

Double-Duty Spaces That Really Work

By Anne Olson Postle

Although today's home buyers want smaller, smarter homes—and most likely don't want to pay for a square foot more than what they absolutely need—they also don't want to sacrifice a single square inch of function.

So the real challenge for builders is offering a home that meets home buyer demand within a tighter space. The solution to the problem: offering spaces that pull double duty.

Double-Duty Offices

Let's start with the stuffy old study. Today's version has to be more than just a place to retreat for brandy and cigars. The space has become a working office and often has to function for two people at the same time with separate work



stations. It also has to be wired so that home owners have easy access to the internet, desktop computers and printers. The smart builder will offer a technology alcove or special closet within the office to hide cords, printers and office supplies. We often try to force the office to function as a guest bedroom, and this can work for some people, but not everyone. If guests are only occasional and for short periods,

and the office can be spared for short periods, then a Murphy bed or seating that converts to a bed can be a great double-duty option.

A dated plan will put a desk in the breakfast nook, but we know that this doesn't really work. A better solution is a pocket office: a small space that is usually adjacent to the main living area and tucked away in an alcove. It's a great option when the office is used full time by one member of the household but the other partner still needs a workspace. It is also a great option where right-sizing has eliminated an office altogether.

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Double-Duty Kitchens



Careful design of the kitchen island can increase the function for this hard-working space. Just adding a bar to one side of the island won't cut it. Try a round dining extension, at table height, to part of the island. Make sure that family members can face each other while they eat. A well-designed island can provide a great serving bar for a party, a wonderful place to visit while

the meal is being prepared, valuable preparation space, and a functional dining area.

Outdoor Areas



One of the greatest double-duty spaces that doesn't add to the square footage tally is a well-designed outdoor living area. These spaces can add incredibly useful and valuable space to a smaller home. It can double as an entertaining area, a dining area, a cooking area and a relaxing retreat.

Laundry Room



The laundry room, if well designed and large enough, can double as a hobby or craft studio. It needs adequate work space, natural light and usually a sink. Whatever you do, don't try to make the laundry double as a mud room. A pile of dirty laundry is never the first thing you want to see when you arrive home. Remember that the laundry should

always be placed on the same floor as the master bedroom.

Storage



One key to making your spaces do double duty is proper storage. Well-designed storage for the various activities performed in the space is critical for the space to function. Depending on the activity, don't forget the shelves, the cabinets, the closets and special built-ins.

For example, one great storage option is the sleepover window seat in a child's bedroom. This is a raised plywood platform that is large enough for a twin mattress. It is great when it has built-in bookshelves adjacent. This space provides an extra bed for guests but also easily stores toys. The sleepover window seat is a great selling point for the family buyer.

Flex Rooms



Are you ready to take double duty to a whole new level? How about a room that is all about flexibility? What can home owners do in a flexspace? For starters, what can't they do?

The well-designed home that will appeal to today's buyer is not the same home of previous generations; it's not even the same home that sold five years ago. The spaces within today's home, just like the people who live there, have a lot of hats to wear. Consider all the different activities that make up a typical day for your buyers and then make your homes work. Spaces that are carefully designed for double duty, with consideration for the way we actually live, will be the homes that sell.

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