

SPACE & STYLE

Home Work

EXPERTS SHARE SOME OF THEIR TOP TIPS FOR SETTING UP A HOME OFFICE
BY SHERI RADFORD

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When most of us started working from home (WFH) last March, it was supposed to be temporary—lounging in pajamas, hunched over a laptop on the couch, munching on quarantine snacks for two weeks. Now, one year later, with no return to the office in sight, it's time to get serious about setting up a proper WFH space.

The first necessity is a good chair. According to Sarah Richardson, interior designer and host of several shows on HGTV, there's no need to break the bank on this. "The desk chairs that my family is all using at home are from **Ikea**," she says. "Super stylish, really comfortable, and everybody's happy." She's a big believer in finding affordable solutions: "You don't have to have a lot of money to make your space fabulous."

But if you are picking just one thing to splurge on, a good chair is a wise choice. It largely dictates your physical comfort for 40 hours a week. Ross Bonetti, founder of **LivingSpace**, saw an uptick in sales of **Herman Miller** chairs when the pandemic hit. The iconic chair is known for improving posture and reducing back and wrist strain.

The next WFH must-have is a desk. Many of Bonetti's customers have been buying nicer ones than they might have in pre-Covid times:

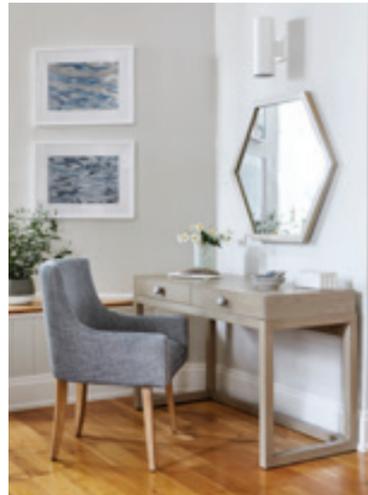


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"If they're going to spend a lot of time at home they definitely want to have a quality piece ... something that makes them feel good in their space."

Maria Lopez, owner of **Creative Home Furnishings**, has noticed a similar trend. She says the increase in WFH combined with the decrease in spending on travel and restaurant meals has led to more customers treating themselves to the high-quality, made-in-Canada furniture her company specializes in. She keeps hearing, "Where was this made? Is it real wood? If I'm going to buy something, I want to make sure my money's well spent."

Another key to WFH is keeping everything organized. Lopez observes that, in a traditional office, "pretty much everything you need is within a five-foot radius," so you should mimic that at home with shelves, drawers and other storage. Bookshelves in particular have taken centre stage during the pandemic, as a coveted background for Zoom calls. According to Lopez, bookcases "tell a story about who you are."

Working from home can cause an unfortunate blurring of the line between work and personal life. Liana Thomson, accessories product developer for **EQ3**, stresses that, even if you don't have a self-contained home office with a door, you need to "find ways to delineate between your work and comfort space." Nobody should be distracted by piles of unfinished work while watching TV—or by the TV while working.

The final piece of advice from all the experts is to get creative. According to Richardson the old way of designing a home, with just a single workspace—what she describes as "dad's home office" with a "banker-esque" vibe—has been replaced by the need for multifunctional zones "that can transition from family life to work life to school life and back to family life fluidly throughout the course of any given day." That may mean investing in the perfect custom-built desk, or it may mean repurposing "a \$10 table at a flea market."

Whether your personal style skews more toward corraling office supplies in something traditional (an Elisa desktop organizer by **Oui x Bigso** from **Indigo**, rustic (a Revistero basket by **Makaua** from **Goodee**) or luxurious (a bone china paper cup from **Tiffany & Co.**), it's all about finding the solution that works for you—and your budget.

Oh, and one bonus tip from the experts: face a window during your video calls. The natural light is extremely flattering.

Now, get back to work. ✓