firstly, decide what you really need to keep and what you don't. Do you see a reason to file things that you don't need? (Remember that you do need to keep financial records for tax purposes). A filing system is necessary to keep all that paper in order. What filing system you decide to buy or setup will depend on your budget and your space.

A proper filing cabinet is an excellent way to keep records because you can file your paperwork in a way that is easy to access. Those hanging cardboard folders with alphabetical stickers on the tabs will quickly show you where everything is. All you need to do is drop the sheet of paper into the correct folder. Always set aside 15 minutes of your day to file paperwork correctly. This will save you lots of time hunting for a file that has somehow disappeared -- even though you are sure it



was right there yesterday.

If you cannot have a filing cabinet, then the next best thing is to have cardboard folders or even plastic or cardboard boxes -- with lids if possible -- on shelves. You can still use an alphabetical filing system by sticking labels on the edges of your shelves, or on the sides of the boxes. If you store your folders in a drawer, write the file name on the bottom of the folder so that you can see it when you open the drawer. Of course, you could store them top first- - but then the writing will be upside down.

You can purchase cardboard folders in packs of ten. You can make them more useful by turning up the bottom by about 5 cm and stapling it to form a pocket. Then your papers will not fall out when you pick it up.

You can also use large manila envelopes to file your paperwork. You can stick the gummed overlap down over itself so that it doesn't catch on the paperwork, cut it off and cut a u-shaped section out of the front so you can see what files are in there. This aids in extracting the file too -- you don't have to take everything out to find what you want.

Once you have everything in its proper place, you will be able to work more efficiently and quickly. And it will certainly look more professional.

## **How to Create a Meeting Area for Clients in Your Home Office**

With many home businesses it is necessary to meet with clients sometimes. You simply cannot expect clients or prospects to feel comfortable in your lounge room, surrounded by toys and kids. And the kitchen with its sink full of dishes has limited possibilities. Even if you don't have children, you need a space for your clients that suits them. This will help your clients feel that you are a professional at what you do and enable you to discuss business matters in a quiet and relaxed atmosphere, free of interruptions.



The ideal solution is have an accessible office from outside. This will separate your personal life from your business -- a necessity when running a business from home. If this area can be at the front of the house, so much the better. You'll be able to have a visible sign directing your clients to the correct place. You can restrict family access to a side or back entrance. Your waiting room -- if you need one -- can be your front porch or even the foyer of the home.

To create a suitable meeting area in your office, you need to visualize what you will use each area for. You have your workspace -- which is usually occupied by a computer and chair -- and you have storage space that is close to the workspace. You can use the rest of the space for the meeting area.

You should design your meeting area with comfort in mind. Whether you have a sofa and easy chairs or whether you have a table and straight-backed chairs may depend on your space and your business. Try using straight-backed chairs. Try them out yourself first. Some are more comfortable than others. You may need a table to demonstrate something on. Or you may need to use a laptop or an overhead projector.

Make sure your client space is appropriate for the kind of business you have. If you need to simply talk to clients, then a sofa or easy chairs may be the best option. Two easy chairs are better than one sofa, unless you are likely to interview two people at once. You may need a small coffee table to provide tea or coffee options, but be sure this does not intrude on your available space.

For instance, instead of the usual coffee table in front of the sofa, try a small round one at one end. You can put two easy chairs along one wall, but you'll need to pull the far side of each forward slightly so you are facing your client, rather than both staring at the opposite wall. The obvious place for a small table is then between the two.

## Style Ideas for Home Offices

Since you'll be spending time in your home office, you'll probably want to decorated it in a style that suits your personality. Perhaps you may want your office different than the rest of your house. Or perhaps you would like to expand the theme of the rest of your house into your office. In this case, be careful to get furniture in the same style whether it is contemporary, modern, rustic or country cottage.

If you've installed your home office in the corner of another room, you may prefer it to blend in with the décor of that room. To make it look completely different will detract from the aesthetic appeal of both. Of course, you could





re-decorate the whole room to be more in-line with what you want from your office.

Decorating a home office in a professional manner will help your family take the work you do seriously and make you feel more like a professional person. You will be inclined to give your work the time and effort it deserves if your office looks professional.

Whatever style of décor you decide on, efficiency is the first priority. A fancy coffee table in the middle of the room may look fantastic, but if you crack your shin on it every time to try to access your files, then it is not contributing to efficiency. You may love the colors in that mat you found at a flea market, but if your clients are likely to trip on the one tatty corner, then don't use it.

Once your office is efficient, you can look for ways to make it personal, pleasing and perfect. You can play your own music there; you can have a fish tank if you want; or you could display your ancient collection of whatever -- if you have enough room. It's all up to you.

But if you have trouble decorating and end up with a messy clutter and a jumbled hodge-podge of miscellaneous items, then it might be time to call in the professionals.

## Should You Build a Custom Office?

Whether or not you should build a custom



office will depend on the location and the size of your budget. If you want your office to form part of another room, then it may not be necessary to custom build anything, except perhaps some special shelves. Custom built shelving will ensure that you get the most use out of your space.

You can easily purchase a freestanding shelving unit, however they do gather dust in that crevice between the wall and the back of the shelves. It is almost impossible to clean and you would need to take everything off the unit before you can move it. For this reason alone, custom-built shelving may be the way to go.

Once you decide what you need in your office, and where it will all go, then it's time to use your tape measure and see how much space you can allot to each item of furniture. If you cannot purchase the right furniture to fit the space, then consider custom built.

A custom built office offers you the style and color that suits you, even though it may not be available in the shops. You can have your specific space measured by professionals who will then consult you on your needs and tastes in design, style and color.

When you purchase pre-fab, then you cannot be sure of quality or fit. You must go with the nearest size of what you want, and you are stuck with whatever stuff it is made from. If you decide on two different units, you may be unable to get them in matching colors or timber.

While a custom built office may cost more, it will also last longer due to the quality. You will be happier to work in an environment that matches your tastes, and your clients will feel your professionalism when they see an office that you designed with such care.

Custom designers are experts in their job. They can advise you on the most

efficient -- and cost efficient -- design for your needs. They will probably think of things that you may not, since they've probably had more experience is setting up offices than you have.

Custom-built office staff are trained in how to get the best use of your available space, no matter if you have lots of room or only a little.

## Tips for Creating an Office on a Budget

Everyone is restrained by a budget of some kind. When you begin planning your home office, you won't be the only one restrained by a budget. Having a budget to create your office is great practice for budgeting other areas of your life. You can still have a great office -- even with a shoestring budget.

You do not need to buy new furniture for your office. You can find plenty of stores that sell used furniture and you can often find furniture with bargain prices. What about an old-fashioned desk for your computer instead of one made especially for the job? You'll get heaps more room and you'll probably be able to fit a set of drawers underneath it.

If you haven't bought a computer yet, think about getting a laptop instead of one with a monitor. Why? You can save heaps of space by using the laptop on the slide-out keyboard drawer of a computer desk. Then you'll have free space on top of the



desk for other activities as well as space on the wall behind for a small corkboard or even a hutch. You can store essential paperwork on that or anything else that you need to reach easily and often.

The space that would have held the CPU can store many other things. Measure it carefully and see if you can get stackable, slide-out storage for it. And thinking of computers and all the other electronics you'll need, keep a watch out for sales and discounts that will save you a bundle. Even buying online can save a great deal.

Browse thrift stores to access pre-loved furniture and other accessories. Garage sales, eBay and other auction sites, both online and offline, are good places to find bargains. You can easily find discount office supplies from advertising.

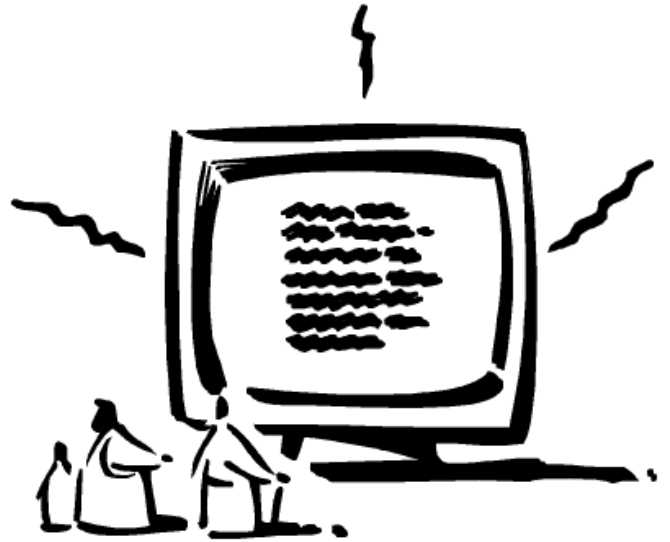
Unless you need to finish your office in a hurry, don't try to do it all in one day. If you start with the basics and expand gradually, you can still work from the office while you wait to find the extra pieces you need. This is a good idea if you've never worked in an office before and are not sure how it should all fit together or what else you need.

If you have a choice, choose the store that offers free delivery, otherwise see if you can handle the delivery yourself. This could save the costs of store delivery that costs \$75 or more.

## **Tips for Defining Your Workspace in a Shared Room**

If your home office must share a room with others in the family, you can find other ways to make it a private space -- or at least define your work area that encourages the rest of the family not to intrude.

To start, you can gather all your office equipment into the one area. Don't spread yourself around the whole room with your filing cabinet on one wall, your desk along the other, and the bin in a corner near the doorway. Instead, keep everything along one wall or in the corner. One exception would be if you have a filing cabinet of records or things you don't need to access every day. You could free up some extra office space by locating this in another room.



You may be able to use the back of the sofa as a low wall to define your workspace -- but don't be surprised if your kids climb it to reach you. A bookcase against the back of it may stop this problem and give you needed storage space. Or you may find it enough to mark off your office boundary with a low coffee table or a couple of indoor plants.

Storage units are probably the most effective way of defining your workspace, as they will do provide storage. If you want to keep an eye on the kids, then you need to keep the storage below your eye level when sitting. The height of a three-drawer filing cabinet is about right. If you have taller storage, you could have one on each side of the desk area (but behind you) so you can view most of the room from your chair.

Try and keep your workspace out of a walkway. If people have to go through your workspace to access other areas of the same room, then it is in the wrong place.

They may also need to go through your space to access other rooms. Try to avoid this, if possible, or you'll never get any peace. Start off by re-designing the layout of the furniture in the room, even if you need to change the electrical outlet positions. Draw up a plan to scale, or measure the new positions and the furniture to make sure it will fit.

If your children are at the crawling stage and into everything, it might be prudent to install low fencing around your workspace to keep them out. This often works better than confining them in a playpen, as they have more space to explore and are less likely to cry for attention.

## How Color Affects Your Work Environment

Most commercial offices are painted a dull gray or beige, though one wonders why. Haven't the professional designers ever heard about the way color affects the mind? Just as the ergonomics of our working environment affects our physical bodies, the colors of the workplace also affects our emotions and our creativity.

Some of the brighter colors e.g., bright yellow, cause eyestrain if used too much, but so do large areas of white, because white reflects light to about 80 %, making our eyes constantly adjust to adapt. Faber Birren, who is considered the father of color psychology, reduced industrial accidents dramatically by the use of color in factories.



The right use of color can stimulate the brain, increase productivity and create a calming effect, while the wrong mixture of color can create nausea, drowsiness or aggression. It is important to have the right color -- or combination of colors -- in our home office, otherwise we could fall asleep or yell at the clients.

Colors that are low light reflective are better for the office worker as they tend to cause less eyestrain and tiredness. You can also use color to make a small work area seem more spacious, or even define your workspace. If your home business is stressful, then you can lower your stress levels and maintain your physical and emotional health by using the right color.

A dull gray is considered the best color for viewing documents, so how can we make sure we don't strain our eyes and still have that necessary color to stimulate our senses? You can use bright colors as accessories in the workplace. For instance, you can have neutral walls and a bright red or blue chair.

When thinking in terms of storage, most office storage comes in dull gray, brown or off-white, so if yours is like that, why not add color with a brighter carpet or mat, a richly-colored picture on the wall, or a pretty vase of flowers? These kinds of things can cause the blandest office to take on new life.

Or you may prefer to start from scratch and do your walls over in tangerine with white trim, then it won't matter how dull the office furniture is. In fact it may need to be dull to rest the eyes a bit. And the carpet or flooring could be a contrast too, in some cooler, calmer color. A deep wood grain would be fantastic.

## Tips for Selecting Lighting in Your Home Office

Lighting in the home office can come from several different sources. Windows provide natural lighting that comes from the windows. There is also reflected light that may be from a natural source such as a window in another room, and there is artificial light. If you like natural lighting and the window is in the wrong place, then consider installing a skylight. A skylight will provide lots of wonderful natural light, often without a glare that comes from a window.

Artificial light can be from your ceiling light or from floor or table lamps of various kinds. These can use fluorescent or and incandescent globes, though the former is considered the best for office work.

Natural light may be adequate for daytime use, but in most cases it is not ideal, as you can't always situate the computer in the correct position. Often glare from the window reflects in the monitor and that causes eyestrain. If that happens, then you may want to block the window light with curtains or a blind of some kind. Or you may want to block it out almost completely and rely on artificial lighting.

While you can get a monitor with an anti-glare screen, it may be that light reflects onto other shiny surfaces such as a plastic filing cabinet or storage areas. If this is





too bright, it will cause eye irritation, even if you are not looking directly at it. If you cannot move the offending item, then you can cover the shiny spot with a cloth, or move something else between your eye and the bright spot to block it from sight.

If your room has good general lighting, you may be happy with just a lamp for spot work. If you have a lamp on your desk, make sure it has a good shade so that your face can be kept in shadow. You may prefer a freestanding lamp that you can move. If so, get one with a heavy base that cannot be knocked over.

Accent lighting is often used in an office to showcase work trophies, awards or other important items. This can create a professional-looking office, one that is both beautiful and a relaxing. It can create an atmosphere that will welcome clients and reassure them of your professionalism. Whatever sort of lighting you get for your office, take the time to get it right and you will reward yourself with days of headache-free work.

## **Ergonomics - How to Make Your Home Office Comfortable**

You can do many things to make your home office comfortable -- and comfort is necessary to efficiency. Feeling uncomfortable is a distraction and you'll use every excuse not to stay with your work. Discomfort can also cause injury, which you need to avoid at all costs. An injured person cannot run a home business.

The first thing to look at is your chair. Is it the right height for you? Your chair should keep your feet flat on the floor and prevent you from slumping or reaching the keyboard. The back of the chair should be adjustable so that it supports your

back, while the seat needs to be both comfortable and supportive. Many people prefer to take the armrests off their office chair. Constant rubbing on the armrests could chafe your elbows.

Some people prefer an ergonomic chair which allows you to sit in an astride or saddle position for better posture. Other people prefer a chair that incorporates a knee rest. Neither of these options have a backrest, so should consider if these types of chairs are for you. If your tailbone hurts after hours in the chair, then you may want a special cushion with a u-shape cut out of the back.

Adjust your computer screen so that it is not too bright or too dim and the font size suits your vision. A glare monitor may be necessary. If you have a window behind you, does it reflect in the computer monitor? If so, a good blind may be the answer.



The keyboard may need to be a split type. This is especially good for males with broad shoulders, but also suits everyone because it allows the wrist position to be a more natural one. The keyboard is shaped rather like a boomerang with extra space in the middle to allow for the expansion.

Insulation may be just what your office needs to enhance your work environment. Noise insulation, that is. If your family or the traffic outside irritates you, then it will interfere with your productivity. Insulation in the walls will help reduce the noise level coming from outside.

Good lighting is another essential. The wrong lighting can have make you squint and give you headaches. For good diffused lighting, try aiming a strong light up to

the underside of a light umbrella like photographers use to diffuse their light. This can bathe your office area in light that is strong, but rarely casts a shadow.

## Great Ideas for Creating a Contemporary Home Office

A contemporary home office is one with a modern, upbeat look. It has a pleasant environment in which to work and it suits many businesses. You can choose from many types of furniture built with the sleek lines of the contemporary style that allows plenty of legroom. Smart and functional, contemporary décor has a lighter, brighter look than traditional with the use of glass and steel mixed in with melamine and wood-grain finishes.

Modular computer desks include features of contemporary style but it is also ergonomic and comfortable to work at. Contemporary style features glass-topped tables, however, most computer or work desks maintain a wooden or melamine work surface.

While a work surface of glass shows every speck of dust, it creates an illusion of space, wonderful if you are working in a small area.

Consider using a glass-topped table and funky chairs for meeting with your clients. Make sure the chairs are comfortable. A glass-topped table will create light and an airy feeling of space. Pearl gray table legs and a frame will not be intrusive through the glass top.



Contemporary décor in your office will offset the space taken by the computer desk and storage. Light colored wood-grain or even a brightly colored work surface will add to the contemporary style. Funky artwork on the walls will not take up any floor space, but will enhance the modern stylishness of the furniture.

Color is important. You can achieve the right blend of color with filing cabinets or storage areas. Set them together for a smooth, un-cluttered look and think of unusual ways to hold all those small items that tend to be strewn about your workspace. For instance, glass storage jars can hang from underneath a high shelf if you screw the lids to the shelf. Then you can simply unscrew the jars for access.

A traditional style sofa or easy chairs will take up more room; if you go contemporary, you will gain room without sacrificing comfort. Two easy chairs with a glass-topped table for the client's coffee mug or papers is sufficient in the meeting zone of the office.

Use wood or a wood-grain vinyl to keep the flooring streamlined and easy to clean. If you have carpet, make sure the pile is short so that wheeled chairs will roll over it freely. Brightly colored walls can enhance the contemporary design of your modern office.

## **Great Ideas for Creating a Traditional Style Home Office**

A home office styled in the traditional way creates comfort. Many people use this style of décor. If you want to keep your clients focused on the business rather than the furnishings, then go with traditional décor.

Traditional décor uses neutral tones; wall colors of beige, gray or pale blue. These colors are restful and soothing and the light colors offset the heaviness of the dark wood or wood-grained furniture. You can incorporate many beautiful pieces of furniture into the traditionally styled office. The richness of the grain is a subtle statement of quality. Use tall storage to gain the space you may lose in the bulk of the piece. Keep lines simple and flowing, with ornamentation understated rather than obvious.



Your computer desk could be big, old and heavy with lots of room on top and small pockets for storage along the back. Drawers down the sides are a feature of this desk.

While the furniture may be on the heavy side, you can lighten the overall look by adding color accents in the seat padding and decorations. The pictures on the walls should reflect the traditional theme with sailing ships or country scenes. You can do this in sepia or pencil sketches, or subtle coloring. The frames should be rich timber to match the color of the other furniture.

Even traditional offices like to have the efficiency of more modern window treatments; so if glare is a problem in your office, install vertical drapes rather than traditional roller blinds. Wooden Venetian blinds are another option. Curtains -- if you decide on them -- should be understated and can match or tone with the seating.

Lighting for the traditional office consists of normal overhead fixtures along with

a desk lamp or two. Brass fittings look great and enhance the traditional look while the shades can be dark green. Potted plants, such as ferns or palms, will add a touch of elegance to your traditional office. A timber framed container to put the pots in continues the traditional theme. Flooring consists of quiet carpet in neutral colors that must have a short pile for those wheeled computer chairs to ride over easily.

## Great Ideas for Creating an Eclectic Home Office

The eclectic style of décor for your home office is probably the easiest to achieve. It combines different styles, handy if you are searching the flea markets or thrift shops for the right piece. Decorating your office in an eclectic style is useful if you have some old pieces that you want to use to save money -- or because you like them -- and then you see something else in the shop that is just what you need, but a different style. You don't want your office to look like a messy hodge-podge, so you need to tie these different styles together to unify the whole look.

One of the best ways to do this is by using color. Firstly, you could choose something that appeals to you - maybe a fancy chair with red velvet padding. Then you buy other goods with similar colors or else paint them to match. You could add cushions in the same color and fabric to your sofa or other easy chairs. You could



cover your office chair in a fabric of the same color, though not the same fabric. You could add a red vase to the top of the storage area or the table. Or you could find a picture for the wall that has that same red color.

Your basic foundation need not be a piece of furniture. It could be something as simple as a picture that you love, a piece of material or even a carpet square. It might be a vase you inherited or a nice collection of something that you want to display. With the eclectic style of decorating you have the freedom to do what you like.

Some styles of furniture go with each other much better than others, though. Contemporary and Country styles seem to merge without difficulty and become Modern Country. Modern and Tropical will enhance each other, while Roman and Greek styles of architecture complement each other and become Greco-Roman. But don't limit yourself to these combinations. An eclectic office can have in it whatever you decide to put there.

The main criterion is: does it work for you? An eclectic office needs to be efficient and functional with plenty of storage space to reduce clutter - just the same as any other office. How you achieve this depends on your own preferences and personality. With an eclectic office you can have the best of many worlds.

## **How to Create Attractive Display Areas in Your Office**

Attractive display areas may be necessary in the home office, especially if your work entails designing products or something that people will want to buy, or hire you to make for them. It may be that you are a photographer and will want to



showcase your best photos. You may design brochures or do any number of beautiful things that will enhance your business if displayed, so how can you display these things in an attractive manner?

Using the wall is a good idea. This keeps floor space free for other things necessary to an office. And it creates room to move around more easily. If you have a meeting area in your office, then use the wall nearest it to display some of your things. You can do this by framing several in one large frame, or by hanging them individually. If you also use accent lighting to highlight them, it will create a beautiful display that shows your work to its best advantage.

Another idea is to paint a frame directly onto the wall and hang your pictures inside it. This will unify them if you have many of different sizes.

Make sure they are hung in a way that is balanced, with the largest in the middle and slightly above the center. Medium sizes should be dispersed equally around it and the spaces filled in by the smaller ones.



But what if you cannot hang the things you want to display? Then you can use shadow boxes, or open shelving on the walls to create display areas. A freestanding unit would also be suitable if you have the floor space because you can have non-reflexive glass doors to keep the dust out. And you can use the bottom part to store things that you don't need to display, so you get storage area combined with your display area.

If your display is small, you may choose to arrange it on the top of a filing cabinet. Standing two storage units side-by-side will extend this area. Another

idea is to use a small side-table along one wall. This could easily become a feature in the office if you have enough room. Accent lighting can come from above for all those displays except those on shelving. In this case, the shelf above would create a pool of shadow that would hide your display rather than enhance it.

Find out the best position for accent lighting on display shelves by holding a table lamp in various positions. It could be that a spot on the opposite wall would be suitable.

## Tips for Sharing Living Space with a Home Office

You may have searched through your home and found the only place to put your home office is in the living room. This is usually where your family plays the TV or other music loudly at various times when you are trying to concentrate. You may find that the toddler will crawl around your feet when you are busy and play with all those interesting shiny buttons on the CPU. Instead of pulling your hair out, follow these few tips to successfully share living space with a home office.

Once the children are old enough to obey a few rules, be sure to write them where all can see. The rules may include:



- No loud music or television turned too high.
- Use of headphones to listen to loud music or TV.
- No kicking or throwing balls in the living area.
- Respecting your office 'space' by keeping out of it.
- Don't interrupt unless there is blood on someone.

What you choose for rules depends on you and your sanity levels. You may work quite well with the television blaring, the baby crying and the dog barking. If you can't, then it's best to shift the office into the kitchen.

The other viable option is to limit work hours to school hours when the children are not home. Otherwise you may need to invest in a quality set of earplugs.

When setting up a home office in the living area, try to keep it all in one place. This place should be somewhere that is not used for a walk space. Nor should your office space intrude between the seating arrangements and the television. But these days of super-large TV screens, you could consider buying a large-size TV and putting it up high on the wall, so that vision is not impeded. This could also free up some extra floor space for your office.

A strip along one wall is the most basic arrangement that seems to work well. It is economical in space usage and could even be used in a hallway. Or a corner arrangement may suit your furniture layout better. You can find many computer desks built for corner installation. You may be able to achieve a modicum of privacy by installing heavy curtains across the corner.

## Tips for Sharing Den Space with a Home Office

The den -- if you are lucky enough to have one -- is the ideal place to fit a home office. A dual-purpose room will save space and you can create a room that retains the elegance of a den and incorporates the functionality of an office.

While it may be tempting to sit your laptop on a table and call that an office, you really need more drawer space to keep things looking neat and tidy. Drawers or slide-out shelving behind neat doors are the answer; you can also use them to fit other office items such as the printer, scanner and whatever else you may need. It's not necessary to stick with office type furniture for your storage solutions. Your den may have a built-in bookshelf that you could utilize.

Be sure you need to keep that paper record before you file it away. Once you've cleared out everything you don't need, you may not need the same amount of storage space. A filing cabinet that is made of wood is preferable to a steel one in a den. Steel is strong and sturdy, but not decorative. Keeping to the rich grain of wood will enhance your décor in a way that steel never could.

Placing your table or desk in front of a window may provide light, but sometimes you may decide you need a good strong blind to keep out the sun's glare. Use desk lamps or free-standing spot lights to ensure that artificial lighting is right for working on the computer or other work you may do.

Sometimes it's better to aim lighting at the ceiling so you create a diffused glow, rather than shining



them directly on the work surface.

Unify the office furniture to match with your den furniture by spraying it the same color. Use the same soft furnishing fabric -- or at least match the color. To keep your office from looking overcrowded, use light colors for everything, then get visual contrast with bright colors rather than dark. While many dens are traditionally done in dark colors, white with gold trim looks both elegant and stunning. Perhaps it's time to revamp the den to fit in with your choice of office décor rather than the other way around.

If you are not planning on meeting clients in your den, it's better to have one long sofa for comfort, rather than a lot of chair groupings. Comfort should be the preference in your den-cum-office.

## Tips for Sharing Kitchen Space with a Home Office

Your kitchen may have the right space to squeeze an office in and create the ideal solution. You can combine your office work with cooking the dinner and not be so likely to burn it. The television blare away in the living room, entertaining the children, while you enjoy the comparative peace and quiet of your kitchen office. What could be better?

To save on bench space, think along the lines of hanging your computer monitor from the wall with a single-axis mount. This will enable you to turn it 180° if you need to. You could have a glide-out



keyboard inserted under the breakfast bar or countertop; if you have extra space, use a drawer or two.

One place you should avoid installing your computer is near the stove. Don't forget you have to sit there and it will get very hot and steamy when you are cooking. A range hood will take the steam out, but not the heat.

Don't have cables running across your countertop; it will look untidy and pose a safety risk. Things often get spilled on kitchen counters, and you don't want your cables to join the mess. You can find many solutions -- from grommets to specialized covers for electric cords -- in your hardware store.

Be sure you have good lighting to prevent eyestrain. You can install lighting either on the wall or under a high cupboard. Desk lamps are not a preferred option for the same reason that cables should be kept off the counter. Besides, you may not have enough counter space. You only need to push the lamp out of your way in a hurry to knock it over and have smashed bulb glass amongst your cooking. Xenon lighting is a cooler option for a room that may be warmer than the rest of the house. A pedestal or wall fan may be an excellent addition to help you keep your cool.

You may have a large kitchen, in which resides one of those wonderful old farm kitchen tables. If so, you could utilize one end of it for your computer -- or consider using a smaller table so you have room for your computer desk. One good thing about kitchens is they usually have plenty of storage. To squeeze more in, fit a small set of drawers under the table. Or throw away some of your excess junk and make your kitchen more streamlined. Then you'll have plenty of space for your office accessories.

## **What Work Environment Do You Need to**

## Create in Your Home Office?

The work environment you need to create in your home office will depend on what sort of business you do. All home offices need positive overtones so you feel encouraged to work hard and accomplish what you need to do. If you have a negative work environment with drab colors, poor lighting and awkward storage, you won't want to be there, let alone work in it.

On the other hand, if you love your office space, you'll look forward to working. This can increase your productivity to the extent that your business will become a success much sooner than you expected.

Apart from the positive/negative aspects, each business will require different a environment. If you are a freelance writer or graphic designer running a business from your home office, then you will need an environment that will make your clients feel you know what you are doing. This environment should be sober and solid. If you walked into an accountant's office where heavy metal music was throbbing, or that had children's toys scattered all over the floor, you might not want to trust him with your finances.

But if you went to an office where someone was supposed to design your wedding gown, or flower arrangements, you would not be impressed with heavy, dark furniture and shuttered windows. So the environment you create for your home office will need to be appropriate for your specific business.

If you need to concentrate carefully in your business -- you might even be a computer programmer -- you will want to



create an environment that is conducive to concentration. This will mean freedom from interruption and unnecessary noise. If you need to share your office, then screens placed between you both will create privacy and freedom from distraction. Even if the other person is quiet, just seeing him or her sitting there or moving around, is likely to distract you.

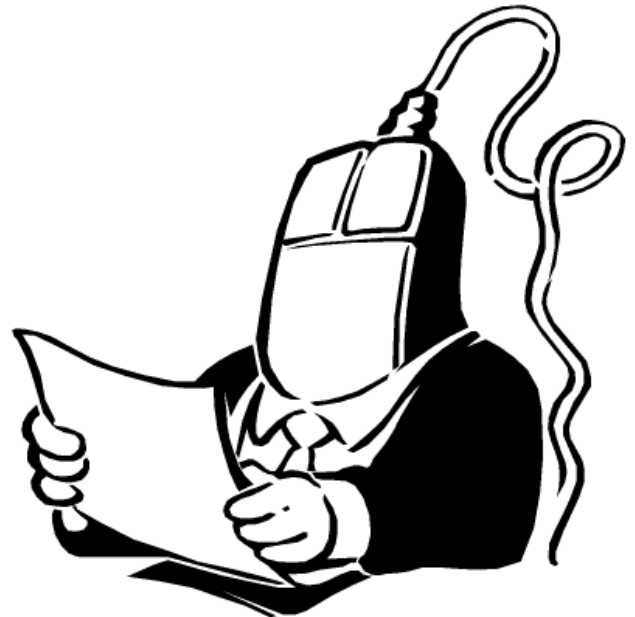
You can create the right environment with the use of color, style of furniture, lighting and decoration. Bright colors and contemporary furniture will create an upbeat, funky kind of environment that stimulates the creative thought processes needed by some home businesses. Cool blues and greens with potted plants will provide a calm atmosphere. Neutral tones with dark or heavy wooden furniture will create an atmosphere of trust and dependability. So whatever kind of environment you need, go for it.



## Maximizing Space: How to Create a Closet Home Office

It's true; you really can utilize that closet space for a home office. Open wide the doors and get out your measuring tape. Even if you don't have a computer desk yet, you'll be sure to find the measurements of one in that last batch of junk mail catalogues that arrived in your mailbox. Once you have the measurements, go ahead and measure that closet space. See? It won't? What do you need a desk for anyway? Forget the desk; shelving at the right height is all you need.

So what is the first task? Take everything out of the closet. Throw out what you don't need and store the rest elsewhere, even if you need to buy another cupboard and put it out on the back veranda or in the laundry. If you have garments stored in there, you could keep them on a garment rack or store them in a space bag under the bed. We mostly don't need half the stuff we keep, so you'll surely be able to dispose of some. You might even decide to sell it on eBay.



Once the closet is empty, you'll need to take out any shelves or inserts and the rod that goes across the top. Vacuum the dust out and give the closet a fresh coat of paint. Use a light color so your office space won't be too dark.

Re-measure it now to be sure your measurements are exact. Decide what you are going to put in there besides the computer. Will you need a printer, scanner, fax, or photocopier?

One thing you will need to put in there is a good light and some power points, so you may need to get an electrician to inspect it.

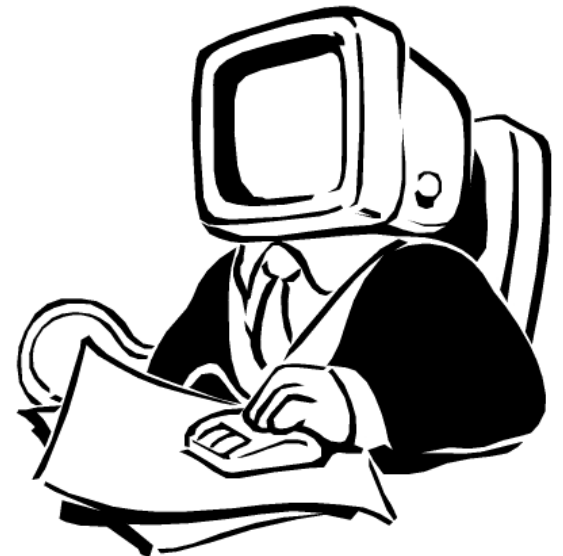
Wall-mounted shelving will take advantage of the height of your closet and provide needed storage space. Depending on how wide your closet is, you may be able to fit shelves down to the floor on one side. But leave ample leg space when working this out. You don't want to crack your knees on a hard edge every time you move.

Shelf space can be maximized by the use of cartons or boxes to pile things into. If you need to share it with family members, each one should have their own shelf with the tallest person using the top shelf. A closet is ideal for an office because you can simply close the doors when you've finished and the room will look neat and tidy.

## Maximizing Space: How to Turn a Niche into a Home Office

It's simply amazing where you can fit a home office. You can use the tiniest niche to store a computer and printer, especially if you use a laptop. But the advent of the slim-line monitor has pared centimeters off the space you need to set up an office. Even if you don't have a slim-line model, you can use a wall-mount to hold the monitor, which means you need even less space than you first thought. A table just large enough to hold a keyboard and printer would be the main necessity.

What niche would be suitable in your home for an office? Under the stairs is a good place, or in an awkward corner



somewhere. You may have a small entry hall at the front door that you could use if the door was blocked off. Many people use their back doors more than the front, anyway.

Years ago a popular style of furniture was long and low, which took up piles of floor space. If you have any furniture like that, consider replacing it with something tall and narrow to free up enough floor space for your office niche. Or what about a laundry cupboard? If you can fit a keyboard across the shelf, it is wide enough for a computer, too.

Whatever niche you decide on for your home office, you need clear out everything else from it. Once it is cleared, you can repaint it a nice light color and then see what lighting you will need. If your niche is really cozy, it is nearly sure to be dim as well. Lighting could be from a freestanding lamp or a desk lamp. A power point can be provided by the use of a power board from the nearest one to your niche. This would save the cost of getting an electrician. Use twist-ties to secure the cables.

If your house has awkward corners, hire a handyman to install custom-built shelving there. This will extend your storage space and keep your niche tidier. You could also use the furniture that is already nearby for storage. A simple chest of drawers can hold a great many odds and ends as well as files and records. The top of it could hold your phone/fax, printer or scanner if the computer desk or table is not big enough.

If your niche is without storage shelves, you can buy a hutch to fit across the back of your computer desk. To maximize the space, use storage boxes on them. Before long you'll be happily typing away in your very own home office. **END**