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### A simple, smart study area for students

Chantal Lamers, Special to The Chronicle  
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If you're headed back to school in the next few weeks, you should study up on how to put together a workspace at home. Whether it's square footage or organizational skills you're lacking, here are tips for creating an efficient, stylish spot to hit the books.

#### IMAGES



West Elm

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**- Carve out space:** Finding a small, dedicated space for an office is a recurring challenge, says Emily Wilska, San Francisco-author of "Organizing Your Home" (Knack, 2008). Avoid putting your office inside the bedroom if possible; it gives the sense that you're always studying. Be creative and find a niche that closes. For those who can spare a little closet space, put a small desk inside and utilize the shelves for storage. (organizedlife.org)

**- Find a desk that fits:** Another way to conceal a workspace is to opt for a vertical, compact desk with cabinet doors. For inspiration, check out the Cyril Computer Desk from Ikea (Ikea.com) and the Bookcase Secretary from West Elm (\$999, shown above; WestElm.com). Both have spacious drawers and shelves that can disappear simply by snapping a door shut.

**- Make it ergonomic:** Choosing the right chair is essential to creating a comfortable work environment. Alan Kent, owner of the Chair Place store in San Francisco, says to make sure that you can sit with your feet flat on the ground and your hips just a tad higher than the knees. (If your feet don't touch the ground, use a footrest.) Keep your keyboard at elbow

height and, when it comes to lighting, reduce glare and try to incorporate natural light. For more tips, check out his buying guide at [store.thechairplace.com](http://store.thechairplace.com).

**- Keep it organized:** "It's critical to decide what's important to have at your fingertips and what to have elsewhere," Wilska says. "Most people keep much more than they need on their desk and it gets cluttered." Create smart storage near the desk or in a closet. Use the walls for storage by putting books, support materials and file holders on shelves. Then reconnect with your stuff about every six months and declutter. "Revisit the support system you set up and make sure it's working for you. If

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it's not, don't be afraid to make changes."

- **Give it style:** Jeannie Fraise, owner of Lotus Bleu Home Decor and Interior Design boutique (lotusbluedesign.com), recommends keeping things simple. Pick a desk, lamp, file cabinet and bins in white or neutral shades. Rely on the accessories to provide color by wallpapering a single wall, covering shoe boxes in wrapping paper for storage or recovering the cushion of a vintage chair in a soft color. To tie the office space in with an adjoining room, incorporate a coordinating item, such as a small rug or felt floor tiles from Peace Industry (peaceindustry.com).

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