

Bringing the Office Home

One of the most popular trends these days in home design is the Home Office, and for good reason. Working from home eliminates the rush hour commute, gives you much more flexibility, and can save you significant amounts of time, money, and aggravation. For many people a year's worth of work-related expenses, including transportation, clothing, restaurants, rent, and childcare, far exceeds the cost of remodeling and furnishing a home office.

Setting Clear Boundaries

When working from home, it's vital to set clear boundaries between home and work life. The biggest challenge is to stay in control of work hours and not become "ruled" by the proximity of the office. This means that a serious home office is best located in its own room with a door, not an alcove in a room that also serves another purpose. Ideally, your work world is self-contained and private enough that you can concentrate on the tasks at hand, and then close the door at the end of the day and "go home."

Any room can be transformed into a home office. Feng Shui observes that work actively focused on communicating and connecting with people is best located in a room at the front of the house, while quiet introspective work is best placed in a room toward the back. When your work includes visits from clients, customers, or patients, plan for a separate entrance that takes them directly into your home office and a nearby bathroom. Again, this keeps your work world contained and your work-related visitors from wandering through the house!

Desk Placement

No matter where your home office is located in the house, space planning is key. Of primary importance is the placement of your desk (or primary work surface) in the room. The ideal spot is where you have a direct or peripheral view of the door(s) from your chair, a pleasant view out a window, and a solid wall behind you. This provides you with a commanding view from the front and a sense of safety and support from the back. Achieving this often means "floating" your desk in the room, rather than pushing it against a wall. This can present an aesthetic challenge unless your desk is attractive from all

angles, without exposed nests of wires or unfinished sides. Whenever possible, include an electrical outlet in the floor under the desk, and choose a desk that's designed with a front "modesty" panel and an opening that allows wires to unobtrusively disappear behind the panel. Or, enclose wires in a tube designed to hold them (available at office supply stores) or run them safely out of harm's way under area rugs or existing carpeting.

While it's ideal to have a view of both door and window from your desk, a view of the door is most important. If you lose a good window view in order to see the door, install a mirror to capture the view while you're at your desk. When a window is directly behind your desk, enhance your sense of security and protection by placing something substantial like a credenza between you and the window. When you cannot bear to give up your window view – or a built-in desk provides no view - install a mirror so that you can see the door from your desk. A freestanding or wall-mounted mirror can be placed so that it reflects the door behind you when you are seated at your desk.

Furnishing Your Home Office

Feng Shui maintains that you can reduce work-related stress and irritability by choosing the right furniture. One important rule of thumb is to choose furniture with rounded corners, even when the overall shape is square or rectangular. When you must include an item that has sharp corners such as a filing cabinet, make sure to place it away from the room's traffic flow, or store it in a closet.

Most people work best on a surface where white paper contrasts "just right." Paper tends to disappear on pure white surfaces and contrast too dramatically on black surfaces, and either extreme can cause eyestrain. Clear glass desks seem to disappear beneath paper, which can also strain the eyes. Most wooden or medium-toned surfaces provide the right amount of contrast without causing visual strain.

When choosing a desk chair, select only the best. Your capacity to produce and prosper is considerably enhanced by a *great* desk chair. Treat yourself to an ergonomically correct chair that has features such as excellent lumbar support and adjustable height. And always test drive a chair before you buy it—that's the only way to know if you've truly found the right one for *your* body.

Consider the other furnishings you'd like in your home office. Perhaps a comfortable reading chair or couch would be the perfect place to open mail, return phone calls, and receive visitors. Or, you may need a conference table or other work surface in addition to your desk. And every office needs storage...lots of storage! Being organized in your home office is not an option - it's mandatory. If your office has a closet, outfit it from top to bottom with shelves, built-in filing cabinets, and drawers. Or purchase furnishings that specifically meet your work-related storage needs such as a cabinet, armoire, or credenza.

Your home office is a launching pad for your prosperity... make it dynamic! Any bold, dramatic, or empowering color you love belongs here. Select "Wow!" art that stimulates your creativity and inspires your productivity. Hang fabulous art, awards, and diplomas on your gorgeous walls, look around, and congratulate yourself. Your success has found its way home.

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