10 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CREATING YOUR HOME STUDIO

(That You Probably Haven't Thought About Yet)
ROOM COLOR & LIGHTING

While it may not seem like the most important factor when creating your studio, the colors and lighting in the room can actually have a big effect on how the space feels. Therefore, consciously (or unconsciously) affecting the way you write and perform in that space.

So it’s important to consider these two factors. Think about what kind of vibe or mood you’d like your studio to create:

Do you want to have a studio that makes you feel more energetic?

Then red walls and brighter lighting can help to create that feeling.

Do you want a studio that makes you feel calm and relaxed?

Then different shades of blue and medium to dim lighting will do the trick.
Do you want a studio that feels eerie and dark?

Then black or dark gray walls paired with dim lighting would be the way to go.

So be sure to think about the mood you want your studio to create and how the colors and lighting will help to put you in that mood. Also, think about the type of music you create and what type of mood/vibe would put you in the frame of mind for creating that music.

If you want to learn more about the psychology of colors, check out the follow link for more info:

"The Psychology and Meaning of Colors"
INSTRUMENT PLACEMENT

Another thing to consider is the placement of your instruments. For instance, if you play piano/keyboard, you may want to think about the advantages or disadvantages of having a keyboard directly under your desk (via a sliding drawer) or off to the side.

Having the keyboard placed on a sliding drawer may seem convenient (since you don’t have to get up to play) but that extra room for the keyboard can take away from your leg space. If your keyboard is 6” thick, that’s 6” of leg room under your desk that's now being used up. Your legs may rub up against this or you may have to adjust the height of your seat to sit lower than usual. Both could be uncomfortable for longer periods.

In my home studio, I use a small, 25-key MIDI keyboard on top of my desk with a larger 88-key keyboard off to the side:

![Image of instrument setup]

This allows me to mess around with ideas while still at my computer but play more complicated parts on the full piano when I want.

Finally, if you play guitar or bass, you may like to play standing up when you record. A standing desk may be more appropriate for you so that you don’t have to get up and sit down so much when recording.

So take into consideration the instruments you play and how your studio should work around the workflow you need.
SPEAKER PLACEMENT

In an ideal environment, your home recording speakers (reference monitors) should form an equilateral triangle between you (in your mixing position) and the two speakers, be set at ear level or just above pointed directly at your ears, and positioned at least a few feet from the wall.

In short, this speaker placement creates the ideal environment for listening to and mixing your music. Ultimately, it helps to create a stereo image that is "just right" (not too wide, not too narrow), ensures you don't miss or miss hear any certain frequencies (more notably, high frequencies), and allows your speakers to "breathe" (minimizing low-frequency build-up from being against the wall).

Now, if you're mainly using your studio to play/practice your instrument or to produce music and have someone mix it later, then this may not be the most important factor to you. But if you want mix professionally, or simply produce the most accurate mixes of your music, then you'll want to get this right.

So it's definitely something to consider when creating your studio (or buying a new desk). You may think about getting a smaller desk so you can pull it further away from the wall or you may want to put your studio in a different part of your house.

You may also think about getting a desk with an added shelf (to place the speakers in an elevated position) or using speaker stands placed behind your desk.

Like I said, depending on your goals, this may or may not be a big concern to you. Nevertheless, it's something to think about before making any final decisions.
NUMBER OF COMPUTER MONITORS

Another factor to consider is how many computer monitors you want to use. You'll find studios that use a single monitor, to a tv as a monitor, to upwards of 4 or more monitors. Think about how you like to work when creating music and whether or not having multiple monitors will be helpful to you.

Personally, I like a two-monitor setup:

![Two-monitor setup](image)

Each of my computer monitors are 22" wide which gives plenty of space. When in my DAW (Studio One V3), I like to have the left side open with the tracking view and the right side open with the mixing view. I'll also use the right monitor to edit MIDI tracks and plugin settings while keeping the track view (on the left monitor) open.

But, you may find this overkill or you may want a bigger setup. Again, think about your workflow and whether it will be necessary and beneficial to you to have multiple monitors.

Ultimately, it's about simplifying the creation process and staying stress-free. By having the best setup for your workflow, you can stay focused on the music.
DESK HEIGHT

The popularity of standing desks has made this a viable option to consider for your home studio.

As I mentioned briefly, in the section on instrument placement, if you play an instrument standing up (like guitar or bass) this may be a preferable setup. This way you don't have to constantly get up and sit down when playing your guitar and working on your computer.

In my home studio, I use a standing desk. I work from home but I spend a lot of time on the computer sitting. So having a standing desk allows me to get up a bit and ensure I’m not on my ass 24/7. But it’s also nice since I record my own vocals. I don’t have to keep getting up and sitting back down everytime I record (since I record vocals standing up).

As you can see (in the picture to the right), although I do have standing desk setup, I still have a chair to sit when I want. The chair I have has flip-back arms, allowing me to flip them back when playing guitar while sitting (so the arm doesn’t get in the way).

To make it high enough to sit at while working at my standing desk, I used a drafting chair kit to raise the height.

Here are the links to the chair I have and the drafting chair kit I used (in case you want to copy my setup):

- Alera EBK Black Mesh Chair
- OFM 9-12”H Drafting Kit

In either case, think about whether having a standing or sitting desk will be right for you.
SEAT QUALITY

Going hand-and-hand with the point I made above on choosing a desk height that is right for you, seating can also be an important thing to consider. While it may not be at the top of your list, a few hours of mixing or producing music in a crappy chair will have you regretting it.

If you can't sit comfortably for some time, you'll get achy and frustrated and end up having to spend time away from making music.

So invest in a decent, comfortable chair. Spend more on it than your desk if you can. There are a lot of expensive desks for recording and home studios, but in my opinion, a good chair will pay more dividends than a fancy desk.

You'll be able to play, record, or mix longer, and be free of pain. Meaning, more time to focus on your music and with minimal distraction.

COMPUTER NOISE

Computers make a lot of noise (the older they are, the more they make it seems). They just do, unfortunately. What you may not realize is that this noise will be picked up in your microphone when recording. Even a little bit of hum from the fan inside your computer can cause recording problems. An issue that you may not notice until it comes time to mix and you have to boost a certain frequency. Then, that's all you can hear and it's too late to fix it.

So if you'll be recording vocals, acoustic guitar, or just any instrument with a microphone, you will have to account for computer noise. Outside of having two separate rooms (one for mixing and the other for recording) you may to find a quiet computer for your studio or find a way to dampen the sound (possibly using acoustic material surrounding the pc).

If either of those aren't an option, try to record as far away from your computer (and similar humming/buzzing noises like that coming from a heat vent) as possible.
ACCESSING EQUIPMENT

When creating your studio, picking out gear, or even choosing a new desk, you should also take time to think about how you're going access your studio equipment.

For instance, many audio interfaces have XLR inputs in the back of the interface. If your interface is pushed up close to the wall or mounted in a rack space, this can make plugging in microphone cables a hassle.

The same idea can be applied to your computer as well. If all of your USB ports are located on the back of your computer, and it's pressed up against the wall, then plugging in MIDI instruments or hard drives can be annoying.

In my home studio, I use a Presonus Firestudio 26x26 Audio Interface:

![Image of Presonus Firestudio 26x26 Audio Interface](image)

While the interface may be a bit older by now, what I like about this interface is that the XLR inputs are located on the front of the unit, making it easy to quickly plug in a microphone or instrument cable when I need to. Extra outputs are located on the back, but that's okay since I don't use those as frequently.

Also, if I do need to access the back of the interface, my computer, or my desk, I can easily pull my desk out away from the wall (my desk is on casters) to easily access the equipment.

So when purchasing gear for your studio, think about how you will access it and what will be important to you taking into account the features you use most. Maybe you'll go with a setup like mine, with casters on the bottom of your desk frame, or buy an audio interface with XLR inputs on the front versus the back.
ORGANIZATION

Recording studios, whether big or small, always seem to require a ton of cables, plugs, and adapters. Keeping it all clean and organized, however, can be tricky.

You definitely want to think about a solid way to keep it all organized. Not only to keep your desk (work area) free from clutter but to make sure you can find everything when you need it. Do you think you can find that ¼” adapter right when you need it or is it buried away in a deep drawer somewhere?

When it comes to storing stuff like this (cables and adapters), I believe the more separation, the better. Meaning, if you can find a cabinet with lots of drawers, and/or drawers with lots of dividers, then this is ideal for storing this type of equipment because you can make each drawer (or drawer section) specific to a certain type of gear.

For instance, in my home studio area, I use two Platinum Elfa Drawers and a smaller version of this Seville Organizer Cart (I have the 6-Drawer Unit):

In the two Platinum Elfa drawer units (in the above, right picture), I store mainly "office" supplies: paper, pens, notepads, binders, etc. However, I do use a few of the drawers for small adapters (like 1/4" headphone adapters) so I can find them quickly. The one unit drawers work great for this and know exactly where everything is. One last note, with the Platinum Elfa units, you can customize the size of the drawer (to take up 1, 2, or 3 drawer spaces).
The Seville drawer unit (pictured to the right), is used solely for cables, microphones, and other gear.

For instance, I use the top drawer for microphone clips and small cables, the second for mics, the third for patch cables, the fourth for power cables, the fifth for instrument cables, and the sixth for XLR microphone cables.

I love this level of separation. Having a ton of smaller drawers (rather than one large one) allows me to organize everything of one kind to a single drawer. This makes is super easy to find something when I need it.

So you may consider a similar setup to store your gear.

If those two units don’t work for you, a tool box, or tool storage unit, would also work great if you can swing it (they are on the more expensive side). Even something like a fishing tackle box would work great for small adapters.

The point I’m making is to think about how to store everything, keep it neat, and organized. When you have a clutter-free space, it frees up your time (and mind) to keep working on the music.
CABLE MANAGEMENT

Not only do you want to get your studio organized, but I’m sure you want it to look clean. However, the mass amount of cables you need to hook everything up in your studio can make this nearly impossible.

You have your computer power cord, monitor cables, the power cords for the monitors, instrument and power cables for your speakers, USB cables for your MIDI instruments, microphones cables, etc. You get the idea.

So to keep your studio from looking like a giant wad of cables, you’ll want to think about how you can hide them.

In my studio, I have a cable organizer tray attached to the back of my desk (actually it’s two right next to each other to create one long tray:

All the cables I use for the equipment on my desk run along this tray. It’s pretty much packed full. Like I mentioned above, these are actually two trays placed next to each other. Each tray has a hole in it to allow cables to flow through. At each end, I have a power strip. All the power cables are plugged into one of these strips. Then the cord from each power strip runs through one of the holes in the cable tray and is then plugged into the wall.

While it's still not perfect, it keeps the space from looking like a total mess. For a pipe desk, this looks extremely clean considering all of the cables I have (see the picture on the next page).
Notice (in the picture above), that only the cord from the power strip is coming down from the desk. This gives it a much cleaner look versus if I had the power cord from each piece of equipment running down to a power strip placed on the floor.

I also use a few cable clips attached to the back of the desk shelf:

Another small trick to keep everything clean and organized.

So think about how you can organize everything to avoid a huge mess of cables and power cords. Maybe you'll copy some ideas from my setup or consider a desk that keeps everything hidden behind the desk.
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