

Furnishing a home office

Many homeowners these days are turning spare bedrooms into home offices. It is estimated that over 40 per cent of homes in North America have a dedicated room for a home office.

This increased popularity of home-based businesses has led to a strong demand for home office furniture. Whether you're contemplating a spare bedroom office or furnishing a larger area, experts recommend furniture that is both functional and comfortable.

If you only plan to spend a few hours a week working at home, you may consider a modest all-in-one desk with a fold-down front. This type of unit is perfect for small rooms and is available with a lockable CPU storage area and an extra wide keyboard shelf which holds computer peripherals. Vertical or lateral file cabinets are also available in many styles and colours, and they're easy to install.

Conversely, if you work at home full-time, you may want to consider a more elaborate set up that includes a com-

puter hutch, a computer desk, built-in file shelves, special lighting and a boardroom table.

An investment in home office furniture doesn't have to be expensive. It's simply a matter of fitting your office furnishing needs to your budget.

A computer armoire is perfect for the portable home office. The computer armoire serves as a self-contained work station and features a pull-out keyboard shelf, a bulletin board, a file drawer, plus a storage area for CPU, printer and monitor. These units are attractive, compatible and work well in a family room or a rec room.

Whatever materials you choose for your home office, one area that deserves special consideration is your choice of chair. Many experts agree that it's the single most important purchase that you'll make. This is particularly true with people who spend extended periods of time at a keyboard or a computer.

Comfort is a key consideration when choosing a chair for the home office.

You want to choose a chair with lumbar support that distributes and absorbs your weight and that doesn't restrict the movement or position of your arms.

Executive and managerial chairs are available with pneumatic gas lift height control, back and seat adjustment, tilt tension control and contoured foam.

If you want a portable home office, some innovative designs allow you to convert, say, a computer desk into a compact cabinet that can be easily stored away.

For students and children, chairs and filing cabinets and accessories are available in a wide variety of stylish colours.

When searching for home office furniture, don't be misled by industry jargon. Here are a few terms to watch out for:

* **Credenza:** a low and wide chest placed against a wall which complements the desk and other room

decor. A credenza will contain either a knee hole opening, or a solid front with drawers and doors for storage space.

* **Ergonomic:** a term used to describe furniture that is designed to reduce discomfort - applies to chairs, footrests, work surfaces, overhead lights, telephone headsets, etc.

* **File drawer:** this can be either a desk or a credenza drawer that serves as a file cabinet.

* **Hutch:** a shelf or storage unit that sits atop a desk or credenza.

* **Pedestal:** the base under the desk top that usually contains drawers. Desks will have one or two pedestals.

* **Return:** a work surface that conforms to an L-shaped pattern with a matching desk.



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