

HABITAT HANDBOOK**DREAMHOUSE DREAMKITCHENS**

CREATING THE IDEAL HOME OFFICE

Now that technology allows us to plug in a slim laptop, charge up our smartphones, and log on to our workplace—all from virtually any location—more and more people are working from home, either in addition to, or instead of, hours spent in a traditional corporate office.

The flexibility of telecommuting means employees can participate in conference calls while still in their pajamas. But working remotely from your own living room often makes it a challenge to stay focused and on-task.

In order to be inspired and productive at home rather than in a corporate cube, design experts recommend creating a “work only” home office space—a room or nook that’s functional, inviting, and well-organized. They also suggest investing in a high-quality desk chair—one that is ergonomically designed to give both the support and the comfort you need for long hours working at the computer.

Another essential feature for the home office is plenty of light. Placing your desk next to a window will not only cut down on eye strain and headaches, it will give you a great view. To avoid glare on your computer screen, use a small lamp to illuminate your desk area.

To get started, assess the space and location in your home that’s most conducive to your work. Do you need a whole room in a quiet part of the house with few distractions? Can you keep the space clean and uncluttered? Or do you need room to spread out large projects? Is a central spot in the home most useful, so you can multi-task? Do you need a professional area to meet with clients? The answers to these questions will dictate where the office should go, and whether it can be part of a multipurpose room or must be located in a distinctly separate part of the house.

Sales Director **Jerry Schmidt** of **Dream House Dream Kitchens** says his full-service remodeling company has helped many clients incorporate a business space into the home. “Sometimes it’s a dedicated corner of a kitchen, a place to pay bills and organize the family,” he says. “Sometimes it’s a doctor who needs an office at home so he can send emails and talk privately to patients during off hours.”



Regarding the physical space, Schmidt says, "It can be as minimal as a straight desk, or as elaborate as fully built-in, solid service countertops with customized organizational systems for files, and bookcases to display awards. Some clients are converting the traditional dining room space into a home office, some make it more of a family room that also includes television and space for the kids to do homework."

When **Coyle Carpet One Kitchen and Bath Designer Deann Noeding** approaches designing a home office, she focuses on organization solutions, ample storage, and a style that reflects the personality of the client, in addition to adapting the space for other uses. "They often double as a guest room, a craft or sewing room, a game room for kids, or a library," Noeding says of today's home offices.

Noeding typically likes to incorporate a mix of different storage solutions into her designs. "Drawers are essential for organizing files and other paperwork, while open bookcases are a nice way to

display books and showcase any decorative pieces or artwork," she says. "Floating or open shelves can house decorative bins and baskets, which can be a catch-all for small items. Closed cabinetry will hide away any unsightly items or seasonal items that aren't needed on a daily basis."

Noeding notes a few recent design trends for offices, including chalkboard walls, calendar walls, and pin boards for photos, notes or inspiration.

Schmidt adds that "drop zones" are a popular feature in home offices, serving as places for plugging in or recharging all of the family's electronic devices. "Often it's a drawer with multiple USB outlets," he says. "We also install hidden power-strips in rooms that need to be highly connected so customers have that functionality, but also preserve a clean, uncluttered aesthetic in the room."

In terms of palette, Noeding notes that "vibrant colors and fun patterns are popular. In cabinetry, white is still classic,

but weathered looks and cool neutrals are also quite popular. I've even seen some barn board accents. Some clients are setting an eclectic tone for their office with a mix of modern and antique elements."

Of course there are many different flooring types that can be used for home offices. "Rooms that double as a guest bedroom are often carpeted for added warmth and comfort," Noeding says. "Rooms that are more craft-oriented, or are used by children, may benefit from having luxury vinyl plank or luxury vinyl tile flooring, since it's very durable, quiet, and washable."

Noeding enjoys helping clients map out their work spaces to make them both fun and functional. She explains, "For me, design and space planning is like a puzzle that I need to solve. Finding a solution that is functional, creative, cost-effective and beautiful is a balancing act. The most rewarding thing for me is working with clients who are truly excited about their new space." •



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