

RealEstate

Going to work from home? How to create productive space in your apartment



This standup desk by DeskView mounts to tempered glass. *fabre media*

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As a business development professional at a Boston-based startup, Jennifer Greenberg spends her workdays hosting live product demonstrations, attending videoconferences with coworkers, and appearing on webinars. She does all this — and more — from the 470-square-foot studio apartment she shares with her miniature goldendoodle, Poppy.

The 25-year-old Greenberg, who pays \$2,500 a month for her luxury apartment at [Hub50House](#) in Boston, works from a desk that doubles as her kitchen table. “Every design decision is very thoughtful, and every piece of furniture has to be very useful,” she said. “That’s the sacrifice I made to have the space to work.”

She's not alone. According to [the 2022 Renter Preferences Survey Report](#) the National Multifamily Housing Council and Grace Hill released in January 2022, 50 percent of respondents said they worked from home or remotely at least once a week. While that trend is driving demand for rentals with an extra bedroom to use as a home office, it comes at a price. In Boston, it costs apartment residents 30 percent more to get that extra room — which translates into an extra \$942 in extra rent each month, according to apartment search website RentCafe.

"The pandemic really changed the profile of work from home," said David O. Gillespie, senior vice president for development at [AvalonBay Communities](#), an apartment developer, owner, and management firm. "We are seeing a preference toward slightly larger units."

In apartments with a second bedroom or den, it's easy to set up a dedicated home office to serve as a quiet place to work or host Zoom meetings. But what if you can afford only a studio or one-bedroom?

- **Be flexible.** Create a "work niche" in your apartment, a place as small as 3 feet by 5 feet that you carve out of the living room, bedroom, or kitchen. "This can be accommodated in even a small unit," said [Edward R. Bradford](#), a principal of The Architectural Team in Chelsea, who designs multifamily communities for developers. "Plan where the desk is going to go, and make sure there are power outlets nearby." Bradford also suggested trying out different furniture arrangements to find the optimal design that allows for both living and working in the same space.
- **Utilize the kitchen island.** Due to their versatility, many apartment kitchens today have large islands for meal preparation and dining. They also function well as workspace.
- **Explore new horizons.** Consider working from your patio or balcony, weather permitting. "All of our outdoor amenity space is wired with Wi-Fi, so people can enjoy the great outdoors," said [Nancy J. Goldsmith](#), managing director of property operations for Bozzuto Management Co., which manages 27 rental

communities in Massachusetts, with 13 more in the pipeline. Goldsmith also encourages renters to make use of the coworking space in their buildings. These spaces are a far cry from the old business centers of the past. Today's coworking spaces are elegant, spacious, and include multiple working areas, from individual "work pods" to conference rooms that can be rented for meetings to comfortable lounge chairs for those using laptops.

- ***Be creative with the furniture.*** Check out companies that specialize in pieces for smaller spaces. [Ori](#), for example, designs furniture to "empower people to live large in a small footprint," according to its website. [DeskView](#) manufactures standing desks that attach to tempered-glass windows and walls and cost as little as \$95. Or you can use a storage unit as a room divider to carve out workspace.
- ***Add color.*** "Paint can completely change the vibe of a room," said Sue Wadden, director of color marketing at [Sherwin-Williams](#). "Even if you don't have a dedicated room for an office, painting the wall behind your desk can visually set that space apart to help with productivity." For those in creative careers, Wadden suggested a bold, playful hue such as "[Coral Reef](#)," a vibrant pink to help you feel energized. For those who want a more soothing space, she suggests a neutral like [Fawn Brindle](#), a warm "greige" color to calm the mind.