

By **Sallie
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desk set

Sometimes a laptop on the kitchen table just doesn't cut it. Here's what you need to know to design, build, and boot up your own home office

NEVER BEFORE HAS A LUXURY SO QUICKLY MORPHED into a necessity, but few people today would consider remodeling a house without making room for a home office. And it's not just the libraries and book-lined dens of early 20th-century homes that are making a comeback. Twenty-first-century computer niches and wired homework stations are finding their place on more floor plans, too. A recent study by the American Institute of Architects designated the home office the most-requested "special function room" in the house. Chalk it up to the spike in part-time telecommuting, after-hours e-mailing, and an effort to keep the Internet out of kids' rooms. Whether it's a bare-minimum desk off the kitchen or a full-blown study with custom cabinets, multiple work surfaces, and extensive file storage, most families just can't do without a flexible, functional workstation. As Hinsdale, Illinois, homeowner Ann Kohout put it: "Our home office might only be 7½ feet wide and 6 feet deep, but it's probably the most-used room in the house."



separate but open

Your family might be in the other room, but you can still keep an eye out, whether it's the kids at the keyboard—or you.

FEELS LIKE HOME

One of the biggest trends in home offices today is the move away from the business/corporate look, toward a warmer, more homelike environment. When Minneapolis designer David Heide was hired to add on to an early-1900s foursquare, he was asked to design an office that flowed into the rest of the house. Using the home's original Colonial Revival details such as colonnades (1) and stile-and-rail wainscoting (2), and adding decorative art-glass windows (3), Heide created a traditional-looking library that conceals its technology with a pullout keyboard tray (4), a hidden hard-drive tower (5), and wiring that runs behind the kneespace's beadboard back (6), which is built out 3 inches from the wall. The desk's 5-foot-wide seating area (7) was intended to allow a parent to pull up a chair during after-school homework sessions.

