

DESIGN & DECORATING



ADVANCED PLACEMENT

◀ **MAGIC CARPET** A rug on which desk and chair fully fit elevates a home office in Houston by local firm Laura U Design Collective.

Gorra has hacked an antique dining chair. “I put a back support on it, and I raised my computer on two design books,” following another OSHA guideline that one’s head be level and forward facing.

Remain in Light

Layer illumination, said Gorra, “so you don’t feel like you’re in a crazy corporate zone with only overhead lighting.” As evening falls, she supplements an overhead pendant and Danish brass task lamp with a floor lamp. Pankopp hid a light in the top of her built-in unit to augment a ceiling flush-mount and table lamp. “You can’t see it, but it shines right

Facing your desk to the wall can feel like the adult version of a ‘time out.’

down on the desk.” Optimal task-lighting height: a couple of inches above your computer, says Hayslett. Laws favors wall-mounted, pivoting task lights, such as the sculptural black fixtures by Serge Mouille. Adjustability counts big-time in the era of video meetings, said Laws, so you can “mess with the light to make yourself gorgeous.”

Climb the Walls

“People put up cork boards but forget walls can be a great space for proper storage,” said Hayslett, who suggests hanging floating shelves and baskets. Alternatively, says Gorra, sources such as CB2 and office-supply retailer Poppin have some “lovely, not-overpriced cabinets that fit under your desk for staplers and paper and electronics.” To control wires and minimize cord slack, Macuga recommends Function 101 Cable Blocks, sold by West Elm. “If your desk is 24 inches from an outlet, there is absolutely no reason to have a 60-inch cord,” she said of this peeve. “Opt for a smaller one!”

The Ideal WFH Lair

Where should the desk go? How large should it be? Could the lighting be affecting your productivity? Interiors experts share the guidelines they follow when designing a home office.

BY KATHRYN O’SHEA-EVANS

NICOLE Pankopp, a former engineer turned DIY-renovation blogger in Denver, sweated designing her home office. “It’s a very functional space, and you don’t want to mess that up,” she said. Beyond practicalities, notes Charleston, S.C., designer Jacob Laws, aesthetics count. “If you find your work environment unpleasant, you’re not going to do your best work,” he said. “There’s an actual science to it.” Here, professionals and a couple of semi-pros detail strategies for mapping out a well-working home office.

Nail the Layout

Facing your desk to the wall can feel like the adult version of a time-out and is “a bit stunted,” said Laetitia Gorra, founder of Roarke Design Studio, in New York City. She sets desks perpendicular to a wall or window, or floats them in the room, facing the door “for a sense of openness that allows you to know who’s coming in.”

When possible, New Orleans designer Ashley Macuga ensures the desk’s position affords an outdoor view, which “improves productivity and makes stress easier to manage.” At the same time, the sun’s glare or sweltering rays call for window treatments. In Gorra’s home office, the drapes on the window behind her double as a video backdrop.

So you can easily get out from behind your desk, allow a minimum of 3 feet from its edge to the

“limiting factor” behind you, be it a wall, window or furniture. You want a carpet big enough to accommodate your pulled-out chair and your desk’s legs. A low-pile rug will be easiest to navigate.

If you have the square footage, create a cushy, separate seating area for mulling ideas. Amanda Thomas, a civil engineer in St. Paul, Minn., who designed the office she and her husband share, included a leather armchair that doubles as a place their dogs can relax “so they aren’t annoying during calls.”

Customize Your Desk

Standard table height is between 28 and 30 inches, but your kind of work can dictate ideal depth and width, said Linda Hayslett. Among other ill-proportioned setups, the Los Angeles designer has seen three huge monitors teetering on a stockbroker’s too-tiny desk. While anyone with a desktop computer generally needs 36 inches of depth, a paper-eschewing minimalist who works on a laptop can get away with a 24-inch depth.

Thomas, the civil engineer, needed to fit two monitors and a docking station but was wary of going too large. “Counter space becomes cluttered really fast,” she said. For his part, the designer Laws conscripted a 12-foot-long conference table. “I have design boards, fabrics. I need to print smaller versions of large-scale art.” In any case, avoid under-table drawers. “There’s nothing more frustrating than a knee-hole space that’s not ample,” said New

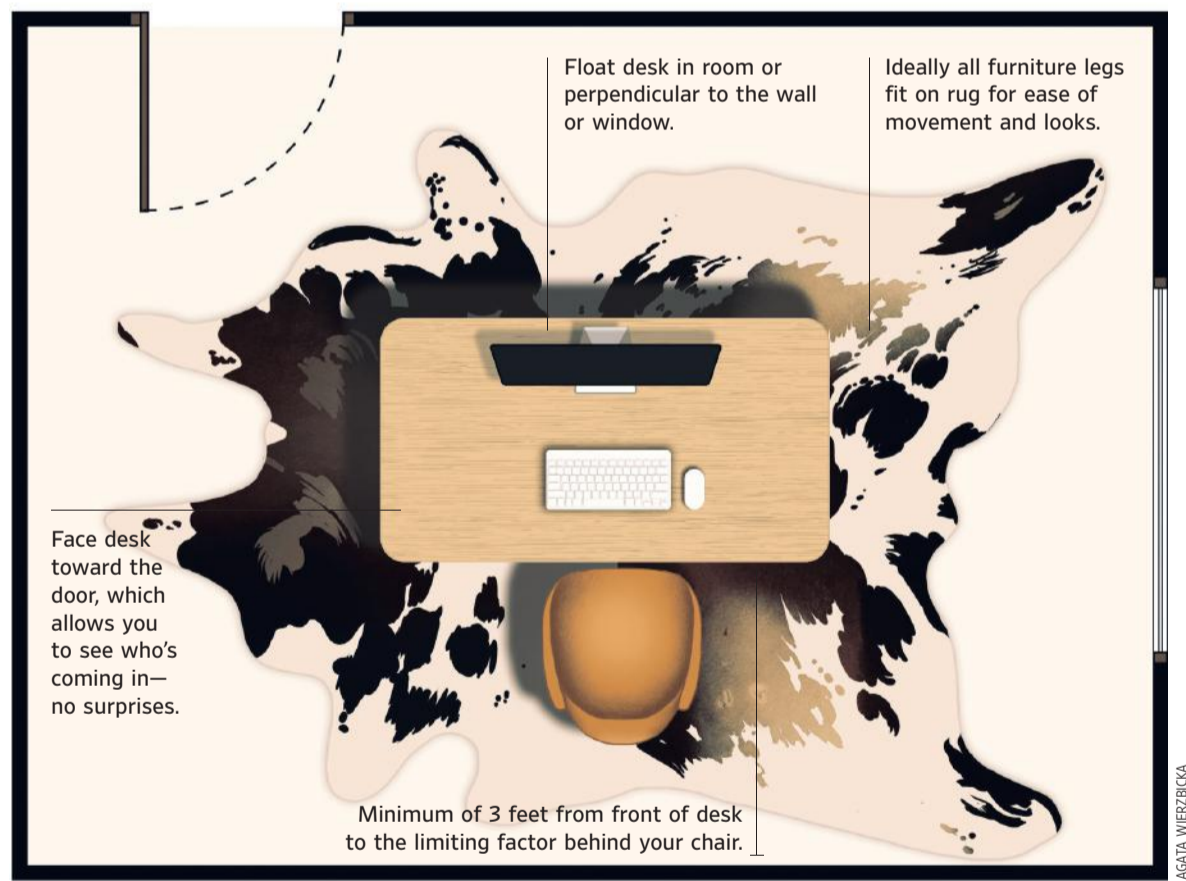
York designer Gideon Mendelson.

Work the Angles

Gorra, who was head of interior design at the Wing, the now-defunct international women’s co-working space, hews to the 90/90/90 rule when setting up a desk. “Your elbows should be bent

to 90 degrees, your hip should be at 90 degrees and your knees should be at 90 degrees when your feet are flat on the floor,” she recites. (The Occupational Safety and Health Administration allows for an elbow angle as large as 120-degrees.) Los Angeles designer Betsy Burnham favors rolling chairs, but

EMINENT POSITIONING / THE IDEAL LAYOUT FOR AN OFFICE YOU’LL WANT TO LABOR IN



▲ Hourglass Large 15 Minutes in Turquoise Blue, \$30, HightideStoreDtla.com



▼ Bengt Ek Design Mechanical Timer, Copper, \$30, RoyalDesign.com



▲ Zone Denmark Timer in Mud, \$34, AfternoonLight.com



▼ Everybody Kitchen Timer, \$48, DusenDusen.com



▲ Mozart Kitchen Timer, \$20, Shop.PBS.org

FAST FIVE

It’s About Timers

Productivity experts say a good old hourglass or pinging kitchen timekeeper (not your phone) can help you focus for 15- or 25-minute stints—especially if it’s a well-designed example like these