



The Seven Secrets to Setting up a Home Office



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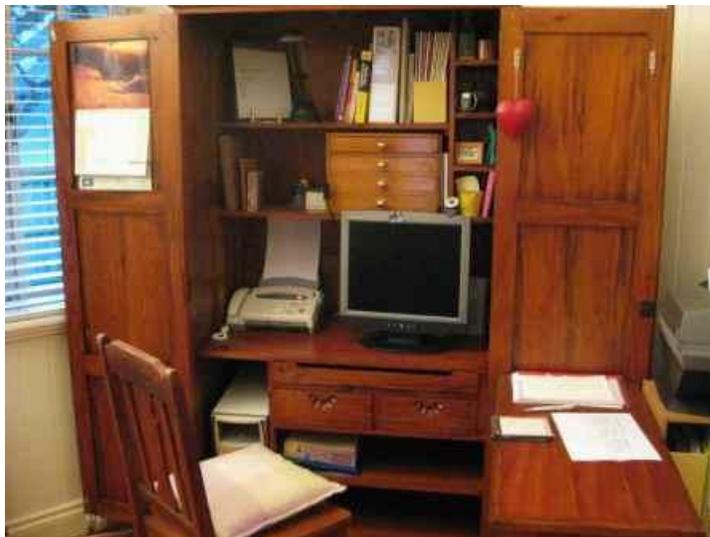


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Making the decision to set up a business working from home is daunting enough without complicating matters with the stresses of making the perfect workspace.

Here are my 7 secrets on setting up your home office to create a space that ensures you are encouraged to start work each morning!



You can even set up a home office in a wardrobe!



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Secret 1 - The Space

The first and most important step before you even think about setting up a home office is: location, location, location!

I have spent many an hour setting up the perfect space with the PC just so, shelves and supplies close to hand - only to find the room too cold and dark. I ended up working on my laptop in the sunroom.

You have to be drawn to your space and encouraged to spend many an hour working there otherwise you may find other tasks to do rather than concentrating on your work. Make sure the natural light is good or you have good task lighting (lamps) and that you aren't distracted by outside noise.

Hint: Make sure if you are working on the dining room table that you have a super quick pack up system so the table can be used for it's original purpose – family meals! Have a storage box or cupboard near by to stow the office materials – easy to set up, easy to pack up is the key.

For other areas you could invest in an attractive room dividing screen, this way when the work day is over, pull the screen around your table and voila – the office is shut for the day!



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Secret 2 – Your Style

The second most important step - find out what sort of organising style you have. Do you like your current projects on show so you can easily put your hand on them, or do you prefer to have everything out of sight so it looks neat and tidy?

If you are a visual person and like piles of papers or files on your desk that you can see, but instead have filed them away out of sight to make the office look tidy, you will find this system won't work as "out of sight" can become "out of mind" and you may overlook tasks.

Remember, your work space doesn't have to look perfectly tidy to be organised. Many people have home offices that look more like a disaster zone, but if you ask them for a particular piece of paper, they can put their hand straight on it.

On the other hand, if you have the style "a place for everything and everything in its place" and you find your workspace covered with papers, this will also cause you unnecessary stress. Set up systems where you can easily locate files or papers but that are just as easy to put back (and make sure you do!).

"Toaster" file racks are the perfect example, they sit on your desk so your files are readily accessible but they keep clutter to a minimum (and you can easily pick up the rack at the end of the day and put away if you need to).



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Secret 3 – The Systems

Don't rush out and buy up all sorts of expensive organising in-trays, storage boxes and the like until you have used your office for a week or two.

Chances are what looks great in the store may not work for your particular system (as per your style) and you don't want to waste your money.

As you work, keep a shopping list handy and add items that you find will make your office organised and easy to use.

You may already have suitable things in the house that will work just as well.

Shop at stores such as Big W or discount chains so if your purchases aren't suitable you haven't spent a fortune.



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Secret 4 - Scheduling

Time management and scheduling is a big component of how well your home office fits into your home and lifestyle.

You can't be stopping projects to put a load of washing on the line no matter how much the laundry is piling up. If you were back in the corporate world in a high rise, the washing would still be waiting for you after hours and that is the attitude you must have.

The same applies for those drop in visitors – just because you work from home does not mean you are available for coffee and a chat at any time of day.

On the other hand, make sure you schedule time for breaks every hour or so; set a timer if you have to. When you don't have office co-workers to meet with or to discuss issues, you can find yourself sitting in the same position sitting at your desk staring at the screen with the hours flying by.

Keep the fluids up, do eye exercises or sit outside in the sun for a few minutes (but don't put that washing out!)

And most important of all – make a prioritised task list every day and do those urgent and important jobs first; the ones that will be bringing in the \$ (not the quick and easy jobs that can wait until later).



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Secret 5 – Storage

From filing cabinets of paperwork and bills to garages filled with product and packaging supplies, storage of business paraphernalia is a huge factor to deal with in your home.

You don't want your work taking over your family's personal space and you don't want items such as toys or washing in your work space if you have clients in for a meeting (plus the visual clutter is distracting).

Unless you have an office with a door that can be shut at the end of the day keeping work and home lives separate, you need to have defined spaces where “never the twain shall meet”.

Set ground rules for yourself and family members so things are either put away (if you are using the dining room table for example) or can be covered up (a filing cabinet in a family space).

And stick to it, otherwise you become complacent and before you know it your time and space for work and home become intertwined and you won't be comfortable or focused in either space.



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Secret 6 – Simplicity

You don't know how long you are going to be working from a home office, your business may grow rapidly and you need to hire extra employees, your storage area for supplies may double overnight, or God forbid you may need to go back to working for someone else until things pick up.

The point is don't be spending the big bucks on setting up the home office when the money can be better spent in building your business – on your website, your marketing, distribution channels etc.

A large table is as good a desk as a purpose built one as long as it suits your style (see secret 2). Make sure the chair is comfortable and supportive but that doesn't mean spending big dollars.

Always shop at discount stores first for supplies rather than the big name brands – be a spend thrift and your business dollars will go further.



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Secret 7 – Serenity now!

To make your work space inviting and serene, you need to add touches such as a family photo, flowers, music or other items you enjoy.

I actually have a water fountain on the floor next to my desk that provides not only a lovely sound, but I add lavender oil to the water to create a calming aroma too. Great for Feng Shui.

Hint: don't overdo it! You don't want to add unnecessary clutter through personal items, just a few things that give you pleasure and keep you grounded and balanced.



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Best of luck in your decluttering and organising endeavours!

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