

Setting Up Your Business

Location

The first thing you will need is a place to work. Your choices include **working from home** or **renting** space. Many event planners choose to work from home when they start their businesses because it saves on the cost of an office.

Working from Home

For many people, the biggest benefit of working from home is the end of the commuter lifestyle. You can take breaks when you need them, and on those breaks you can do what you need to do, from making up the bed in the guest room to playing with Fido.

Another big plus: you can deduct from your income taxes a percent of your mortgage payment and property taxes (or rent) and a share of utilities and maintenance costs. There are various methods to make those calculations, but by far the easiest – and most acceptable to the IRS – is to use an entire room, and to use it for no other purpose.

In the U.S., **IRS Publication 587** has information on how to compute the calculation and file the deduction. You can download this information by visiting the IRS website and searching for the publication numbers from the search engine on the front page.

The other thing you should check before deciding on an office at home is **local zoning**. Most places won't have a problem with a home-based business that adds only a few cars a day to the automobile load on your street. Most will, however, prohibit you from posting a sign in your front yard, which is okay anyway, as you will not get any clients from drive-by traffic. To find out the rules in your area, look up "zoning" or "planning" in the local government section of your phone book.

In addition to any legalities, working from home requires some planning with family members. Set **regular office hours** that you will insist on, both for your own focus and to keep family members from intruding when you need to work. It will be tempting for the family to interrupt you. So make it clear you are **at work** unless it's an emergency.

(The garage on fire is an emergency; needing to know where the cookies are is not.)

Finally, before deciding to set up a home office, make sure you have all the space you will need to run an event planning business. You will need:

- A **large desk**, preferably with enough space for a phone, your computer, vendor catalogs you use most often, and plenty of writing room
- Storage space for **supplies**
- Space for **assembly** (e.g., of decorations)
- **Room to expand** to accommodate an assistant when you get to that point
- A couple of **guest chairs**, and, if space and money permit, a **conversation area** with comfortable chairs and table to consult with clients

Decorate your space like an office, and don't spare the office amenities, such as coffee, tea or soft drinks, and even cookies to go with them. Strike a balance between homey and professional, but make it lean toward the **professional** side (i.e. no plastic toys on the floor, and set meeting times when you can have a babysitter or family member care for the children out of the business area.)

Renting Space

While a home office works well for many event planners, others prefer to rent a separate space. If you find it challenging to stay motivated, or tend to get easily distracted when you're at home, an office may be just what you need to help you focus on business. A separate space also creates a better impression if you plan to have people visit you. If you want a place to meet with clients and vendors, or work with employees, you might want to consider getting an office outside your home.

Look for a place that is **convenient** to get to from your home and that gives you quick access to any services you may need. Such services might include your bank, suppliers of materials, even a good coffee shop! Pick an area that suits your needs and fits your budget. For good advice on what to consider before renting space visit:

Nolo Resource Center

Click on **Business and Human Resources**, then on **Starting a Business**, then on **Finding and Renting Space For Your Business**
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