51 Ways to Create a Great Home Office

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More and more people these days have home offices, but it can be hard to separate the "home" from the "office." This ebook is designed to help you make a wonderful home office that will be efficient, appealing, and comfortable.

MAKE A PLAN

If you're building an office from scratch, the first thing you need to do is make a plan. This first set of tips will get you thinking about where to start.

1. Define Your Space

The first thing you need to do is decide where your office is going to be. Do you have a whole room to dedicate to it? Or maybe just a corner of a room? Whatever the case, it's important to clearly define your office space.

2. Questions to Ask

You're going to want to ask yourself some important questions while considering your home office. Questions like:

What furniture do I already have (desk, chair, lamp)?
Will clients need to come in my office?
Is my space big enough that I won't feel crowded?

3. Draw Your Work Area

It's a good idea to plan out your work area. Where is your desk going? Do you have room for shelves? If you can see everything on paper, It'll be a lot easier when you move things to where they need to be.

4. Measure

After drawing your office, get out a measuring tape and measure everything. Be sure you measure your office space *and* all of your furniture. Even if you don't yet have all the furniture that you need, at least you'll have the measurements of what will fit.

5. Give Yourself a Space to Write

When planning your office, make sure you give yourself room to write. With all of your computer equipment, lamps, printers, etc., you can easily forget to give yourself space to write. Even the most technology-savvy individual needs to simply jot down an idea sometimes.

CREATING SPACE

Many people don't have room for a home office, so they need to *make* room. All it takes is a little creativity. This next set of tips will give you some ideas and hopefully get those creative juices flowing.

6. Using Long, Narrow Spaces

If you have a long wall, you can use it as a make-shift office. Just look around for a narrow desk, and you're halfway there. You can even use some cinder blocks and a sturdy piece of wood.

7. Use a Wall Separator

Wall separators do wonders for would-be-rooms. They're not very expensive and can make any corner look like a real room. You also can use the extra "wall" for calendars, sticky notes, etc.

8. Look For Nooks

You'd be surprised at the little nooks and spaces you can use for an office. Look for things like:

Under stairs
Entryway
Laundry room corner
Walk-in closet

9. Garage or Basement

Don't forget to consider your garage or basement for a make-shift home office. You may need to do some temperature and lighting control, but in the end, either could make a great office.

ROOM LAYOUT

There are several types of room layouts for your home office. This next set of tips will help you get an idea of what yours might look like.

10. Corner Layout

The corner-layout is great if you need to share your room with something else: Here's a diagram:

11. "U" Layout

The "U" Layout is great for giving you lots of room. Here's a diagram:

12. “T” Layout

A “T” Layout is great for sharing your home office with another person. Here’s a diagram:

13. Shared Room

Remember that when you share your home office with another room, like a bedroom, living room or kitchen, it’s important to find a way to separate your office from the other part of the room. If you can’t afford a partition, get creative with backs of couches or home-made curtains.

ON A TIGHT BUDGET

Not all of us can afford to go out and buy new office furniture. This next set of tips will give you some creative ideas about building your home office on a shoe-string budget.

14. Use Things You Already Have

Start by looking around for things that you already have. Go through your attic, garage or storage unit. You'll be surprised at what you find you already have.

15. Build Your Desk

Need a custom-made desk for a tight space? Build one! You'll be surprised at what you can do with three sturdy pieces of wood and some nails. I'm sure the employees at your local hardware store can give you some great tips as well.

16. Second Hand Stores

Second hand stores are great places to find gently-used furniture. If you can't find what you need on your first visit, keep going back every few days. If you're persistent, you'll find just what you need.

17. Garage Sales

Don’t forget about garage and yard sales. Many treasures are found every week at these. Just start early one Saturday, newspaper in hand, and hit as many as you can. You’re bound to find something for your home office.

18. Swap With Friends

It’s fun to ask a friend if they want to swap furniture with you. Maybe that ugly end-table in your garage is just what she’s been looking for. And maybe the desk gathering dust in her basement is exactly what would work great in your home office.

19. Coffee Cans and Flower Pots

Look around your home for things that you can use to hold smaller things like pens, pencils, and paperclips. Coffee cans, flower pots, and small boxes work great.

20. Visit Professional Offices

Be sure to visit professional offices to see if they are redecorating. Quality hotels redecorate guest rooms every 4 or 5 years. They’ll sell their old furniture to you dirt cheap.

BUYING FURNITURE

If you're lucky enough to be able to buy new furniture, you need to be sure that it's the right kind. This next set of tips will give you some questions that you should answer before buying.

21. Is it Easy to Assemble?

Does it come already assembled, or is it quite simple to assemble? What tools will you need? Are the instructions in English and easy to read and follow?

22. Will it Last?

Does the furniture you're buying have a warranty? Is it sturdy and strong? Is it real wood or particle board? Look close, because sometimes they'll trick you and put a thin layer of veneer over the particle board to *look* like wood.

23. Is it Safe?

Look at your furniture from top to bottom and make sure it's safe. Look for things like:

- Sharp corners
- Position of nails
- Sturdiness
- Smoothness (no slivers)

24. Does it Need to be Portable or Versatile?

Do you need to be able to tuck things away when you're not using them? For instance, a small desk on wheels that you can roll into a corner, or a desk that can be shut up into an armoire are two great options.

25. Is Your Desk and Chair the Right Height?

Make sure your desk and chair are the right height for you. Sit in the chair at the store, then put the chair up to the desk. Make sure your feet are comfortably on the floor, and the desktop is at a good distance to work from.

FILING SYSTEM

Every office needs a good filing system or else papers will start piling up *fast*. This next set of tips will help you set up a great home office filing system.

26. Filing Cabinet

Whether it's new or used, a good filing cabinet is important. Make sure it's sturdy and roomy enough for your needs. The drawers need to slide smoothly and be easy to open and close.

27. Folders

You'll need two different types of folders:

Hanging folders—these are a bit wider and have hook-like hangers on both ends.

Manila folders—these are smaller than hanging folders, and go *inside* them.

28. Desktop

You'll need to have *some* papers on your desktop, and you need a way to keep them organized. It can be as simple as in/out boxes, or there are lots of tiered desktop organizers that you can buy.

SAFETY

It's important that your home office is safe. This next set of tips will help you make sure that there are no dangers in your office.

29. Surge Protectors

Every home experiences power surges. Make sure that *all* of your electronics are plugged into surge protectors. This will protect your computer and anything else from electrical damage.

30. Carpet

If you have a choice between carpet versus no carpet for your home office, it's better to go with no carpet. Static from carpet may damage the computer's circuits. If you do have carpet in your home office, buy an antistatic mat or use an antistatic spray to reduce buildup on the carpet.

31. Electrical Cords

Even with just a computer and a phone, cords seem to always get tangled. Make sure all of your cords are tucked behind your desk. You can buy plastic cord bundlers at office supply stores as well.

32. Halogen Lamps

If you have halogen desk lamps, don't touch the bulbs with your bare hands when changing them. The residue of oil from a human hand rubs off on the bulb, making the bulb warm up too fast when the lamp is turned on. This quick warming can cause the bulb to explode.

33. Paper Clip Holders

Beware of those magnetic paperclip holders. Anything magnetic can erase information off disks, mess up your hard drive, and damage your monitor.

34. Turn Off

Practice shutting down your computer and turning things off when they're not in use. This will save energy and ensure your office is safe when you're not around.

35. 3-Prong Outlets

Be sure to use three-prong electrical outlets in your home office. This, along with using surge protectors, makes sure that your computer and other electronics are safe, even if the worst happens.

36. Dust-Free

Make sure to keep your computer, monitor, and keyboard free of dust as it can interfere with their effectiveness. Compressed air works well, and you can buy it at any office supply store.

ASSESORIZING

After acquiring your bigger furniture for your home office, it's time to look at the smaller things that can make an effective work area. This next set of tips will give you suggestions of other needs.

37. Bulletin Boards

Make sure you have plenty of places to hang paper and sticky notes on. Bulletin boards come in all shapes, sizes, and styles these days. Find one or two that fit your needs and put them up.

38. Lights

It's important that your home office be well lighted. It really doesn't matter what kind of light you use, just make sure that wherever you read has sufficient light so that you don't strain your eyes.

39. Calendar

Every home office needs a good calendar to keep track of important dates and deadlines. It needs to be big enough to keep *all* of your household appointments on.

40. Paper

Every home office needs paper, and lots of it. Here are some paper products that you'll always need on hand:

- Printer paper
- Notebooks
- Sticky notes
- Graph paper

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ORGANIZING

Even if you have everything you could possibly need in your home office, if it's not organized, you're not going to get much done. This next set of tips will help you organize so you can get the most out of your office.

41. Less is More

It's great to have more than enough office supplies, but make a spot *away* from your desk area to store them. Have only what you need in and on your desk. For example: one notebook, one sticky notepad, two or three pens, etc.

42. Put Things in Reach

Make sure you have pens, paper, paperclips, etc. easily reachable from your chair. If you don't have desk drawers, have small containers on your desk with these items in them.

43. Noise

It's important to keep the noise level to a minimum in your home office, especially if clients will be coming into it. You don't want your client to have to compete with a TV or a crying baby.

MAKING IT COMFORTABLE

In order to make your home office truly yours, be sure to make it comfortable. This last set of tips will help you put those finishing touches on your home office to make it as comfortable as possible.

44. Make Your Chair Comfortable

By now, you've already decided what chair you're going to use. If it's not the most comfortable, use pillows or back supports to make it easier to sit on.

45. Monitor Distance

Make sure that your monitor is at a good distance from you. You'll want it close enough that you can see and read things on your monitor, but not so close as to strain your eyes.

46. Personalize Your Desk

Find one or two things that represent you and display them on your desk. These can be things like a picture, a small toy, or an heirloom. Try not to have too many, as it will cause clutter.

47. Music

Don't be afraid to play some of your favorite music. As long as you like it, and it helps you to be more productive, go for it. Most

computers can play CD's, or you can get radio stations on the Internet.

48. Paint

Painting your office can be a great way to add your personal touch. Get creative and pick your favorite colors and textures. Finish it with a nice border, and your office will look great!

49. Bring in Nature

Bringing in nature will add class and style to your home office. Here are some ideas:

A plant for your desk A
corner tree
A hanging waterfall
Sounds of nature

50. Ergonomics

Make sure that you have comfortable tools to make your time working as easy as it can be. Here are some ideas:

Ergonomic keyboard
Wrist pad
Foot stool or massager
Slightly reclined chair
Lumbar cushion

51. Artwork

Spoil yourself with a bit of artwork in your home office. Whether it's new or you found it at a second hand store, make sure it says "you," and that you're willing to look at it every day.