



Get Organized

HOME OFFICES AND ORGANIZATION IDEAS FOR YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Story by Lesa Knollenberg | Photography by www.micahhighlandphoto.com

One of the best parts of autumn is a new routine. Although we may not all go to school anymore, fall feels like the time to start fresh and settle into work. Whether working from home or managing the household, having a home office has taken on much more importance. And it's not just Mom and Dad who use the office anymore. Home offices have become family offices and creating a functional but inviting family office takes a little planning.



The family office is fast becoming the most-used room in the house. More people are working from home, whether to do contract work, run their own business or check in to the office from home. The family office is required to be the ultimate multitasker: it is a place for paying bills, planning menus, storing paper, doing homework and serving as a hub for storage and technology. One room does it all, but most people don't want a cubicle in their home.

The newest trend in home offices is to make the family office an extension of the rest of the home. Usually decorated in deep colors with woods in warm colors and a combination of different textures, the

style of the new family office is often similar to the rest of the home. Although typical office furniture can be utilitarian, families are choosing to design their offices to create a mood that is motivating and captures the family's unique essence. By using bold geometric rugs, lampshades with bold colors, comfortable chairs, sitting areas and quality lighting, a family office can be both inviting and functional.

CHOOSE A SPACE

"An office space in a home is now a transitional place that many people can use interchangeably as the task dictates," says Maida Korte of Designs by Maida. "Since less equipment is needed today, the space can be less as well. Having a place that is

not away from the family, but rather with the family is essential."

She finds that parents like to have offices in family rooms so the whole family can work together. "Sometimes in homes we forget that just being with each other in a comfortable setting is a breath of fresh air," says Korte.

One drawback to having a family office near the busiest area of the home, however, is the lack of boundaries. For those who need to check in with the office, it can be daunting to be home but never quite relax. If the family office is an extension of the family's recreation area, it is often hard to recharge in one room without seeing clutter



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ter and worrying about what isn't getting done in another; using a wall partition to create a boundary without being closed off from the family's activities and conversations can solve this problem.

Another way to alleviate this problem is to put the office in another part of the home. "I am finding my clients are opting for a home office that is a little more remote in the home," says Jan Fix of Jan Fix Design Group. "They don't want guests to see this area. Some people have finished space or a bonus room over their garage and use this for a remote office. It's usually much larger than the token space a builder allows for an office and has good natural light."

This larger space allows more than one person to work in it; with this additional space, homeowners can set up computer and study areas for their children, too. While a room in a finished basement can be used for a home office, Fix suggests an aboveground space so natural light can flood the space, as lighting is an important element of a successful home office.

KEEP IT ORGANIZED

With smartphones, laptops and individual docking stations, organization for our technology is a hot topic. Fix has developed a solution for clients on remodels or new construction: a charging area.

"These are located right as you enter the home from the garage, usually in the back hall. It doesn't need to be a really large area, but just a spot where everyone can charge their phones, iPods, laptops, etc. before they run out the door. It helps to keep things organized, and you always know where to find them."

Fix takes the design even further as this is also a great spot to drop and sort the mail; usually located in the base cabinet of this charging area is a roll-out shelf with a shredder so you can immediately eliminate all junk mail before it makes it further than your back door. On the upper unit, she designs a space with cubby holes for outgoing mail or things kids need to grab for school before they leave for the day.

If a charging area isn't a possibility, then organization in the family office is crucial.

The first step is to control the cords, using wireless technology whenever possible. There is a new generation of cord minders to keep cords organized and out of the way, adding to the visual appeal and function of the room.

Korte adds that cords can be problematic. "A central hub is essential for charging devices and throwing keys, mail, etc. People love taking their tablets and laptops with them to the counter or the sofa, but the charge cords are left virtually everywhere. My kids are grown and some married and every time they are over there are cords and keys and chargers and cases and cameras everywhere. We have one spot where all of this goes so that when coming in or going out, everyone knows where to go to find their stuff."

MAKE IT FUNCTIONAL

As for office furniture, it's dictated by how the family uses the room. While the office may be used to make sales calls during the day, at night it's a homework table or place to spread out a science project. As such, furniture needs to multitask and be flexible. Two smaller consoles can be combined to create a corner desk. A drafting table can be used in one corner, and a more conventional desk used for those doing homework. Specialty office furniture stores offer new solutions, such as a square office desk with compartments underneath each side for individual supplies and technology and all four sides can be used at once. For the couple that wants to enjoy the view but needs access to the same tools, one long table with two chairs side by side is an option.

Fix finds that her clients are requesting more built-ins, such as workstation units, bookshelves and areas for hidden storage, areas that allow for sliding baskets, and areas where necessary paperwork is well-organized but hidden.

Although the function is important, it all comes back to how these family office areas make you feel: "These should be areas that are bright, upbeat, fun, welcoming, comforting. Areas that are inspiring, yet calming. This space should reflect you." ▲

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