

### Three Questions to Ask Before Setting Up Your Home Office or Workspace

By Alyssa Gregory, About.com Guide

Many small business owners have [home offices](#)<sup>1</sup>, either because they completely run their businesses out of their homes, or because they keep a second office away from their everyday workplace.

Setting up a home office isn't always as simple as having a desk, though. There are often other considerations to think through before you begin to create your workspace. Here are three of the most important questions to ask yourself if you are thinking about setting up a home office or at-home workspace for your small business.

#### Where will I work?

The first part of this question requires some thought into the type of work you will be doing in your business. If your work is done on a computer, an office that can accommodate an [ergonomic computer workstation](#)<sup>2</sup> may be all you need.

On the other hand, say you are a jewelry designer. You may use welding tools or special resins that are best used in an open-air environment, so a regular in-house office may not be the best option for you. You may want to explore setting up your work in a garage, basement or unused part of your home.

If you fall into the first group and work in a traditional office setting, the next consideration is where in your home you will be able to fit in your office. Ideally, you will already have an empty room that you can turn into a home office. If this isn't the case, you can still create an effective workspace, but you may have to get a little creative as you explore where you can create your at-home business home base.

With some "out of the box" thinking, you may be able to divide an existing space into part living area and part work area with a [shoji screen](#)<sup>3</sup>, strategic furniture placement or even a curtain. The goal should be to create a feeling of separation between your workspace and your living space, even if they are technically one and the same.

#### What do I need?

Once you know where you will be working, you should put some thought into what you will need in order to do your work. For many small business owners, this means a computer, Internet access, a flat surface of some sort, a phone and perhaps a printer. Those are the most basic physical needs for a small business owner who uses technology to access and complete work.

Going back to our jewelry designer example, or any other business owner that requires more than a desk and a computer with Internet access, you should think through what kind of equipment and supplies you need and where and how you will store them.

This [home office checklist](#)<sup>4</sup> provides a good starting point as you make your list of things you will need in your home office.

#### Who will have access to my workspace?

This is often the most important question to ask when it comes to home offices for the simple fact that it can be immensely challenging to separate your work life from your personal life when they are physically intertwined. This is why it is so important, especially in the beginning stages of setting up your workspace, to create boundaries for your workspace that are understood and agreed to by everyone in your household.

If you will be working from home full-time, it's also important to set boundaries that outline when you will be working, and how other household members will be expected to behave during those work hours. This is most important for small business owners who will be running a [home-based business with children](#)<sup>5</sup> at home.

The best thing about a home office is that it is usually flexible and easy to change as necessary. As your small business grows, or your living arrangements change, be open to changing the configuration of your home office or workspace. It's always a good idea to take a look at your set up from time-to-time and re-evaluate so you can reorganize and [redesign your office](#)<sup>6</sup> when necessary.

*This About.com page has been optimized for print. To view this page in its original form, please visit: <http://sbinformation.about.com/od/office/a/before-setting-up-your-home-office.htm>*

*©2011 About.com, Inc., a part of [The New York Times Company](#). All rights reserved.*

---

#### Links in this article:

1. [http://consulting.about.com/od/gettingstarted/tp/CF\\_FirstHomeOffice1107.htm](http://consulting.about.com/od/gettingstarted/tp/CF_FirstHomeOffice1107.htm)
2. [http://ergonomics.about.com/od/office/ss/computer\\_setup.htm](http://ergonomics.about.com/od/office/ss/computer_setup.htm)
3. <http://erclk.about.com/?zi=20/3DNY>
4. <http://sbinformation.about.com/od/office/tp/home-office-checklist.htm>
5. <http://sbinfocanada.about.com/cs/homebusiness/a/homebizkids.htm>
6. <http://sbinformation.about.com/od/office/a/60officespace.htm>