

# Tips for Designing a Home Office

By June Campbell

## Tips for Designing a Home Office

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Setting up a home office that will enhance productivity while offering comfort isn't as simple as it sounds. Many home workers juggle and struggle to determine the best setup for their needs.

### Think Comfort

Studies show that efficiency decreases when we are uncomfortable. Lesson to be learned: don't sacrifice comfort for beauty when selecting your furnishings.

### Use Mobile Furniture

Reduce grunt work. Few of us enjoy an hour spent shoving and pulling a heavy filing cabinet from one side of the room to the other. Office furniture with wheels or similar mobility aids will make life much simpler. It's easy to set up, easy to rearrange, easy to move for cleaning or to retrieve lost items.

Remember to take accurate wall measurements before you go shopping for office furniture. Take wallboards, heating ducts and other such items into account.

Some manufacturers are making office furniture with adjustable surfaces so you can work either sitting or standing. Before buying, be sure your home office has adequate space for this feature.

### Think Convenience

How much fun will it be when you have to crawl under a desk on your belly to attach your new printer to the back of the computer? Computer makers don't make things easy for us, but with a little pre-planning, you can place your computer so you can actually get at those hookups when you need to.

### Check Your Wiring

Make sure your home's wiring is adequate to accommodate office machinery and various computer hookups. Ensure you that you can use three-pronged plugs to ground your equipment. Check for electrical hazards -- being especially cautious of hazards to children and pets.

### Be Mindful of Wall Outlets and Phone Jacks

Stringing a long cord across the living room and into your home office isn't a look that Martha Stewart would endorse. If your office area doesn't have outlets, you won't regret the cash it takes to have them installed.

### Communicate Efficiently

So, your best client phones with a big order but he can't get through because your kid is on the Internet!

If you're sharing a home with other people, you need a separate phone line and Internet hookup for your office. If you spend much time on the Internet yourself, a direct connection like cable or DSL is very, very helpful.

#### Make it Safe!

When you work from home, you don't have a Workplace Health & Safety Committee looking out for your best interests. Learn about workplace ergonomics and take it seriously. Having to shut down your Internet business because of carpal tunnel syndrome isn't a good business plan.

Remember your eyes. If you're on the computer for long hours, get a glare-resistant screen for the monitor, or ask your optometrist about glare resistant eye-glasses.

You'll need to position your monitor so sunlight doesn't shine on it directly. If this can't be arranged easily, be creative about finding a way to block the sun. An artist's easel holding a large poster or chart is one approach.

#### Light It!

The best lighting is lighting that allows you to see what you are doing without strain to your eyes. Many find that incandescent lighting is easier on the eyes than fluorescent lighting or cool lighting.

#### Deduct It!

You'll want to check with your taxation department, but in many countries, some aspects of a home office are tax deductible. In Canada, for example, you can deduct a portion of home expenses (rent, utilities, etc.) for your home office. BUT your office must be separate from the rest of the house and used only for business purposes. Find out what's deductible before you file your taxes.

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