

# DESIGNING BEDROOMS & OFFICES

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# Day 12 -

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## DESIGNING BEDROOMS AND OFFICES

### OVERVIEW

We've already tackled the primary bedroom in the home, but what about those other rooms available to us? In both staging and redesign, I find these rooms to be very gratifying areas to decorate, because here is where creativity can really be displayed.

The home is about everyone who inhabits it, so making sure that everyone has a space of one's own is an important part of both redesign and staging. The key to successful redesign is tapping into the owners' personality, tastes and desires, and displaying them in their surroundings. It is important to interview everyone who lives in the home, so you can truly place each person's stamp on his or her space. In this module, I'll give you plenty of fantastic and creative visual examples of staged and decorated bedrooms for all ages.

In this module, I will first tackle bedrooms and then move on to offices. I will have a "For Staging" section at the beginning of each room's segment, rather than at the end.



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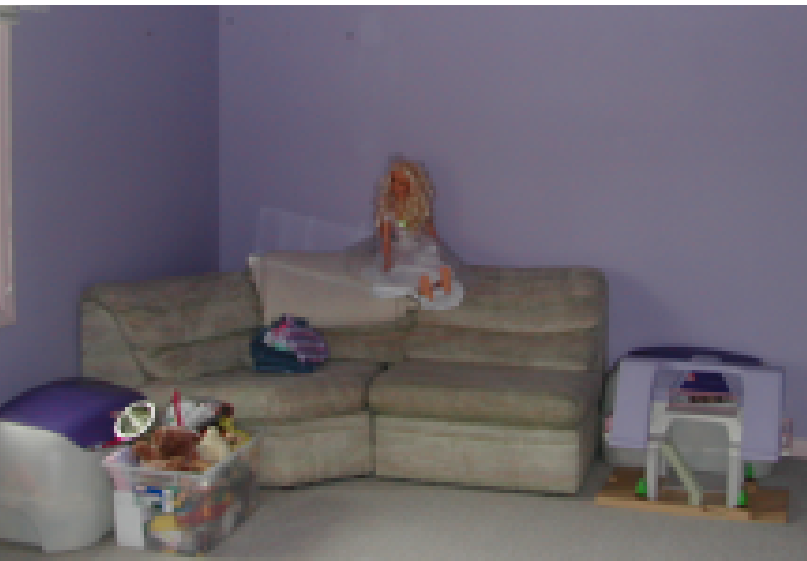
# DISCLOSURE

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Before you can tackle staging the bedrooms in a home, you should first have a conversation with the agent to ask about the typical family that he or she anticipates as prospective buyers. Is this a neighborhood for first-time home buyers with young children, or for third-time buyers with teenagers? Here are some general rules of thumb when staging extra rooms in a vacant home:

- For three-bedroom homes in a family neighborhood, stage the two rooms as children's rooms. If given the choice, decorate for a little girl's room instead of boys.
- For a four-bedroom home in a family neighborhood, stage the third room as an office.
- If the home is two stories and there is a downstairs fourth room WITH adjoining bathroom, stage it as a guest room.
- If the home is two stories and there is a downstairs fourth room WITHOUT an adjoining bathroom, consider creating an office.
- For a five bedroom home, stage an office, two children's room and a guest room.

For a non-vacant home, use the rules above, but try to work with what you have. If you're staging a three-bedroom home and one room is used as an office instead of a second bedroom, so be it. Remember, you can't always anticipate the exact demographic that will be looking to buy a home, but you can try to neutralize all rooms enough so that someone can imagine putting their little girl into a boy's room.



Buyers will be looking through the home imagining what they would use each room for, so the more neutral the paint (see Color Module) as the 60% portion, the better. The home I live in today was on the market for over seven months simply because the paint colors were atrocious! We were able to purchase the home at a 100K discount because we were willing to spend the 15K on cosmetic improvements. Here's a picture of the little girl's room which, as you can see, was painted completely dark purple with pink trim! The Dad bragged that he let her pick out the color for her own room.

Work with what your clients have, but it is also your job to be honest when there is a selling "deal breaker" involved (like this bedroom), where thousands of dollars are at stake. For instance, if the downstairs fourth room is a play room, then turn it into a guest room by clearing it out completely and starting fresh. This brings me to an obvious and important topic...





## THE HARD TRUTH ABOUT TOYS

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Let's face it, toys are unsightly. Toy rooms in a home (especially living rooms used as toy rooms) are huge turn-offs to buyers! Two years ago I did a staging walk-through for a client who used the living area as a toy room. I emphatically told her to clear the toys and pay for the expense of renting furniture for the living room of this 900K home. She chose against it. Needless to say, the home never sold and eventually she gave up trying. Toys in rooms other than bedrooms are deal breakers, so get the children on board by having them keep their special things in their own special rooms.

### *Tip*

Big baskets are a stager's companion, so have your clients give each child a basket to fill nightly with any toys that have travelled out of their bedrooms. Personally, I have a toy rule in my home: toys that travel into my spaces (kitchen, office and living area) will meet an untimely death.

I know it's tough to control the toys when you have very little ones because you want to have an eye on them at all times. An easy solution is to use a floor mat and a basket of toys that you can easily tuck away in a closet or cabinet for home showings.

Even in redesign it's important that everyone have a space of their own and that others' things should not encroach on that space. I'm always amazed at the homeowner who allows their children's toys in every area of the home! This is not only completely unnecessary, but clearly displays a lack of boundaries within the relationships in the home.





## Tip

Having a hard time getting your children to clean up their toys? I don't. I provide lots of baskets for my children to easily throw their toys in at the end of the day. I also use the phrase, "In ten minutes Mommy is going to the trash and whatever you want mommy to take to the trash just leave on your floor and I'll pick it up for you." I walk into their rooms with a trash bag after the time frame given and lo and behold the room is always clean.

Using this phrase gives my children complete responsibility and control over what they own and makes me an "innocent party" who is just trying to help. Make sure to put a time limit on that phrase, so the child knows when they can expect the trash bag. This may sound harsh, but I've never had to throw away a toy and yet the phrase works like a charm. Children over the age of three are very capable of picking up their own messes. Giving them responsibilities and boundaries teaches valuable life lessons!



# KIDS' BEDROOMS

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Anyone who has had a child knows that there have been definite phases in the way their child's room has been decorated. From birth to college, the bedroom grows with the child through many transitions based on changing preferences. Once you've identified the general age range of the typical buyer in the neighborhood, you can stage the rooms accordingly. Don't be afraid to give the rooms both personality and gender in the form of accessories (not paint).



## YOUR SIX GOALS AS THE REDESIGNER AND DECORATOR OF THE KIDS SPACE

Interview each person in home to discover their favorite things and the primary uses and style of the bedroom they live in. Here is a refresher on some things to consider in translation from our Living Area lesson:

- 1 Bring convenience to the function of the space** – It's obvious that sleep is the primary function of a bedroom, but outside of sleeping, many activities take place in a kid's room. If homework, play, drawing, reading or video gaming are functions of the space, then make sure that the room is well organized for these activities.
- 2 Bring comfort to the function of the space** – If for instance, the bedroom is a place for open play, keep the floors as clear as possible for toys. If reading to the kids is a priority, be sure there is a comfy place to do so.

- 3 Bring meaning into the form of the space by highlighting their favorite possessions**  
– Sometimes too much of one thing is simply too much, so leave space around their favorite things so they will be noticed. A favorite toy on a table. A shelf for treasures or their favorite trophies. Frame some of their best drawings and hang them prominently on a wall.
- 4 Bring emotion into the form of the space by incorporating many of your client's personal possessions without ruining the function or feel** – Surrounding your clients with personal mementos of love; like photos, treasured books, and accessories helps to bring warmth, life, personality, emotion and harmony to a space.
- 5 Bring emotion into the form of the space by incorporating a color scheme suitable to the feel your clients want, using colors they prefer** – See our Color Design Module for details. Since kids have a tendency to choose their favorite primary color, use that as an accent rather than a wall color.
- 6 Bring vision into the space by fulfilling some of your client's wish list for the function of the space** – Believe it or not, kids have a vision of what they want for their rooms, too! Unfortunately, too many of the rooms don't serve that vision because kids lack organization skills and have a hard time letting go of possessions. Brainstorm with the kids about what their vision looks like and create an action list to help fulfill it for the present and future. The action list should help to convince them of the need to say goodbye to older possessions.





# SIX STEPS TO REDESIGNING AND STAGING KIDS' ROOMS

You may be surprised to read this next statement. Here it is: Outside of the parameters for staging outlined above, feel free to decorate the bedrooms for both staging and redesign similarly. In other words, it's okay for bedrooms to be personal spaces, since buyers very well expect them to be. If the bedrooms didn't display a little personality, then they would all look like guest rooms. Here is a quick five-step process for decorating kids' rooms:



- 1 Identify the Theme of the Room** – Look around and see what it is the child likes. Ask the child. Usually a theme has already been created but just needs a little defining. You only need about four things to reinforce a theme, so find those things in the room. Use stuffed animals, clothing, accessories, toys or books in your creativity. For example, I love the look of fluffy princess dresses hanging on hooks in a little girl's room as in the picture below.
- 2 Clear the Clutter** – If the kids are like most, they will have tons of toys. Have the owner organize the toys into baskets or bins by type of toy. Find a home for those baskets and bins, so that they are out of sight and can be re-introduced later.
- 3 Organize the Big Stuff** – Some toys just won't fit into bins or baskets. Find a shelf, small corner table or closet to organize the big toys or consider giving the older stuff to Goodwill. Refer back to my Three Steps to Less Is More and Loving What You Have in the Living Areas Module.

- 4 **Make the Bed** – Since the bed is the natural focal point of most bedrooms, dress it up first by making it and placing pillows, a stuffed toy or themed piece on the bed.
- 5 **Accessorize Simply** – Remember the handful of themed items you pulled in step one? Use these to accessorize the room simply.
- 6 **Assess Lighting** – Many bedrooms appear dark .Some easy ways to add light:remove old window coverings, clean blinds and lamp shades (or replace them), change out the bulbs. You may also want to wash the windows and remove dark screens.

These are before and after photos of a room I did for a little girl whose bed just wasn't placed right:





## BEAUTIFUL BABY ROOMS

Nurseries provide so much emotional connection for all of us because anyone who's had a baby remembers those fleeting, crazy and wonderful days. Here are some gorgeously staged baby rooms to tug at your heart strings.



I find that, even in homes that are a mess, the nurseries are always decorated to the hilt!

These two photos give you a genderless example of how you can stage a nursery..

An easy way to add more emotional impact to a nursery is to place a small basket of baby onesies or stuffed animals on the changing table.



## BEAUTIFUL BABY ROOMS CONTINUED...

Here are some photo visuals to show you how the little details really help to make the whole. I absolutely love to dress up the stuffed animals to the theme...



## LITTLE GIRLS ROOMS AGES THREE TO TWELVE



Sugar and spice and everything nice describe the decoration of a little girl's room. Since I have two boys, pink is always the order of the day.

An inexpensive plywood table makes for an easy side table. Consider using a standard 70 inch round cloth but ribbon the loose sides to give it a more fitted, custom look as in the photo above.

Stencils, stamps and murals are easier than you think...



Pillows really do make a focal point pop in a bedroom! At first glance you wouldn't notice that neither of these beds have headboards because of the artful use of European pillows which can inexpensively be purchased at IKEA.

An easy way to complete our theme in this room...





## LITTLE BOYS ROOMS AGES THREE TO TWELVE



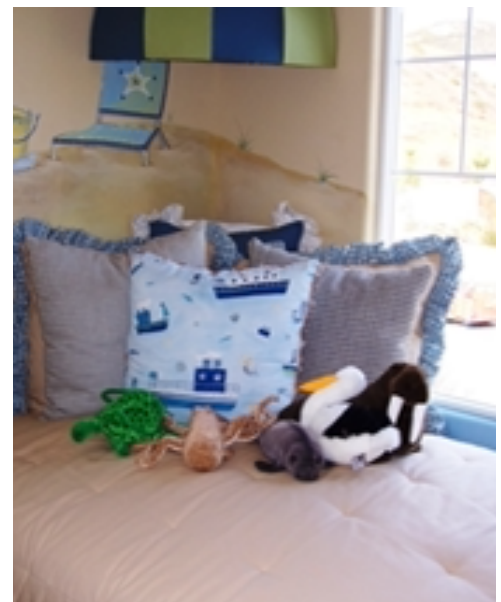
Snakes and snails and puppy dog tails describe the decoration of a little boy's room.

Think primary colors, dinosaurs, trucks, super heroes, sports and reptiles for little boys.

It's the little details that count and go a long way in staging...



I don't know if you've noticed, but the boys' section in the toy store is usually twice as big as the girls', so be sure to provide easy ways to pick up and store the various toys...





## GIRLS ROOMS AGES THIRTEEN AND UP

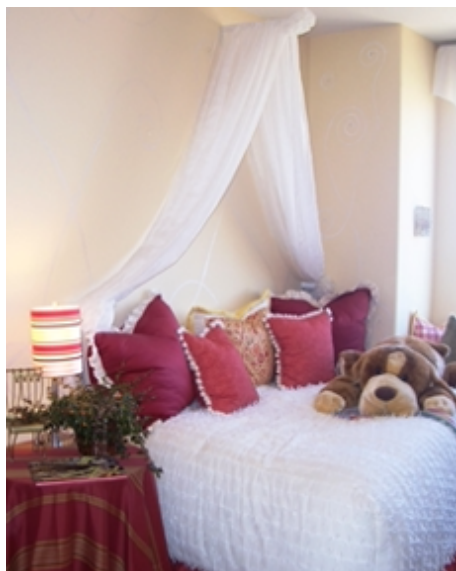
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Pretty in pink, yet tastefully done. A place for home work, lounging and comfort. The vertical lines add interest and help to enlarge an otherwise small room.

The inexpensive Target pillow serves as inspiration...

In the bedroom below, a full size bed wedged in a corner with inexpensive plywood covered round table makes for an easy way to decorate an older girls room.

You can see from the photo below how very easy it was to use a bracket to drape fabric in order to frame the bed and add whimsy....





## GIRLS ROOMS AGES THIRTEEN AND UP BEACH THEMES

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Consequently, beach themes are always very popular and allow for easy and fun decorating.

Bamboo fencing as seen in the photo above can inexpensively be had at home depot or Lowes. Simply staple gun the fencing which looks almost just as good without the railing. The hibiscus is a stamp.

This easy and cute window covering was a simple drape wrapped in burlap cloth and glue gunned with a star fish...

In the bedroom below, a different bamboo is stapled to the wall and looks just as festive. A bamboo screen serves as a headboard and is dressed up with large shells. A beach bag with flip flops completes the theme.

Below a different beach theme is created by simply stenciling in waves and hanging netting under a common beach sign....





# BOYS ROOMS AGES THIRTEEN AND UP



Boys will be boys and what's cool for teenagers is sports and music!

I love the shadow boxes that allow you to put kid's treasures on display! For boys, it's a favorite, autographed uniform and pennant. Using the favorite home team guarantees an endearment to buyers!



Simple frames of favorite team photos are an easy way to decorate and you can do this with any sport or topic.



# BOYS ROOMS AGES THIRTEEN AND UP BEACH THEME



Simply done, this boy's room can easily be replicated. Again, the vertical striping served to enlarge the small room.

Hanging the surfboard on the wall is not only an easy way to store it but to also show it off. Make sure to hang it so the backside is showing since unsightly wax will be on the front.

IKEA is a great place to go for kids funky accessories like this chair and lamp below.



# DECORATING THE GUEST ROOM

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Remember our General Rules of Thumb and decorate that fourth room as a guest room or office. BEFORE you tackle placement, take a hard look at what you have and do some “editing” since most people simply have too much and use the fourth bedroom as a “dumping” area for extra furniture. Many times, both sellers and owners have pieces they don’t really like that were just left there because they haven’t critically edited the room. That’s okay. Now is the time to create space, remove excess chaos and allow visitors to notice the true beauty of what’s left. Remember our Three Steps to Less is More and Loving What You Have? Use it!

## *Tip*

Create storage in the guest bedroom, since this is a great place to hide extra necessities you had to pull out of other rooms to create space! Use old suitcases, a chest, ottoman or baskets.

For both staging and redesign, it’s important to get rid of those things that the owners and buyers dislike. Go back to your Buyer Aspiration Cheat Sheet (for staging) and the Lifestyle Questionnaire (for redesign) and critically view each piece in the bedroom.

1. Do the owners love it?
2. Does it fit with their Lifestyle Questionnaire or Buyers Cheat Sheet preferences?
3. For redesign: Have they used it within the past year? (Change to six months for staging.)

## *Tip*

Having a guest room is a huge positive feature for buyers. Stage the guest room similar to the master bedroom and shoot for the contemporary hotel look. Consider buying new, neutral bedding or laundering the coverlet. Grab all the pillows you can muster and layer them nicely on the bed. This is an easy and fun room to stage because it’s rarely used, so more likely will keep its look longer.



# PLACING YOUR PIECES IN THE GUEST BEDROOM – A FEW RULES TO FOLLOW

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Now that you've considered the three steps above, you can begin placing the furniture that you have available to you, but be sure to keep it simple! As in the master bedroom, we are trying to create a luxurious hotel room look, so it makes sense to stick with the basic pieces and use "extra" furniture for other rooms. Here are a few other things to consider before we place our furniture.

- **Spaciousness** – Ideally, have a handful of pieces in the guest bedroom: a bed for sleeping, two nightstands on either side (if there is room), a dresser for clothes and a chair for reading.
- **Think Symmetry** – Remember, symmetry brings sanctuary and relaxes our senses, giving us a sense of order in the room, which is exactly what we want (especially in staging.)
- **Proportion** - No matter how large or small the room, the scale of the human form dictates appropriate space between objects in terms of function and comfort. There should always be comfortable walking space between the bed and walls.
- **Don't Crowd** - In staging especially, do not crowd the entrance. Create long sight lines that are not visually blocked by furniture, so that people can view the entire room.
- **Scale** - The scale of the pieces should be appropriate to one another and the size of the room. The night stands in particular should be to scale with the bed and no more or less than six inches different in height from the bed.
- **Create Storage** – We can all use some extra storage space in our bedrooms for out- of-season clothes, shoes, hats and accessories. Consider a chest or ottoman at the foot of the bed for extra space.
- **Purpose** - The night stands should be sturdy and provide light. Ideally, they should provide storage for bedside essentials that should not be seen by visitors to the room.
- **Supreme Hostess** – Welcome your guests by providing a carafe of water and glasses (Pottery Barn) or staging tray on the bed. Think luxury.
- **Clear the Closet** – Anything that is being stored in a guest closet can pretty much be packed away since it usually means it's not used often. Clear the space and organize this closet nicely for buyers.

## FOR STAGING – RULES OF THUMB FOR THE GUEST BEDROOM

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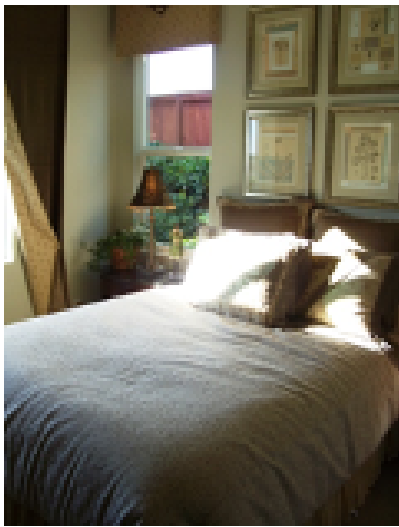
When decorating a home to sell, there are some pieces that will hinder the sale and distract buyers from envisioning themselves living there. Those items should be discarded and packed away immediately!

Here is a reminder list of things buyers don't want to see or will become distracted by:

- Collections of any kind only serve to distract, so tame them down to three of various heights if they are generic enough (see Arrangement Module) or remove them altogether, especially in a neutral guest bedroom.
- In the guest bedroom, size of the room dictates size of the bed, so try to use a full-size bed at minimum, since most people entertain couples.
- Remove accessories that reveal personal tastes, posters, pictures and other things that serve to distract and may even offend buyers.
- Clean is the order of the day, so refer back to our Obligations section in the Living Areas module for ideas on making sure every surface is sparkling! Clean all linens!
- Remove bright furniture or carpets, especially anything that is worn or outdated.
- Remove family photos, religious mementos, political, sexual or racy matter that would serve to profile the seller. Fill the frames instead with peaceful scenes or photos.
- Remove all paperback books and remove the jackets on nicer hardback books in order to dress them up. Again, make sure the book collection is classic (generic) and does not indicate a profile of any kind (religious, political, controversial or sexual).
- Remove anything that is contrary to our sleeping/relaxing/sanctuary purpose like gym equipment, etc.
- Remove heavy, light-blocking or outdated drapes, especially if no one sleeps there, making them unnecessary. Bare windows are preferable to old, cheap or outdated window coverings. Metal blinds are very unpopular and can make a home look cheap and outdated. Silhouettes in fabric or simple panels are very popular and help to add a lot of light to a room.
- Remove any furniture or accessories that are broken, worn, damaged, stained or outdated.
- Remove tiny rugs that only break up the flow and floor space, but make sure to have a large rug anchoring the bed if there is hard wood or tile flooring!

## A WELCOMING GUEST BEDROOM

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This tiny room packs a punch! In the absence of a headboard the pillows stolen from the couch create a nice focal point. The throw adds the hostess touch.

This bed is simply dressed but is the picture of serenity. The large mirror serves to expand the visual space and a plant in the corner is a wonderful and easy way to add life to a room! Don't forget to add a special spot...





# A REMINDER WORD ABOUT CLOSETS FOR STAGING

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Many stagers will ask you to clean out all of your closets and cabinets on the off chance a buyer looks through it. We think this is a good idea but a bit over the top. We describe how you can clean out your closets in the “Going the Extra Mile” section but have no expectation that you need to get this done. Remember, our focus is on the priority transformations, not to drive you crazy with a lot more work. Ideally, since you will be packing things away anyway take a closet at a time and weed out anything you haven’t used in four months.



With that said, the Master Bedroom closets are the exception to this rule. This is an area that homebuyers pry into so it’s a good idea to appear spacious, neat and organized. The more anal you appear to be, the more your homebuyer will view the house as “taken care of”. Below is a step by step checklist of how we suggest you attack your master bedroom closets:

- ✓ Pack away anything you have not used or worn in four months. For most of us, it’s about 80% of our wardrobe. Think ahead in terms of weather and special events but overall this should not be hard to do.
- ✓ Group by item starting with shirts, blouses, jackets, skirts and lastly pants (If you have a walk-in closet, pants should be in the back).
- ✓ Within each item category, arrange by color
- ✓ Make sure each item is facing the same direction (away from the door)

- ✓ Organize shoes preferably in a rack on the floor
- ✓ Clear off and pack away anything on the top of the closet shelf
- ✓ Organize any “loose” items such as belts and scarves in matching boxes or baskets on the top of the closet
- ✓ Consider buying inexpensive hat boxes for your hats and a little drama
- ✓ Consider buying wood hangers OR matching hangers
- ✓ Consider buying a closet organizer (Target has these now) which can be very appealing to homebuyers
- ✓ Finally, since closets usually don’t have any natural light, make sure your artificial light is extra bright by replacing the bulbs and cleaning the fixtures



# THE HOME OFFICE FOR STAGING AND REDESIGN

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As each year goes by, the importance of a home office in a four-bedroom house compounds. Why? Because more and more people are telecommuting or running home-based businesses. Buyers who telecommute will automatically be looking for a room to make their office, and they want it to be a quiet place away from the kid's bedrooms and preferably downstairs. Keep in mind that if you place the office downstairs, it must be staged well so as to entice the buyers to trek upstairs for the rest.

*Remember, if you only have a three bedroom home; make the other two rooms bedrooms! The home office should be in the fourth room with no closet or den.*

By this time in the training, you should have organized a home office for yourself. You'll notice that although it seems ideal to have the desk face the door (a feng shui recommendation and staging imperative), it's absolutely not practical given that almost any working computer station involves chords galore. Also, window light reflects brightly on the computer screen!

Thus you will be staging and redesigning home offices very differently because function is a critical role in the home office. Here are a few questions to ask owners and sellers about the home office before you get started:

1. **How often is this room used?**
2. **What is the room used for, primarily?**
3. **Do you work from home and use the computer daily? How often?**
4. **What does the back of the desk look like?**

If they regularly use the room and computer for work, it's usually best to have the desk facing towards a window, not the door. Why? Because the workers-at-home are the most important users of this room. Thus, facing the desk towards the window allows them to rest their eyes (studies show that periodically while working on the computer, one should look up and into the distance), cut down on computer screen glare and have a nice view. Not to mention: they will be likely to have chords on a computer they use daily since it will regularly be plugged in (even laptops).

If this is a rarely-used room, then function does not play a critical role. In fact, facing the desk toward the door for staging is a much more attractive way to display the home office. A laptop can be on battery power (not plugged in) for telecommuters who work in the office only one day a week. Otherwise, a docking station is necessary.

The key is to assess the chords, computer screen glare and primary purpose of the room and work around all those critical factors. When redesigning an office, think function and organization since most people tend to have very cluttered offices and really need someone to assist in organizational solutions for their equipment.

## REDESIGNING A WORKABLE HOME OFFICE FOR FUNCTION

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Having worked mostly out of a home office for the last 12 years, I know exactly what I need in my work space to make it work for me. Here is a checklist of sorts to help you find solutions for your redesign clients:

- ✓ The desk must be placed in such a way that I can look up and outside periodically
- ✓ There must not be any window glare on my computer screen
- ✓ I need a docking station for my laptop so that it is always charged and ready (this means chords at the back of my desk)
- ✓ I need a printer within reach of my desk chair
- ✓ I need an ergonomic desk chair, as well as chair mat so it can slide easily
- ✓ I need a clear desk drawer for all of my USB chords (camera, Ipod, headset, camcorder, etc.)



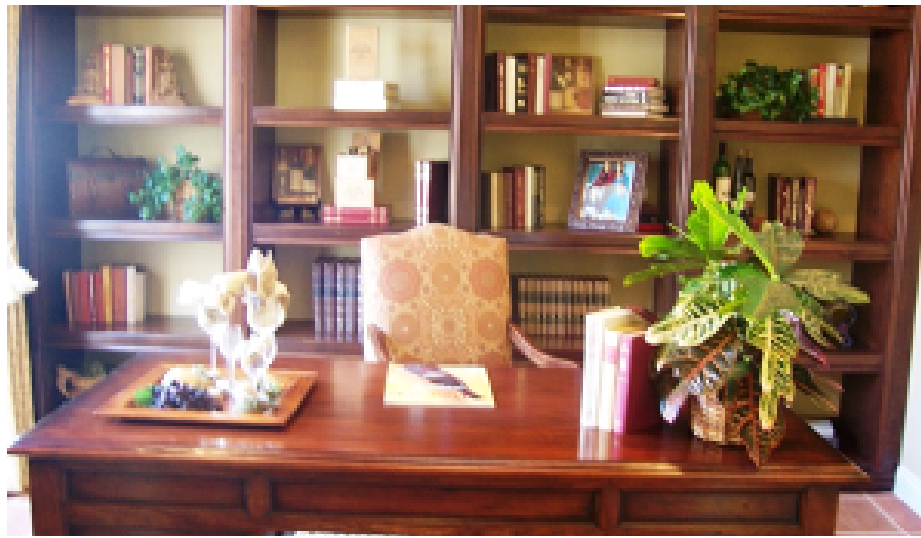
- ✓ I need another clear, larger desk drawer for files
- ✓ I need a book case for all of my reference materials
- ✓ I need a special spot in which to read and study
- ✓ Ideally, I need an smaller extra chair to place next to my desk chair for someone else to view my computer
- ✓ I need space on my desk for my daytimer, phone, coffee cup and framed photographs
- ✓ I need a lamp at my desk and in my special reading spot

Since books are one of my passions, I need a huge bookcase close-by and at hand. While many people have bookcases in their offices, they fill them with cheap, paperback books that they have already read. A good way to clear the space on the bookshelf is to donate those paperbacks to the local library or simply place them in the recycle bin. Books to keep in a bookcase are everyday reference books, hardbacks you have yet to read and antique books.

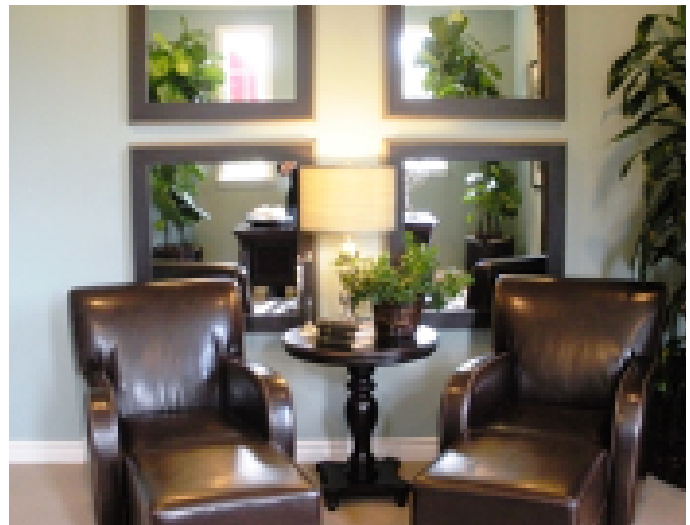
The beauty of the home office or den is that these rooms usually have built-ins which give us an architectural detail to use as a focal point (see Art of Arrangement). Use baskets and extra tables to create a functioning space for your clients while clearing out the items they do not use. For the typical owner, spring cleaning is never more imperative than in this extra space!

## THE STAGED HOME OFFICE

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We've talked about decorating a home office for function but let's talk about staging an office for buyers. Buyers want clean, cordless, workable rooms with a classic feel. Here are some wonderful visual examples of staged home offices:



From opulent to contemporary, staged offices are always a lot of fun. You don't even need a desk since a table will work just fine as in the photo below...

This staged office was one of my favorites because it was large enough to place the two facing chairs below to the desk. Notice that staged office desk chairs can be dining room chairs instead?



# MY HOME OFFICE REDESIGN – A DESIGN CASE STUDY

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Have you ever had this random room in your home that you didn't know what to do with? I did and it plagued me for a year! It was north facing with very little light, so the previous owner simply busted through the south facing family room wall and made it a small room off the family room (instead of a den which should have been its original purpose.)

We put the wall back up and boy did the room darken...



You will learn this when we get to color but you cannot make a very dark room “light” by paint alone. At the end of the day, you have to embrace the darkness and go with a cozy feel for best results...

## MY OFFICE AFTER THE REMODEL: \_\_\_\_\_



Now it's one of my favorite rooms in my house! I had to keep my ugly but amazingly comfortable desk chair and surround myself with family photos, favorite design books and children's artwork to create my own "happy place". Hope you were able to do this for yourself in Week One to maximize your productivity.

Here's more before and after photos:



