

WORKING FROM HOME

How to Set up a Great Home Office



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Introduction

Just because you don't have a lot of space, doesn't mean you have to work hunched over your coffee table. Here's how to carve out a workspace when space itself is at a premium.

When most people envision working from home, they picture a well-lit, spacious home office. Your fantasy office might have a sleek desk and a high-tech ergonomic chair. Or maybe an antique oak desk and a cushy leather chair is more your style.

But when you look around your studio apartment or small, cluttered house, you quickly come to terms with reality. Is there even enough room for a real desk? How much work can you really get done on your couch? Maybe you should just work while sitting on your bed, the way you did homework in college?

The prospect of carving a home office out of a tiny living space can seem impossible. But with some creativity and resourcefulness, you can build an office space that will help you enjoy working from home even more. Here's how to do it.

Seek Out Natural Light

As you decide what part of your living space you'll use for work, there's one thing we want you to keep in mind first: natural light.

Even in a basement apartment, you probably have a small window that lets at least a little light in. You can use those natural light sources to your advantage. Studies have shown that natural light access is [the number-one thing](#) that makes employees feel great about a workspace.

Without natural light, you'll quickly feel bored, tired, or shut-in. Your brain will have a hard time tapping the energy it needs to focus. So, no matter where you decide to put your home office, make sure it has a clear view of a window. The bigger and brighter the window, the better, but work with what you've got.

Consider Your Needs

Now, consider what your home office will need.

For most people, a desk and a place to sit will do the trick. But how big will your desk need to be? Do you work with two large monitors regularly, or do you work from an ordinary laptop? Do you need a place to spread out lots of papers, or can you work with a single notebook?

As you think about this, make sure to separate needs from wants. Maybe you want a big, pretty monitor to work with, but a laptop will work just as well. Look for creative solutions, too. Perhaps you can hang that large monitor on the wall, so it doesn't take up any desk space.

Identify the Right Space

With that in mind, it's time to identify the place you'll put your home office.

Unless you have a real need for lots of space, you truly don't need more than a few feet. However, depending on how cramped your living situation is, you might need to rearrange some furniture to open up that office space.

Look for or create a spare corner, stretch of wall, or space under a window. Move things around as needed until you have an open space where you can fit a desk of some sort. If there's no spare wall space, you might be able to tuck a desk up against the back of your couch instead. You could even use an extra closet as an office (but let's be real---how many people in small living spaces have a closet to spare?).



[el lobo/Shutterstock](#)

Your office can also be in your hallway, entryway, kitchen, or even your bedroom. Anywhere with a few extra feet of space works. Our Editor in Chief Jason turned an unused alcove at the end of a hallway into a home office for his wife: it was just the right size for two file cabinets, a wood countertop from IKEA, and an office chair. You may have a spot in your own home like that: a space at the end of a hallway or under a staircase where a modest little home office could sit.

If you put your desk in your bedroom, try to face it away from your bed, so you won't be thinking about naps all day long or work when you're in bed.

Choose Your Desk and Chair

Now, you have a place to put your office. It may only be a few feet wide, but all you need is enough space for yourself and your most essential work supplies.

Next, find (or create) a desk that will fit that space. Use a tape measure to see what you have to work with. Then consider what kind of desk will work best.

Most people don't need a full, traditional desk. You can put up shelves or buy standalone organizers to take the place of desk drawers. So, in addition to shopping for desks, consider ordinary tables. Thrift stores often have old desks and tables in many different sizes at great prices.

You can also put up a shelf to serve as your desk instead. A sturdy shelf that's wide enough for your work essentials will do the trick. This is an excellent way to get the most out of a very small or oddly shaped office space, and the supplies are usually cheap. You can even put your shelf desk high enough to use as a standing desk, then use a tall chair to give yourself the option of sitting.

The chair you use is up to you---just make sure it's comfortable enough for every day. You can also help a small home feel less cluttered by carefully choosing your desk and chair design. Styles with thin legs and clean lines, or even clear acrylic that blends in with the background, don't add much visual noise to a room.

Consider Dividers

If you live with other people, you might want to find a way to divide your office space from the rest of the living space.

Of course, the dream is to have a home office with a door you can close. But since that's not always realistic, get creative. Try hanging curtains or putting up a folding room divider screen to separate your office corner from the living space.

These solutions won't block noise, but they'll at least keep visual distractions to a minimum. You can use [noise-canceling headphones](#) to take care of the noise aspect.

Find Storage Solutions

If you have a small living space, you probably struggle with finding places to put your stuff. Luckily, your home office space can also become a source of new storage.

Look above and below your desk. Can you put up shelves just above the desk, or add some rolling drawers beneath it? Remember, vertical space is your best friend in a small living situation.

Your storage solutions can hold your work supplies. But if you don't have lots of work stuff, they can also hold anything else you need to store.

Get Multipurpose

If you're still struggling to find a space in your home that will work just for work, you can create a dual-purpose space instead.

Maybe you just need to rearrange your dining table so it can easily convert into a worktable after breakfast. A few rolling drawers to keep your work supplies close at hand might do the trick.

Or maybe the new desk space you built can do double duty as a coffee nook. Just make sure you can easily pack your work stuff away when you want to use the space for relaxation.

Add Personal Touches

Your home office isn't just about practicality. It should also have some fun, personal touches that make it an integral part of your home.

If you don't need to hang shelves for storage up to the ceiling, you can hang your favorite art prints above your desk instead. Looking at them will inspire you on dull days, and they'll make the space feel less utilitarian.

You can also stack your favorite books on your office shelf, set a couple of cute plants on your desk, or buy office supplies in your favorite colors. Do whatever it takes to make your home workspace feel like, well, home.

Creating a home office in your small living space might inspire you to find other ways to use your area more efficiently, too. But most importantly, it will provide you with a place where you can quickly get into "work mode" and get stuff done.