



PLANNING FOR STUDY SPACE

General Principle: Focus on what you want to accomplish, not how you want things to look.

Location

Start your thinking from the end of the school day: **Consider the "Drop Zone" and the "Pickup Zone" problem:**

- * **Through which door does the student enter?** Does s/he have a place here to leave coats, shoes, skateboard, etc.? Is this also where the backpack gets dropped? Where would you like the backpack to be when it comes time to start homework?
- * Is that the same place you want it to be when homework is done so that it will be **ready to go in the morning?** [Maybe your Drop Zone should be by the entry door-- or maybe there is just a Pickup zone where you will put backpacks etc. when all work is done and you are want everything that needs to leave the house in one place]
- * What is the **first thing you want him/her to do after school?** Have a snack? Most kids probably head to the kitchen. Parents of some kids may want to use this time to preview homework to set up a plan: What do you need to get done? How long will it take? What would be a good order to do this in? What parts will require parent help? What needs to get done before you are tired? [maybe your Drop Zone should be in the kitchen]
- * Is the **main study space** is in the child's bedroom? [Maybe your Drop Zone should be in the bedroom. . . but will s/he really use that?]
- * Is the **best study space a private one or public one?** Some kids want to be in the middle of the action for their homework and others want to be away from it all.

"Public" work areas (kitchen counter, dining room table, etc.

Advantages:

- * Maybe they will work better where they **don't feel isolated.**
- * **Parents can assist** more readily if in public area.
- * Parents can **monitor attention and effort** better in public area.
- * This allows the child's bedroom to be a **more private space** which becomes increasingly important as they get older.
- * If the child's room is shared, coming into the room to help one child with homework can be an **invasion of the privacy of the other child.**
- * Computer activities in public areas can be monitored; **game playing and internet usage can be supervised.**

Disadvantages

- * If they want to be **in the middle of things**, can they actually handle it? Is there too much distraction?
- * Public spaces are usually not designed for the best **ergonomics**. What about the **chair height, lighting, etc?**
- * Can s/he **leave things out** for several days if it is major project, or will these things be a **nuisance** to others or risk being disturbed?
- * Can you **make all of the tools available** in a public area or will they have to be brought out from his/her room? Public tool center means tools are shared with others and does not encourage a sense of ownership.

Work Surfaces

- * Most **pre-made "computer tables"** are inadequate in size.
- * **Depth** depends on monitor depth, but 30" is a good rule of thumb; otherwise you are too close **to the screen**.
- * Allow for **an area for writing** that is not encumbered by the computer keyboard.
- * **Monitor should be straight ahead**, not on an angle. This might mean you can move keyboard aside and do other work in front of monitor, or might suggest a separate work area for non-computer work.
- * Allow for **room for books and materials both to the right and the left** of the monitor.
- * **Keyboard trays** tend to be too narrow. There should be room for the keyboard AND mouse (and mouse pad with most mice, though not the newer optic models) on the same plane as the keyboard.

Seating

Ditch the decorator chair. Get a **utilitarian chair** that allows for adjustable height as the child grows.

Lighting

Desk should **bring lighting in from the side**, not directly in front (strain on the eyes when looking at a monitor with a window behind it) or behind (glare on the monitor).

Consider **window coverings** to control glare on the monitor, but realize most kids won't take the time to regulate this.

Storage

Explore your favorite household goods store for **a variety of storage containers**, trays, baskets, notebooks, labels, tubs, boxes, etc.

Some students benefit from a **photographic model of each area of the room** in order to remember specifically how/where things go.

Tools

* A **dictionary** is important. Paperback is far superior to hardback for ease and speed of scanning. Look for a dictionary that is appropriate to the age of the child. Some word processing software has dictionaries with definitions, but most are just for spelling.

* **Thesaurus** is important, but using the one on the computer is far more effective than a book.

* A "**desk encyclopedia**" in paperback is invaluable for looking up concise explanations of a variety of things.

* **Have a variety of writing and drawing implements, including pencils, sharpener, colored pencils, multiple colors of highlighters, ball-point pens, erasable ball-point pens, fine-tipped colored markers, 6-inch ruler, 12-inch ruler, etc.** These are great "stocking stuffers" and introduce novelty and creativity.