

Creating a Home Office that Works for You

Janet is pulling on her jacket and grabbing her briefcase and keys in a mad rush for the front door. Jim is letting the dog out, pouring a cup of coffee and heading down a back hallway of his house. Which one is going to work? They both are!

Home offices are becoming less of a luxury and more of a necessity with more people telecommuting or running their own businesses from their house. The number of Americans who work from home is in the millions, and with the rising cost of gas and increased traffic causing longer commutes, that number is likely to grow even more every year.

Work space is no longer relegated just to the kitchen table or a corner of the guest bedroom; it has been promoted to a room of its own in the home. A 2007 consumer preferences survey by the National Association of Home Builders found that a home office was the third most desired specialty room, following the laundry and dining rooms, respectively.

If you are looking to create a home office, or revamp an existing one, keep the following points in mind:

Separate Your Space

Although you are physically working in the house, it is important to set up your home office so that the lines between your home life and your work life do not get blurred. By creating a barrier, you will be less tempted to take a television break in the middle of your work day or work on spreadsheets when you are supposed to be “home from the office.”

Design Your Office to Match Your Work Style

When choosing the furniture and layout of your office, make sure it fits the way you choose to work. For example, if you believe in “a place for everything and everything in its place,” be sure to allot enough space for adequate storage and file cabinets. If you

work on several different projects, set up separate, smaller work stations dedicated to each task.

Show Off Your Style

There is no such thing as “one design fits all.” While one person may prefer the look of dark woods and rich colors, someone else may favor a more whimsical look with bright colors and clean lines. This is your chance to bring in designs and items that best reflect your personality and interests. Don’t be restricted by what you think a home office *should* look like. Make it your own since you will be the one spending the most time there.

Make It Comfortable

When choosing the furniture and amenities for your office, make sure that you are physically comfortable and that your work space is conducive to productivity. Your chair should be adjustable with adequate seat cushioning. Add a couch or armchair to the room to allow for additional seating for guests or to provide a place to read away from your desk. Install recessed lighting which is less harsh, and buy smaller desktop lights focused on task areas that are used for reading and writing to reduce eye strain.