

# Office Ideas

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## Home Office Overview

By Lisa Montgomery

Having a home office takes more than a PC and a printer. Plan also for a computer network, a lighting system and a music system to help keep you cranking.

Few people have the luxury of utilizing a space dedicated solely to work. Sure, we've all seen, and have probably tried, the conversion of a guest bedroom into a home office. And we have to admit, the results can be fantastic. But the absolute best time to build a highly functional office into a home is while a house is being built. That way, you can create a room expressly as an office, and easily integrate state-of-the-art technologies that ensure that the space is comfortable, efficient and suits your personal work style.

## Computer & Communications

There are two givens in any office—a computer and a telephone. Sure, you'll want to purchase a PC with enough memory, speed and screen. And the telephone should support all the key features like speed dial, hold and conference calling. But just as important, these two basic office tools should be able to communicate beyond the confines of the home office. After all, there are other phones and computers in the house. The idea of cross communication between a home office and other rooms is really no different than how a standard office operates. A phone in an office cubicle can call any coworker's phone within the building, and a PC can access files stored on a central office server. If you install computer and telephone networks into your house, your PC can exchange files with other PCs in the house and your telephone can transfer calls to other phones in the house. Sound a little over the top? Think again. The networks effectively minimize many of the glitches that commonly plague home offices. For example, when every PC can access the Internet simultaneously (thanks to a computer network), you'll never have to wait to get online. The same computer network lets PCs in the house utilize one central printer as well. Need to refer to a printed document you accidentally left in the kitchen? Put the caller on hold, stroll to the kitchen, and pick up the line on the kitchen phone.

## Lighting

Nothing tires the eyes more than poor lighting. Introduce a lighting designer to the project early to ensure that your home office has the right type of light in all the right places.

Optimize the performance of the light fixtures with a system that gives you greater control over them than ordinary wall dimmers. For example, you might utilize a lighting control system that includes a keypad where each button sets the office lights differently for a particular task. If you see clients in your office, lighting can form an immediate impression by illuminating framed diplomas and certificates, as well as samples of your work.

## Entertainment

A home office is one room that is rarely shared with other members of the family. It's all yours, so you might as well make it a place that's as fun as it is functional. And that means a TV and a music system. Of course, speakers and a TV that are built into the walls or into custom cabinetry always look clean and professional, so tell your architect, builder, and home systems installer before construction begins that you want these amenities in your office. [5 Things to Consider in Your Home Office](#) Setting up your own home office? Here are 5 things that today's telecommuter needs to get the job done right!

- Install a multiple phone lines
- UPS backup in case of power failure
- Have a monitor that doubles as a TV
- Extra hardware, such as fax machines, cameras, etc.
- Put in enough wall plates to hook up everything on your home network

## Home Office FAQs

I don't telecommute; do I still need an office?

- That really depends. Some people don't telecommute, but still do a lot of work at home (shame on you!). Home networking connections may still benefit these users, as well as those sharing material or other computer peripherals. Maybe you don't want a full-blown office, but have a small area to devote. Anyone that owns a computer desk could claim they have their own office, and there are enhancements available for almost any application.

- My kids always want to play when I am working. What can I do?

Well aside from a babysitter, there's not much you can do when you want to get work done. However, there are many ways to make your home office a more professional environment. For instance, separate phone lines will keep business in its place, and you also won't get interrupted during dinner hours or other family times. And you may not be able to play, but it is possible to keep an eye on your kids. All you need to do is set up a few video cameras. A surveillance system will help keep your property secure, but it also lets you watch the kids. Many computer monitors now feature picture-in-picture (PIP) functions, so you can keep an eye on them throughout the workday.

- I'm just starting a home office. What should come first? My computer?

As funny as it may seem, try to pick out the furniture you want to use first. It may not seem to have a "cool" factor (although there is a lot of cool office furniture out there), but it will dictate how much other equipment you'll need—or can fit. Just remember that when you are placing that furniture, you will need access to both multimedia and electrical outlets.