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How to Avoid the 5 Worst Home Office Design Mistakes

We asked designers and architects for the inspiration-crushing gaffes they see in residential workspaces, and what to do instead. Plus: the most egregious home-office setups they've witnessed.

FOR A YEAR now we've all been getting copious advice on how to make our remote workspaces worthy of our toil. Why then, incredulous designers want to know, are they still seeing people's unmade beds during video calls?

Here, interiors pros share five other home office blunders they've observed, and what to do instead.

Dead-end Desks

The quickest way to make your office feel like a college dorm room? Shove an undersized desk against a windowless wall, warned Dallas architect Eddie Maestri. "Nothing looks more sad and depressing."

Instead: "What you see affects your mood and increases your work performance," said Mr. Maestri. If a real vista isn't available, he positions the desk so its occupant has an expansive view of the room.

Cable Mayhem

Leave webs to the spiders. "I hate when tangled cords dangle from the desk in plain sight," said Dallas designer Traci Connell.

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Instead: If you have scope to place your desk against the back of a sofa or love seat, suggests Mark Lavender, an interior designer in Winnetka, Ill., “cords can then run behind the sofa, and the desk lamp pulls double duty as a sofa light.” Ms. Connell channels cords through grommet holes she has drilled into desk tops. Adapting the same idea, New York architect Eric J. Smith outfits a drawer or cabinet with a power strip and cables for an out-of-site charging station. Mr. Maestri suggests this hack: “Connect all your cords to one power strip, then place the power strip and additional cord lengths in a small wastebasket under your desk.”