

CHEAT SHEET: The 3 Ps of a Suitable “Office Space”

Permanence. Ideally, you want to look for a permanent spot, one that does not have to be packed up and squirreled away each day.

Productivity. Your space may be small, but it has to have the items you need to maximize your productivity. You will need some basic office supplies, but beyond that, you might also need specific tools that apply to your chosen business. And don't forget to fulfill your emotional needs as well. Maybe you need an open window to keep your energy level high and your mind clear. Or a door that you can close to signal to everyone that you are, indeed, working.

Personalization. You need a work spot that allows you to put your personal stamp firmly on it. When you look at your space — that corner of your family room or that guest room you just converted — it has to give you comfort and be right for you. It must be a place where you can accomplish your best work.

CHEAT SHEET: How to Hold the Conversation about Work and Your Workspace with Your Family

- 1. Family first.** Your family needs to know they come first in this equation. Make sure you remind them, “You are the most important people in my life.”
- 2. Show mutual respect.** You respect family time and require that your family respects your work time. “Together, we can make this work.”
- 3. Make promises you can keep.** If you say you're going to stop working at 5:00 p.m. and won't start again until the kiddos are in bed, do that. If you need to work on Saturdays but make a commitment to not work on Monday nights during softball practice, keep your word. “I promise not to bring my phone to the table during meals. That's my commitment to you — to give you my full attention during those times.” Say it. Mean it. Do it.
- 4. Manage expectations.** Make it clear what you can and cannot do and when you cannot do it. “Mommy can't play with you until after lunch time. Enjoy your lunch, and when you're done, we can play for a little while.”
- 5. Ask for input.** You can't unilaterally set all the rules in this new situation. What does your partner need? What do your kids need? You're pretty much at the mercy of what your baby needs, but we'll tackle childcare in Chapter 6. “What's important to you? When do you need me to be available?”
- 6. Look for happy compromises.** Not every compromise will make everyone happy, but as you give in a little and your family gives in a little, you can find workable solutions, so in the end you create a way to run a business in your home. “I'm willing to stop work at 5:00 p.m. if you can do your homework as soon as you get home, so we can all have dinner together.”

Yes, we did it, too. We had the talk with our families.