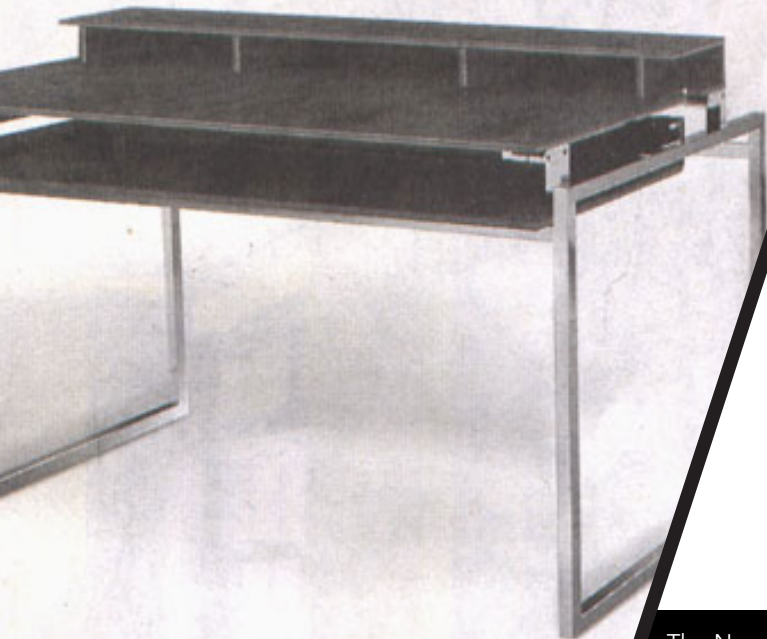


HOUSE & HOME

ROOM TO IMPROVE

Tim McKeough

Q Our dining table doubles as a home-office desk. How can we keep clutter in check?



The New York Times March 22nd 2007
Folding Table

A. Keeping a small apartment with a home office tidy is a never-ending battle. Each day's mail delivery can seem like an assault, bringing letters, bills and catalogs that take up precious space. Add a laptop, pens and notepads, and a clutter crisis can arise.

But there are ways to keep your affairs in order while preserving the serenity of the dining table.

One of the easiest remedies is a small rolling cabinet with drawers for paper and supplies. When you are working at the table, you can roll the cabinet to where you are sitting. When it is time for dinner, close the drawers, stow the laptop on top and roll the cabinet to the wall.

There are many sizes and models; the Mobil cart (\$764 with two drawers, \$999 with three) from Kartell (39 Greene Street, 212-966-6665, www.kartell.it) will do the job in style.

If you have a fairly deep bookcase near your dining table, you can use storage boxes instead. CB2 sells handsome linen-covered boxes called Folio (\$14.95 to \$44.95, cb2.com), which come in sizes big enough to hold files and small enough to hold odds and ends.

Both solutions mean you still have to clear the table for meals, whether you are finished working or not. Dror Benshetrit, a New York designer who faced this problem in his small Hell's Kitchen apartment, devised an innovative piece of furniture to deal with it.

The Folding Table, above, is a desk with a second tabletop that can be flipped up to create a clear surface for a meal, activating hardware that lowers and conceals the work surface (drorbenshetrit.com). A gap between the two tabletops allows piles of paper and laptops to remain in place. You will have to be patient if you want to get your hands on a Folding Table, though; they are in the process of being manufactured by BBB Emmebonacina in Italy (www.bbbemmebonacina.com), and will be introduced at Milan's furniture fair in April and New York's In-

ternational Contemporary Furniture Fair in May.

While any of these approaches might suffice, it is still tough to beat the convenience of a dedicated workspace in the home. Conventional desks are usually too deep, eating up a big chunk of space in a small apartment, even though few people need a very large work area. Consider setting up a work-bar arrangement along one wall instead, with a console table like Blu Dot's Barbarella (\$499, bludot.com), which is a mere 15 inches deep.

If you have lots of closets, you could turn one into a home office. Melanie Charlton, the president and creative director of Clos-ette (clos-ette.com, 877-803-9797), a New York company that designs and builds custom closets, has done many such conversions.

One recent project involved the installation of his-and-hers desks and cabinets in a pair of closets in SoHo. With chairs on casters that tuck beneath the desks, the units can be closed behind sliding doors when not in use. Clos-ette charges an hourly fee of \$150 for design services, a 25 percent fee on purchases and a commission of 10 to 20 percent on construction. As for what the company can do in your home, "it all depends on the size and shape of the closet," Ms. Charlton said. "A deep reach-in is good for this kind of conversion."

No matter which option you choose, it is worth taking action. After all, who can enjoy a meal next to a pile of unfinished work and credit card bills?

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