

LET GOOD DESIGN IMPROVE HOW YOU WORK FROM HOME

[Lifetips](#) · [Lifestyle](#) · [Home Decoration](#)

1 Feb 2022 [+4 more](#)

Struggling to separate home life from work? Journalist Fleur Britten explores the ways good decoration can make your office space a hot desk of creativity.

Surely the greatest perk of working from home is the possibility of creating your dream office – without a cumbersome plastic chair or fluorescent strip light in sight. The chances are you've already set up your home-office, but if it doesn't feel as beautiful as it could, if it isn't inspiring your best work, there are plenty of things you can do to optimise your creativity.

To ensure that all parts of your workspace exist in harmony, [Emma Morley](#), founder of Trifle Creative, an office design

consultancy that also offers home-office packages, advises first creating a mood board – and a proper plan. 'Things get messy when you panic-buy or design it piecemeal,' she says. [Emma](#) advises heading to Pinterest to hone in on your preferred colours and textures, and the desired style of the key ingredients – desk, chair, lighting, storage. Then you can start to layer in the details. 'Think about how it all looks together, so that it's appealing for you to work in,' she says.

Your biggest challenge is arguably finding the perfect location. Ideally, it's in a dedicated room, says Jo Thornhill, interior stylist and author of *My Bedroom is an Office & Other Interior Design Dilemmas*, in order to 'reduce distractions and help disconnect at the end of the day'. If not, try to set aside a space solely for working, Jo advises – that could be at the top of the landing, in a generous hallway or in a quiet alcove. Wherever it is, you're going to want natural lighting on tap, which is proven to help alertness and

productivity. 'It's more important to work by a window than sleep by one,' says Jo. She also advises placing your desk adjacent to the window to avoid glare.

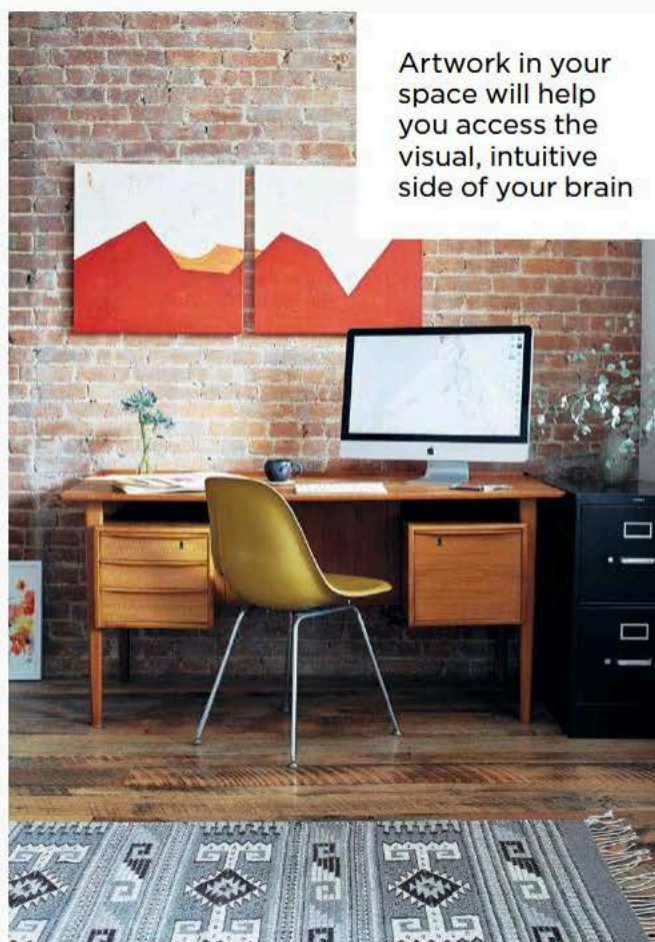
It is even better if you can look out onto nature. The American architect Donald Rattner, author of *My Creative Space: How to Design Your Home to Stimulate Ideas and Spark Innovation*, points out that, 'although we evolved in nature, it's in scant supply indoors where we spend most of our time'. We can easily restore that equilibrium, Donald says, by ensuring a leafy view, and by bringing in natural materials – wood, brick, stone, plants, and green and blue tones. 'Science has found that these colours and textures stimulate creativity,' he says. Tall ceilings and a sense of space also make us open to new ideas, he explains. Donald recommends creating the illusion of height with tilted mirrors or vertical wall lines, or even with a photograph of an expansive landscape: 'It's the perception of space that

counts.'

There are stylish ways of blocking out domestic distractions – you could establish effective boundaries with a tall, open bookcase, a decorative screen or a wall of plants (Jo Thornhill recommends ferns and monsteras). After all, you don't want to be gazing longingly at your bed when trying to work – or at your desk as you're trying to sleep. It's also helpful to mark out a 'work zone' – this could be with rugs, paint, wallpaper – even Japanese washi tape – to create

A physical border. If you would prefer your home office to blend in seamlessly with the rest of your home, Jo recommends visually defining it with a specific colour, and then connecting it to the surrounding space by using pops of that colour.

For those of us working at the kitchen table, Jo recommends establishing a daily ritual to set up your home office with beautiful things – perhaps a



Artwork in your space will help you access the visual, intuitive side of your brain

special pen pot, a scented candle, a favourite plant – and packing them away at the end of the working day. You may not be able to block out your fridge from view, but you can condition your mind into work mode with lemon, rosemary or peppermint oils for a stimulating, productive ambience, and, at the end of the day, relax with jasmine or lavender.

Lighting should also be on your to-do list: 'Not enough means you could be straining your eyes, and too much for too long

can trigger headaches and insomnia,' says Emma Morley. She advises three different types – overhead for general ambience, daylight lamps to support your circadian rhythm, and task lighting to reduce eye strain. You might want to consider a chic bare-bulb lamp or pendant: Donald Rattner says that the image of a light bulb triggers creativity ('It's one of the most recently evolved triggers,' he explains). If you want to activate your creative right brain, dim the lights ('There's nothing for your eyes to rest on,' he says), or turn them up if you want to get analytical.

For most of us, disorganisation is a source of stress – and stress is the enemy of creativity. If your work entails messy paperwork, Emma advises 'closed storage' (drawers, a filing cabinet, a chest, etc). 'If not, go for open shelves, where you can also display lovely things.' Storage can be a way of bringing your personality into your office, with beautiful vintage pieces such as trunks or trolleys, or perhaps a pegboard for tools and equipment. 'It is

important to think of the walls in your home as working walls,' says Donald. 'You could add shelves and baskets for organising your things. If you feel in control, you're more likely to try new ideas.'

It may not be sexy, but ergonomics – or how you safely and efficiently interact with your office – is crucial. 'It doesn't matter how beautiful your home office is,' says Emma. 'If you don't get your desk, chair, screen height and lighting set up correctly, it's not going to work.' Trifle Creative recommends that desks are 70-75 cm in height (higher if you're tall). Your chair needs to be set so that your elbows are in line with your desk (if not, you'll get shoulder or neck ache). Your eyes need to be level with your screen, so if you're working on a laptop, Emma advises investing in a separate keyboard: 'Spending time being hunched over can cause chronic back and neck issues.' She also recommends an ergonomic office chair, so that your back and neck are straight and your lumber is

supported. Relax, though, says Jo Thornhill. 'Lots of brands – for example, Made, Cult Furniture and Swoon – now have tasteful ranges.' Plus, she adds, 'There are still some great mid century designed desk chairs made new today.'

Practicality will only get you so far, though. For Donald, the most important detail is the beauty factor, which is, he says, 'critical for finding inspiration'. He recommends providing 'sustenance for your eye to land on – artwork, colour, etc', adding that curves, as opposed to sharp edges, will help you access your right brain. It's also about using design to persuade you to stay put in your workspace: 'You want to create a space that you feel drawn to use,' says Jo. 'Surround yourself with the things you love and that uplift you.' And as Donald points out,

'If you've made your home office as attractive as possible, then your space is definitely Zoom-ready, too.'

“It doesn't matter how