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YOUR GUIDE TO CREATING A GREAT SPACE

Whether your home office consists of a spacious basement suite or a miniscule bedroom corner, making the best of your space is so important. Location, furniture placement, and ambience will impact the ease and enjoyability with which you function.

First, identify your home office location. Will you be working when others are at home? If noise and distractions are a concern, consider finding the most secluded spot in your home. Any spare room where you can shut the door — bedroom, attic, or basement — is great. If you don't have an entire room to work with, get creative. If you can give up a closet, consider emptying one and installing a simple work surface inside. Add shelving above for supplies and reference materials. Pull up a desk chair, and voila, instant mini-office! When the work day is done, simply shut the closet door and the office disappears. If you can't give up the closet space, try sectioning off a corner of any room with a fold-out decorative screen.

Next, arrange your office furniture carefully. Consider whether you'll need lots of surface space and where you plan to put your desk and computer. Other items, such as filing drawers and book cases, can be placed next. Make sure to have good lighting, both indirect and direct.

And finally, take the time to add a little "you" to the room. Paint the walls a color you love. Add artwork — whether expensive originals or a child's framed finger paintings. And add a little greenery in the form of a potted plant or fresh flowers. Now it feels like home (office)!

Now that your space is ready, you'll need to prepare for inevitable interruptions. A day working from your home office can be filled with them from spouses, kids, roommates — even the cat. To maximize your time, consider these tips:

- Establish regular office hours and make sure everyone knows and respects them. If necessary, find quiet time by getting up early or staying up late.
- For parents working at home with small children, you already know that nap time is your savior. For the waking hours, set up a small play area in your office. Set aside a bucket of special toys to be taken out only when you're on the phone and need extra special quiet.

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- Resist the urge to continually check email or voicemail. Ignore the doorbell. Use caller ID to direct your energies toward work-related calls, rather than chatty friends and pesky telemarketers.
- Make a to-do list at the beginning of each day or the evening before. Schedule your time so the most important tasks get done first. That way, if you do get interrupted, at least your most urgent needs have been met.

Elizabeth Bowman is a professional organizer and the president of Innovatively Organized, a professional organizing services company. She has a passion to help busy professionals streamline their homes, work spaces, and schedules.

Visit www.InnovativelyOrganized.com for more information. You may also contact Elizabeth directly at 206.369.8853 or elizabeth@innovativelyorganized.com.

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