

Photo by Jeffrey A. Davis Photography



DESIGNING A PRODUCTIVE HOME OFFICE

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FOCUSED ON SAFETY

In challenging times like these, we know your first priority is keeping your family safe and healthy.

With that in mind, T.W. Ellis is working hard to meet our clients' remodeling goals, while also protecting our clients and our team. We're here to provide a safe, healthy solution to your remodeling needs.

T.W. Ellis is open and operating, while taking precautions. We are following all guidance from local, state, and federal officials, while also working under industry recommendations and precautions for a safe workplace.

We're issuing regular reminders to our team and have distributed jobsite posters from the National Association of Home Builders outlining these best practices on construction sites. We continue to monitor the situation daily and are working with our industry associations to refine best practices in remodeling and construction.

Improving your home while keeping your family and our team safer are our highest priorities! If you're ready to start your next remodeling project or want to start planning, contact T.W. Ellis today to let us know how we can help you!

New Deck Creates Outdoor Retreat

With our long summers and beautiful springs and falls, investing in outdoor living makes a lot of sense for homeowners in Maryland.

These Harford County residents were no different. They hired T.W. Ellis to re-deck their existing deck as the aged wood was in need of replacement. We quickly discovered, though, that the wear extended beyond the deck surface. *(continued on page 4)*





DESIGNING A PRODUCTIVE HOME OFFICE

Maybe you were thrown into working at home because of the pandemic, or maybe you've been doing it for years. A lot of us are going to continue to work at home at least part-time as businesses figure out how to move forward. Whatever the reason, working at home can offer several benefits—less time wasted commuting, more flexibility, and more productivity.

But to get the most of working from home, you're going to want to create a workspace that allows you to be as productive as possible. Perhaps that means an addition to make room for your growing home business, or simply a redesign to make the most out of your existing space. We're ready to help you tackle whatever you need from a home office and find the best solution.

Here are six tips for creating your best home office.

1. Location, location, location

The best home office is one that will help you avoid distractions, but also provide a comfortable setting.

A separate room, away from the main traffic flow of the house, is best. Finding (or creating) a space that allows you to close a door will give you the necessary privacy for calls with clients or Zoom meetings. It may be tempting to squeeze yourself into a large closet, but think about the other rooms in your home, like a little-used guest room or dining room. An unfinished basement may offer some privacy, but why not finish the area to create a more comfortable workspace?

A dedicated office space helps you associate "work time" and separate it from your home life. If you're going to need to meet with clients in person, be sure the office has or is near an outside entrance to avoid having to take people through your home.

2. Embrace natural light

A key part of selecting the location of your new home office is natural light. Research shows that company offices with more natural light enjoy greater productivity. A large window will also give you something to look at besides your computer. (If a window isn't an option, at least consider a nice picture so you're not staring at a blank wall.)

3. Install sufficient lighting

Even with plenty of natural light, there's going to be cloudy days or late nights. Good ambient lighting will help reduce eye strain, headaches, and other problems. Position your desk and computer to avoid glare but offer sufficient lighting for tasks. Consider installing LED lighting. LED lights aren't as harsh as fluorescent bulbs, use less energy than other types of lighting, and have a very long life.

4. Efficient storage

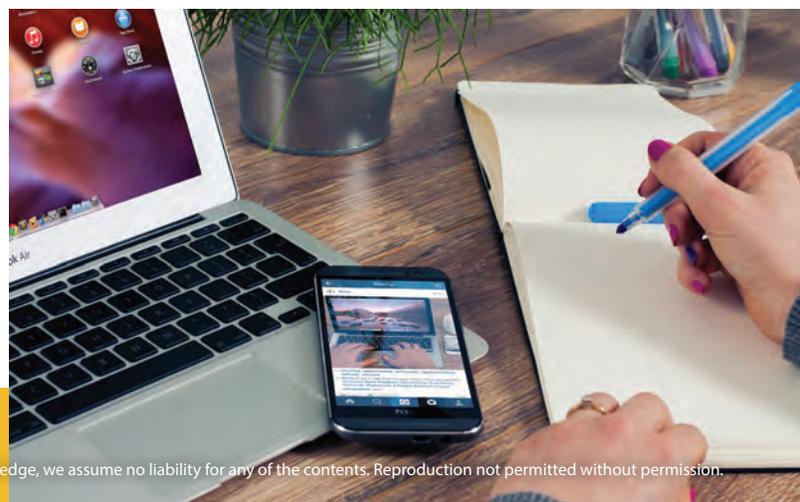
Get creative with your storage. Inset cubbies, racks, or floating shelves on the wall can help save valuable floor and desk space. Built-in cabinets will hide printers and other peripherals that otherwise will clutter up the space. Consider a closet you can outfit with shelves to minimize the space you use in the room.

5. Think ergonomics

Stop and think about how you use (or are going to use) your office. The layout needs to reflect that. If you're going to spend a lot of time getting up to grab your stapler or bending over to grab paper off the printer, that's not efficient or good for your body. Set up your desk or table so that your back and neck are straight and your arms are parallel to the desk. Adjust the chair height so your feet are flat on the floor (and while we're at it, invest in a good chair). Make sure the whole arrangement is set up so you don't have to lean over, slouch, or crane your neck to work.

6. Set rules

Not a design tip, per se, but one for your sanity. It's important to set expectations with yourself, your supervisor, and your family. Have set "office hours" that are your normal work time and try to stay away from your home office outside those hours. At the same time, make it clear to everyone that your work time is just that—work time. If at all possible, have them treat the situation just like they would if you were at the office.



Easy Entryway Upgrades

Oh, the poor neglected entryway. The drop spot for coats, backpacks, shoes, and more.

It doesn't have to be that way, though. You can make your entryway more attractive and more useful at the same time with these easy updates included in your home's remodel.



Creative Storage

You've got to have space for all that "stuff," but why not have some fun with it? A whimsical design that matches your personality gives a great first impression when visitors come in the home. Let kids pick their own themes. It might even make them more likely to use the storage spaces...well, maybe!

Adding cubbies offers a great space to put hats, gloves, or other accessories. Use color coded bins for each family member.

Seating

If people are going to be taking off shoes, coats, or outdoor gear, they need somewhere to sit. Nothing's worse than doing the awkward jumping-on-one-foot dance in the doorway. Use a bench seat with storage underneath it to maximize the space.

Overhead Lighting

What's the first thing you do when you walk in? Turn on the light. So the entryway area should have ample lighting, with



a switch within easy reach of the door. During daytime hours, let in plenty of natural light by remodeling the doorway to include sidelites or transom windows.

Drop Zone

A shelf or cubby right inside the door can make a handy place to drop that handful of keys, mail or other detritus. Ones with built-in hooks can offer even more wall-mounted storage space.

Be Colorful

Painting the walls of the entryway or foyer a different color than the rest of the space will help it feel more like a separate room even if it isn't set apart by walls.



Creative Backsplash Options for the Kitchen

A backsplash is a great opportunity for homeowners to express themselves in a kitchen remodel. While tile is the most common material for a kitchen backsplash, there are a wealth of options to cover that wall space between the counter and cabinets.

Here are a few ideas to add some creative flair to the kitchen.

Glass is easy to clean and resistant to mold, mildew, and bacteria. It is impermeable, so can be installed above a sink or anywhere else it may get wet. Glass is available in a variety of colors, offering an endless of design options. Naturally reflective and refractive, a glass backsplash will help the kitchen feel brighter and more open.

Wood can be painted to match the any kitchen color scheme, or it can be left with a natural finish. Reclaimed wood offers an attractive rustic look, perfect for a farmhouse kitchen. Sealing with a polyurethane finish will help protect the wood, but it is still more susceptible to staining and water damage than other materials.

There are a number of metal options for backsplashes, from copper to tin to stainless steel. Metal is easy to clean and can be found in different textures and patterns to match any style. Many metal backsplash tiles are eco-friendly, crafted from recycled materials.

Natural stone options like marble or granite are a great complement to a high-end countertop. Due to the nature of stone, no backsplash is the same as another, guaranteeing a unique look. Like a stone countertop, a backsplash is susceptible to staining and is more difficult to clean than glass or tile.

Brick veneer offers an attractive, nostalgic look. Brick is durable, but also requires sealing and is highly absorbent. Because of its uneven surface, it can be difficult to clean.

If you haven't looked at wallpaper lately, you may be surprised. Today's wallpaper options are creative and durable, while offering an incredible variety of patterns. Wallpaper is easy to clean, and simple to replace when you decide you want a different look.

Focused on Safety

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Our Family Working Together with Yours



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New Deck Creates Outdoor Retreat

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After taking off the existing pressure-treated wood decking, we realized that the underlying joists were deteriorating and would not make for a good finished product for the homeowners. After consulting with the client, we replaced the joists as well.

Besides new joists, the 16- by 40-foot deck features Trex Transcend composite decking in Tiki Torch. Composite decking offers lower maintenance and longer life than traditional wood decking, giving these homeowners a deck they can enjoy for years.

The homeowners wanted to keep decking seams to a minimum. To achieve that we divided the deck into two sections and utilized picture framing in the contrasting Lava Rock color. The railing is white Finyl Line railing, with black balusters. Light is provided by 15 Saturn low-voltage lights around the deck. In order to make the deck more usable, we connected the decking landing to the driveway for wheelchair accessibility.

It was also important to the homeowners that the large space under the deck be usable. To help accomplish that and keep the area dry we recommended and installed DEK Drain, an under-deck ceiling system. It creates a dry space under the deck by preventing precipitation and moisture from breaching the surface.

This project ended up being more complicated than first imagined, a great example of why we always recommend hiring a professional to install or repair your deck. A deck may look simple, but there are a lot of things that can go wrong when building one. A skilled deck professional like T.W. Ellis knows what to watch for and can deliver you a quality project that will last for years.

Our team has decades of experience building and designing decks throughout the area. We are not only certified remodelers, but also a long-time member of the North American Deck and Railing Association (NADRA). Contact us today to see how we can help you with your next outdoor project!