



Create a workspace that energizes.

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Working in a Zen-like environment could lead to less stress, greater productivity, and on-the-job happiness.

Over the course of a lifetime, the average person spends more than 90,000 hours working. So, whether you're working from home (over 23% of all U.S. workers teleworked in December due to the pandemic) or have returned to the office, it helps to create a pleasant, calm and productive work environment with minimal distractions.

Aim to support better work habits and on-the-job happiness with a mix of minimalism and the things that make you happy. Not sure where to begin? The following tips should help.

Express your personality.

We each have our own sense of style, and you find it energizing to express that at work. Sure, too much clutter can be distracting, but a few precious items can also brighten your day. Framed pictures of loved ones, your favorite mug and a notebook may be all you need on your desk. Keep other office supplies stashed in a nearby drawer for easy access.

Streamline your computer.

An organizational system that makes sense to you will help you easily find the files needed to keep your projects on track. Arrange your folders and desktop so they're easy to navigate. When necessary, silent distractions like email and instant messaging so you can focus or block specific times of the day to do just that. Leverage the tools at your disposal to ensure efficiency while still being responsive.

Be color savvy.

For some, neutral colors like white, gray, and beige can be depressing. The same is true of darker colors. But where you go from there depends a lot on the type of work you do. Workers who want a calm environment generally prefer blues and greens, while those in search of creative inspiration rely on bright colors like yellows, oranges, and reds. A potted plant or small bouquet of flowers can also help boost your mood. The same goes for stylish pencil cups and notebooks instead of bland-looking alternatives if that's more your style.

Bring on the light.

The best-case scenario is a work environment with an abundance of natural light, which is known to increase health, happiness, and productivity. In the absence of windows, however, you can create the next best thing with bright lighting (not fluorescent). Some people position a light box on their desk to increase light exposure during the winter months.

Control the temperature.

Not everyone agrees on the optimal temperature for a work environment, but experts suggest that peak productivity usually occurs at about 71 degrees Fahrenheit. Test several temps before landing on the most comfortable and productive option for you. If you work in a shared office where it's not possible to regulate the temp, keep a blanket or warm beverage within arm's reach.

Conquer the noise.

While noise can be distracting or even irritating, it's rarely possible to achieve complete silence. If surrounding noises disrupt your concentration, a consistent volume of ambient background noise could help. White noise machines or noise-canceling headphones may be the workplace hero you didn't know you needed.

Change places.

Mixing up your location is admittedly easier when conference rooms and brainstorming corners are safe, viable options. But get creative if you're working from home – try stepping outside to take phone calls or finding a spot where you can stand up for parts of the day. Switching things up can be good for both your body and your mind.

Next steps

To set the process in motion, you can:

- Create a desk space that reflects your style and inspires creativity, not clutter.
- Experiment with a new location, standing desk or lighting setup to see how it affects your mood and productivity.
- Ask your advisor about setting aside some funds to improve your home office.

Sources: [bls.gov](https://www.bls.gov/); [businessinsider.com](https://www.businessinsider.com/); [lifehack.org](https://www.lifehack.org/); [rocketspace.com](https://www.rocket.space/); [business.com](https://www.business.com/); [entrepreneur.com](https://www.entrepreneur.com/)

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