

A Childproof and Workable Home Office

By Rachel Goldstein

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If you have young children, then deciding how to design your home office has probably given you a headache. There have been times of chaos in my own home when my young children have ripped up or colored on important papers, stuck objects into disk drives, and jammed the printers with toys. With this under my belt, I can give you some good advice on how to prevent this happening in your home office.

First of all, if you have young kids, separating work from family is going to be nearly impossible. In addition, you are going to need to be very innovative at times in order to get any work done. When designing your home office, envision what layout would work best for you when you are working and taking care of the kids at the same time.

LAYOUT SUGGESTIONS

1. Locate Office Near Kitchen - If your kids are anything like mine, locating your office near the kitchen is essential. My kids are always thirsty and it makes them happy to get a full sippy cup. My first office was located on the second floor, and was quickly moved downstairs for this reason.

2. Buy a Cheap TV / VCR - In my opinion, there is nothing wrong with letting your children watch TV, especially if you have to finish your work. We bought a very cheap TV and VCR (\$200) and placed it in my office. When the kids have become bored of all of their toys, I pop in their favorite tape.

3. Small Table / Desk - A good idea is to find a small table or desk for your children. You can give them a toy phone, paper, pencils, a Rolodex, folders, and other office materials so that they can pretend to be you. In addition, they will love it if you ask them to help you with your work.

4. Bookshelf or Drawer - Fill a bookshelf or drawer with toys or knickknacks that the kids can play with. You should change these toys weekly so they won't get bored of these playthings.

5. Old Keyboard - If you have an old keyboard lying around somewhere, by all means give it to your children. Kids love to imitate their parents.

CHILDPROOFING

About 2 million kids are injured or killed in their own homes every year by hazards. This is why childproofing your home and office is so important. Here are some important childproofing suggestions to follow:

1. Doorstops - Use door stops to prevent your kids' fingers and hands from being pinched or crushed in your office door.
2. Window Blinds - I am sure that you have heard of all of the injuries and deaths caused by blinds and cords. For this reason, make sure that your blinds are safe. On older miniblinds cut the cord loop, remove the buckle, and put safety tassels on the cord. Make sure that this cord remains tight, if not, you will need new blinds.
3. Outlet Covers - Purchase outlet protectors for all of your free electrical sockets. Make sure that they aren't easily removed or they might become a choking hazard.
4. Safety Locks - If you have drawers in your office that contain dangerous items, you should invest in safety locks. Safety locks can prevent poisoning, choking, and other injuries.
5. Safety Gates - Use safety gates wherever you foresee danger for your kids. I use safety gates everywhere, including my home office. I put a gate from my desk to the wall to prevent the kids from touching the computer equipment. It works great.
6. Corner Cushions - If there are sharp corners on any furniture in your office, invest in corner cushions to prevent injuries from falls.
7. Tie up Cords - Tie up and hide electronic cords. Try running the cords under rugs or behind furniture.
8. Surge Protector Covers - I have two surge protectors in my office. I invested in covers for them so the kids cannot play with them.
9. Put Away Small Items - Keep staples, paper clips, rubber bands, and other small items away from the reach of your children.

As a work at home parent you will need to make many adjustments in your life, this includes your home office. Your home office will grow as your children do. Moving things around and adding new features will probably be something you do regularly to keep your kids and work life balanced. Remember to always keep safety guidelines in check and enjoy working at home with your kids.

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