



1. You need to make sure that the space is yours and exclusively yours - no room for unnecessary books, toys or storage for anyone else's clutter.

2. Storage and space for books and files are key. It doesn't have to be dreary filing cabinets, so consider shelves you already have or flat pack ones you can assemble.

3. Make sure you are sitting comfortably and in an ergonomically designed chair - hours without good support could eventually mean back problems.

5. If you're working from home permanently or occasionally, broadband access is essential, along with a fast laptop, PC or Mac, and a separate landline.

4. Make sure your office is in a prime location - away from playrooms, kitchens or any hive of activity or where you can expect people traffic and interruptions.

Honey I'm home

Working from home and forgoing the dreaded commute is a dream most of us wake up from every Monday morning. But if you are one of the lucky ones, here's how to make the perfect office space in your home

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Working from home is every office-bound worker's dream; dodging the drudgery of commuting, instead sitting comfortably at a desk in your pyjamas - without being thought unstable, tea on demand and the comfort of your couch for your lunch break.

Thanks to the advent of modern technologies such as the Internet, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and wireless broadband, it is now easier than ever to work effortlessly and, in

theory, productively from home. So before you embark on your DIY office, you need to seriously consider whether you have the ability to work without collegial check-ins or queries from your boss. Making it work from home requires, in abundance, the ability to work on your own, prioritisation and of course the all-essential planning to ensure you keep all distractions at bay and work to hand.

1. Your own space

The starting point should be the room - where in your home will you set up your office? There

are a lot of things to consider, such as space, light, noise levels and heat. You should select your space according to the nature of your work and the space required to carry out your work comfortably. Your work space should be at room temperature as being either too hot or too cold will lead to discomfort and subsequently, a decrease in productivity. So there should be a radiator in the room, as well as a window so you can control the temperature in all seasons.

Having a window in your office will also allow natural light and give the illusion of ▶

CHECKLIST

- ▶ Plan your office space
- ▶ Choose your colour scheme
- ▶ Select ergonomically designed furniture
- ▶ Decide on the technology you'll need
- ▶ Get connected

extra space, so even the smallest room will seem less claustrophobic. Remember though, shutters or blinds may be required if you've a south-facing window so check the amount of sunlight throughout the day. To ensure you don't damage your eyes, you should also have a desk lamp and overhead lighting for those winter months, when darkness falls sometime in early-afternoon.

2. Storage

It's not a case of just opening your laptop and kicking off; you need to consider and anticipate what your needs will be to enjoy continuity in your working time. And part of this is access to materials you would have at work, which inevitably means storage. Make a note of all your requirements, and draft a layout; your storage doesn't necessarily have to be an eyesore and a good storage unit can add to a room not just in terms of space-saving but also aesthetically.

Space-saving tools are an absolute must when planning a home office, as you need to minimise the space your files take to make sure your work space doesn't overflow into your living space, upsetting your work-life balance. When you shut the door on your office, you need to know you can really leave it behind.

3. Simple and stylish

For your office interior you'll need to choose a colour scheme that is conducive to a working environment and you may find yourself understanding the reason for the mustard carpets and cream walls in your old office. Your space should both stimulate productivity and be free from needless distraction, so think clean, simple and stylish with a neutral colour, such as orchid or cream, for your walls, and add pieces of artwork to make the office feel like your own.

Ergonomically designed furniture is essential for posture and good working health, so at the very least look for a comfortable chair that supports your lower back, with adjustable backrest, deep cushioned seat and adjustable armrest.

If you buy your furniture in a set rather than piece-by-piece, it will generally feel more like a professional office and will usually



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work out more cost effective. The bare minimum requirements are a desk, filing cabinet and bookshelf. It is worth buying a bulletin board to hold reminders, calendars and the all-important 'To Do' list.

4. Keep it down

When choosing a room for your office, noise levels should be a major consideration. If at all possible pick a quiet area of your home, nowhere near a washing machine, the children's playroom or where there will be a lot of people traffic. In order to be able to concentrate and work productively you need quiet, so if you can't sequester a wing of your home for your own personal use, soundproofing is always an option. If expert soundproofing is not an option, consider a DIY project, as there are a variety of books available on the topic.

5. Get techie

Technological equipment will be the most expensive part of your home office, so you need to think about what you actually need to function as a business unit. Here are some of the basics:

- Laptop and docking station - A laptop has the added bonus of being portable, so if it is a case that you are working at home, but still need to visit clients or call into your company's office, it is ideal. All you need is a

docking station, full screen monitor and a wireless keyboard.

- Phone - Although the mobile phone is a universally employed communications tool, it is better to have a different landline for your home office in order to separate your work and personal life.
- You'll need a fax machine, printer and copier to carry out your day-to-day business. Get an integrated model for space-efficiency.

Probably the most important tool for a home office is fast, secure and reliable Internet access and for this you'll need broadband. Even for a small home company, it is favourable to choose a business broadband package. For business customers, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) will offer a level of support that the domestic customer will not be afforded, and there will usually be a service level agreement (SLA), outlining the minimum level of service that you will be provided with.

If you lose your Internet connection, your work stops. While domestic packages will offer email or phone support, the SLA in a business package will usually include an engineer available to come to your rescue, they may even be able to access your computer remotely and solve the problem from their own desk. At least you can rest easy knowing your Internet connection has contracted back up from engineers. ■