

ready to rent



Carve Out Space for An Office

Even apartment-dwellers can find room to create a home office that works

Decor

Kara Lang, 24, moved with her boyfriend, Bryan Schapperle, 21, to a two-bedroom rental in Georgetown to have more space, but they debated about just what to do with the small extra bedroom. Art studio? Tiny guest bedroom? Day spa for their dog?

Ultimately, they decided to transform the space into a home office.

Home offices may sound like a luxury to space-constrained renters in D.C., but they don't have to be. People increasingly work from home or just need a space to check email, pay bills or even watch movies and play video games.

"A lot of people work from home, especially at some point during the day or over the weekend," says designer Nicole Lanteri (703-909-8001; Onmyagenda.com), whom Lang and Schapperle called

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Home Offices

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in to help create an office space where they both could work.

"Nowadays, having a dedicated space instead of just your bed is really important," she says.

Small Space Solutions

There's almost no space too small for an office, local designers say.

"A lot of people don't have a whole room to dedicate to that, so you're often carving out space from another room," says Jason Claire, co-owner of furniture and interior design store Vastu (1829 14th St. NW; 202-234-8344, Vastudc.com) in the U Street neighborhood. Claire is an expert at carving out space: He has even transformed a walk-in closet into an office.

Matthew Johnson, 27, made a space for his office by setting up a desk, a computer, bookshelves and a guest bed in the den of his one-bedroom apartment in Greenbelt, Md.

"I use the computer mostly for games," he says. "It's nice to have it [because] it doesn't clutter up the bedroom as much."

nextweek

Many apartments come with less-than-pristine kitchens, but there are ways to make them look cooler. We'll show you how in next week's Ready to Rent.

In addition to the office in his den, Johnson keeps a small Ikea table and a chair in a corner of his bedroom for doing work.

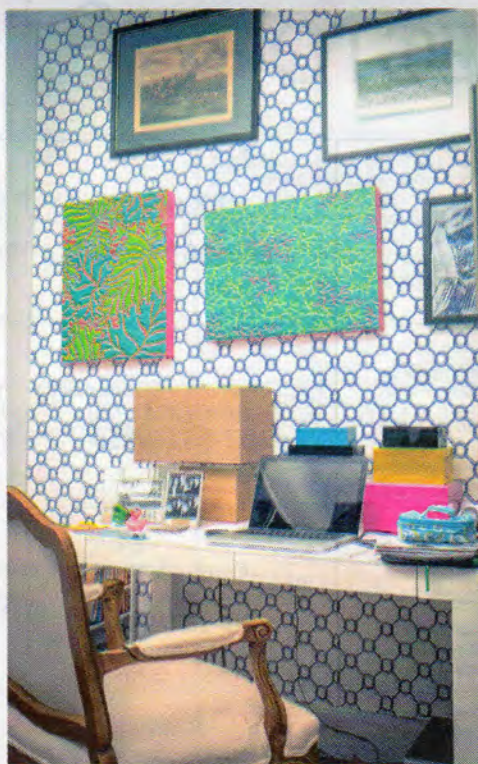
In smaller spaces, designer Claire finds two uses for every piece of furniture: a dining table that serves as a desk, a seat that does double-duty as a dining and desk chair, an ottoman with storage, or a flat-panel TV that serves as a computer monitor, too.

He also likes furniture that can be hidden away, such as a storage unit on wheels that can be rolled into a closet, a la CB2's TPS file cabinet (\$159; 3307 M St. NW; 202-333-6204, Cb2.com).

To save space, Lanteri advises her clients to edit down their stuff before they arrange the space.

"Really take inventory of what you have," she says. "Be ruthless."

Don't forget to use the vertical space in a room, too. Freestanding Elfa shelving is great for renters (\$500 and up; the Container Store, 4500 Wisconsin Ave.; 202-478-4000, Containerstore.com) because it doesn't do any permanent damage to the walls. Or ask your landlord if you can screw



Kara Lang and Bryan Schapperle share a home office, so each side of the room reflects their individual tastes.

Find a Seat, Take a Seat

As writer Flannery O'Connor famously never said, "a good desk chair is hard to find." Local interior designers Nicole Lanteri and Jason Claire share their lists for a variety of budgets and spaces:

- **High Roller:** 1. **Herman Miller's Eames Management Chair** (\$999 to about \$1,839) is the BMW of office chairs. Originally designed in 1958, "it is a classic office chair that has never gone out of style," says Claire, co-owner of Vastu (1829 14th St. NW; 202-234-8344, Vastudc.com), which sells it.
- **Great Value:** 2. **Herman Miller's Sayl chair** (\$399 to about \$879) is Claire's pick. "It's really comfortable and it's a really sharp design," he says. Lanteri likes 3. **Herman Miller's Setu Chair** (\$579 to \$649; available at Vastu and other dealers).
- **Budget-Friendly:** 4. **The Container Store's Bungee Office Chair** (\$139; 4500 Wisconsin Ave.; 202-478-4000, Containerstore.com) "is actually a really supportive chair," Lanteri says of the chair, which comes in many colors.
- **Space Savers:** For a double-duty dining/desk chair, Lanteri recommends **Crate & Barrel's Vintner Chair** (\$139), **West Elm's Curved Upholstered Chair** (\$199; 3333 M St. NW; 202-333-2928, Westelm.com) or **CB2's Vapor Chair** (\$179; 3307 M St. NW; 202-333-6204, Cb2.com). Claire recommends the collection of **vinyl restaurant chairs** (\$275 to \$325) sold at Vastu. J.B.

floating shelves into the wall, Lanteri suggests.

Inspiring Accents

Home offices need not conjure up images of leather-bound books or rich mahogany a la "Anchorman."

"A home office shouldn't just be functional, it should also be fun," Lanteri says.

Example: a hot pink Herman Miller Eames chair that she snagged for her own home office.

"Why wouldn't you be happy in a hot pink chair?" quips Lanteri, who also likes to accent a space with photos, art and pops of color to make the work space feel personal and fun.

In Lang's Georgetown home office, her side is decorated in navy blue and white wallpaper from Jonathan Adler



— taped to the walls instead of glued so she can easily take it down if she moves — a white West Elm Parsons desk and Lang’s art pieces. Schapperle’s side has black and gray wallpaper from Cole & Son, a chocolate brown Parsons desk and his art.

Lang likes that the two sides “speak to each other but look different.”

The key elements of any home office are the desk or table, chair, lighting and storage, Lanteri says. The West Elm Parsons desk is one of her favorites (\$349; 3333 M St. NW; 202-333-2928, Westelm.com), but she also likes Ikea desks and dining tables because they are simple and affordable. Craigslist and consignment stores are another good source for tables, she says.

“A lot of people work from home ... Nowadays, having a dedicated space instead of just your bed is really important.”

— **NICOLE LANTERI**, WHO LEFT A CAREER IN LAW TO START HER OWN DESIGN FIRM, ON MY AGENDA, AND HELPED BRYAN SCHAPPERLE AND KARA LANG CREATE A HOME OFFICE

If two people are going to share the same work space, a long, narrow dining table is a great solution. Desks and dining tables are typically the same height, Claire says.

The designers agree that the desk chair is one of the most important purchases for a home office.

“I would spend more money on your chair than your table,” Lanteri says.

If pondering a home office, Lanteri advises people to “spend a little bit of money and time and create a space that brings out the best in you.”

JESSICA BYLANDER (FOR EXPRESS)

