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FALL
2021

HOUSING
GUIDE

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Turning your closet into a WFH space

By Kaitlin Hurtado
U L O O P

Whether you're just testing the waters of working from home or months into your routine, you may be ready for a change in scenery when it comes to the space you're working in.

You may already have adopted plenty of healthy working from home (WFH) habits over the past year, but you are still lacking one major thing — a proper home office. While many of us aren't ready or able to head back into an actual office or classroom yet, you don't need to leave the comfort of your own home to change up your WFH space. Enter, the closet office.

Depending on your living situation, you may not have the ability to dedicate a space to a complete WFH setup. Instead, take advantage of the area you already have that you may not be getting full use of — a linen closet, a small nook in your living room — and transform it into your new home office.

Plan out your new WFH space

Before you begin shifting around furniture, clearing out your closet or buying a completely new desk setup, make a plan that you can stick to when turning your closet into a WFH space. First, think about the nook or closet you are planning on turning into a workspace and ask yourself if it can make an effective workspace.

Does the space have easy access to an electric outlet? Does it get a good internet signal? You definitely don't want to go through the effort of transforming your space when you have no internet access, or worse, no ability to plug in any



Working from home could be tough if you don't have the space for it, but there are ways to take advantage of the areas available to you.

PEXELS

devices or lighting.

Next, envision yourself actually working in that space. Would the space make you feel too claustrophobic to be productive? If you're thinking it's looking a little too cozy for comfort, you may want to choose another location. Make sure the space is something that you will actually feel productive and comfortable in.

Unleash your dream design

Once you've picked out the right space for your new WFH setup, you'll want to design it to be the perfect spot for yourself to work at. Just as you would with any workspace, start with your work surface and build around that.

You may already have a desk or table handy that would fit in

the closet space you're choosing, so it may just be a matter of moving around some furniture.

Depending on how small your closet or nook space is, you may also opt for a less traditional "desk" and want to look into getting a small table that would fit better in your new workspace, or you may elect to install a floating desk that is perfectly measured to fit in your new space and that has the ability to fold up to save space when not in use.

Make sure your space is well lit, especially if your closet or nook is tucked into a corner that your main source of lighting doesn't quite reach. Add in a lamp or two to brighten the area or install a more permanent lighting fixture to get all the light you need in your new WFH space.

Focus on storage and organization

As with any other desk setup, you'll want to make sure you have everything you need within reach, whether it be from your chargers and devices to your notebooks and writing utensils.

Place a small bookshelf or cabinet below your work table to get in some extra hidden storage. If you don't have much floor space to work with, use your wall space to install shelves to incorporate more storage and a touch of decor into your space.

If you are moving your desk setup into a closet space that already has an organizational unit or shelves, see how you're able to transform it and use it in a way that works better for storing everything you need for your workspace.

With a space as small as a closet or nook, you'll want to make sure you are staying organized and maximizing every inch of space that you have. If you have more floor space, opt for a larger desk or more storage units that you can place beside or under your desk.

If you don't have much floor space, but a ton of wall space to work with, make use of the empty space above your desk. If you don't have much space to work with at all, consider something on wheels, like a rolling cart, that you can move closer to your WFH space when needed.

You don't need a whole room to create your very own home office. Start with what you have, and you'll be surprised with how you can transform your space into the perfect WFH setup.

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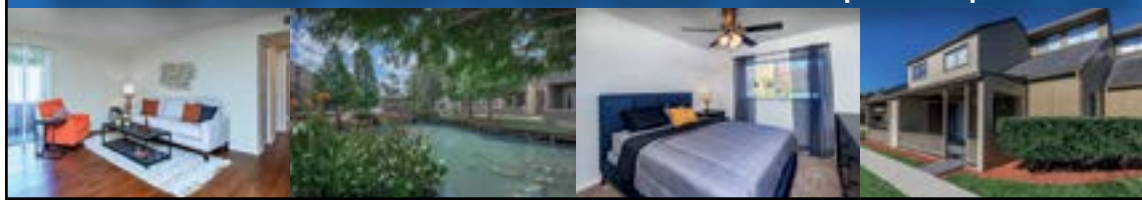
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Budget-friendly cooking tips for beginners

By Elise Nelson
U L O O P

Moving into off-campus housing is a liberating step for many college students, especially after you've lived in a tiny dorm room. There's plenty of room in off-campus apartments for you and your roommates to divvy up and decorate as you please.

In addition to providing extra space, off-campus housing can be an excellent learning experience. You'll have a much bigger space to take care of, so it's a great stepping stone for moving into your own place after college.

One major difference between on-campus and off-campus housing is that you'll most likely have a bigger kitchen, which means you have room to learn one major life skill — cooking. It's not as hard as it sounds, and there are plenty of affordable ways to cook on a budget. Check out these tips for learning how to cook in a simple and cost-effective way.

Start with basic staple foods

There's no need to jump into complicated recipes when you're first learning to cook. Start out with some easy and affordable basics. Every off-campus college student should master three foods: eggs, pasta and rice.

You can pick up each of these basics at the grocery store for under \$5, and there's plenty of room to get creative. From scrambled to sunny side up, you can cook your eggs however you like. For pasta, you can add different sauces and toppings to your favorite dry pasta shapes. The same goes for rice since you can add any seasonings or veggies.

Research ingredient substitutions

It's perfectly fine to switch up recipe ingredients in favor of making it more affordable, once you're comfortable doing so. You'd be surprised at just how many ingredients are replaceable, which is great for saving money and last-minute recipes.

There are a few substitutes for eggs, including mayonnaise. Margarine and vegetable shortening are common substitutes for butter, while allspice can be recreated using cinnamon and ground cloves. Just be sure to research substitutions before you proceed, as some are best used only in certain circumstances.

Grocery shop with a budget and a plan

You'll want to head into the grocery store with a game plan and a budget. Before your first cooking session, add some cooking essentials to your shopping list like oils, flour, sugar and canned goods. These are always great to keep on hand at home.

Try to map out some meals for the week and take note of the necessary ingredients. Be on the lookout for any grocery coupons or student discounts and try to stick to store brands to save some money.

Keep basic herbs and spices on hand

When you're first learning to cook, you may only have a handful of simple recipes to rotate through. Practice makes perfect, so you'll want to keep trying these recipes over and

over. However, repeat meals can get boring quickly.

Spices and herbs are a great and inexpensive way to jazz things up. Garlic, basil, chili powder, cinnamon, onion powder, nutmeg and even taco seasoning are just a few herbs and spices to keep in your pantry. These add a ton of flavor to basic meals like pasta and rice, so you can keep switching it up. Experimentation is a crucial part of learning to cook.

Watch cooking videos on YouTube

You don't need lessons from your city's top chef to learn how to cook. Cooking lessons come at no cost from one very useful resource — YouTube. Cooking videos are a great tool, especially if you're more of a visual learner.

Studying recipes and cookbooks often isn't enough to fully understand what you're doing. You may have seen Tasty videos floating around at one point or another — this channel is excellent for recipe walkthroughs. Bon Appetit, Binging With Babish and Food Network are also great cooking YouTube channels. You can learn everything from basic starter skills to more complicated recipes.

Get creative with leftovers

Cooking your own meals can often lead to leftovers, but don't throw them out. Leftovers are great for busy days when you don't necessarily have time to cook a full meal. They can also save you some money, because you can plan to eat leftovers

one or two days a week instead of buying ingredients for new meals every day.

Instead of eating the exact same thing, you can get creative and use your leftovers to whip up something new. For example, chicken is very versatile — you may want to cook a chicken dinner one night and then cut up the leftovers to put in a salad the next day. This way, you're cutting out some cooking steps yet still eating a new meal.

Moving into off-campus housing is a great opportunity for learning to cook on a budget. If you're able to get a smaller meal plan at your school, you may even wish to start out one semester by eating some meals in the dining hall and cooking the rest at home. Ease into cooking skills and take your time.



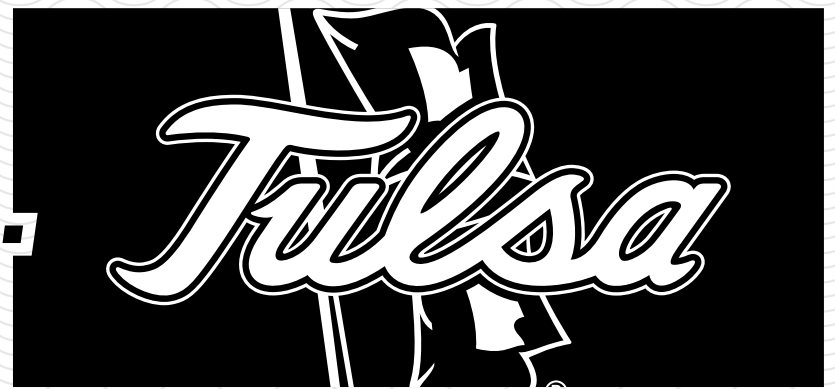
Regardless of experience, YouTube channels offer several step-by-step videos teaching your favorite recipe. **PEXELS/Dana Tentis**

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How to handle noisy neighbors

By Danielle Wirsansky
U L O O P

Your home is supposed to be a safe haven, a quiet place where you can rest, recharge and rejuvenate as a college student. A quiet, ambient home is an important aspect of making your dorm room, apartment or house a restful place to live.

If your neighbors are not being respectful and are being loud and noisy, it can make you feel less safe, more irritated, less rested and straight-up mad.

But what exactly can you do about it, after all? They are your neighbors, and you don't want to sour the relationship if you don't have to. It could lead to further complications that you don't need or want.

Read on to learn what to do about noisy neighbors so you can create strategies that will work for you.

Courtesy knock

It might seem like a cliché, but one of the first things you can do to let your neighbor know they are being a little bit too noisy is to give them a courtesy knock.

Whether it's a next-door neighbor and you have to knock on the wall between your apartments or it's an upstairs neighbor and you have to knock on the ceiling, just give a knock so they are aware there is a problem.

Don't be so quiet with your knock that they don't hear you, but also try to avoid making your knock really aggressive, which might create tension between the two of you unnecessarily. Perhaps they don't realize they're being loud, or more likely just how loud they are being.



Dealing with loud neighbors can be tough, but it's important to be polite and respectful when discussing the issue with them. **PEXELS/Liza Summer**

While a courtesy knock might feel a bit brusque, it is often the simplest and easiest solution for a noise complaint.

Contact your neighbor

Should the loud noises persist, the next step is to contact your neighbor directly. If you have their contact info and have texted or called them in the past, you may be able to just let them know directly over a call or through text that they're being a little bit too loud.

If communicating with them via the phone is not a precedent you already have set or you're not too familiar with each other, you probably need to talk to your neighbor in person. This can be really intimidating for a lot of reasons, but if you do everything you can to be respectful,

considerate and appropriate when addressing your concerns, then hopefully all will go well.

Make sure to approach them at an appropriate time of day, to stay civil and level-headed and not be aggressive in your airing of the complaint. Your neighbor might get defensive if you come on the offensive, so try to stay pleasant and cordial.

Your neighbor probably doesn't want any bad blood either, and they'll potentially appreciate the fact you brought it up with them directly rather than jumping ahead and speaking to the landlord right away. Give them a chance to resolve the situation.

Let the landlord know

If communicating with your neighbor directly doesn't work,

whether they become really defensive and refuse to temper the volume level or if they inadvertently are too loud over and over again, then you need to let your landlord or property manager know.

Your neighbor might be trying to be quieter, but if they fail to do so again and again then you need to go above their head. They are an adult and need to be able to take responsibility for their own actions. You might feel guilty, but you deserve a quiet place to live, especially when you're paying for it.

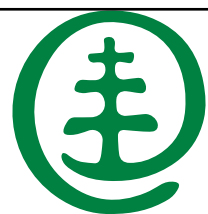
And if your neighbor has become really defensive or aggressive toward you because you approached them, this needs to be included in your complaint to the landlord.

File an official complaint

If your landlord refuses to take action or their actions are minuscule and accomplish nothing, then it's time to get out the big guns. What this means is that it's time to file an official noise complaint with the city and the police.

This should only be for serious infractions. There are city ordinances that monitor noise so read up on what your local laws say and make sure your noise complaint truly does fit within the qualifications of a report to this level of authority.

You deserve a quiet and safe space to live in, so hopefully these strategies will help you to make and keep your home a quiet space.



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Upgrade your living room on a budget

If someone were to tell you
By Victoria Robertson
U L O O P

your living room will look 10 times more expensive, and your total investment comes in at under \$50, would you believe them? Odds are you wouldn't, and you also wouldn't be alone.

It is possible to upgrade your space without breaking the bank, so regardless of your budget, there's the potential for a major overhaul of your space. But where do you even begin, and what products should you look for? Here are six, inexpensive items that will totally transform your living space.

1. Baskets and Trays

A plain-Jane coffee table is almost pointless without some décor to add that "wow" factor, which is why you should always incorporate baskets into your decorating techniques for those areas.

Simply placing your remotes into a basket adds something to the aesthetic that's visually appealing and practical, and can really make all the difference. Plus, it's actually more convenient for you, so win-win!

If you have an ottoman, you should invest in a fashionable tray to place coasters and decorative pieces on. This is a small purchase that adds a lot in terms of décor.

2. Picture Frames

Naked walls, even if well painted, are pretty boring, which is why you should definitely invest in some picture frames to really elevate your look. Not everyone can afford unique, beautiful artwork, but some

cheap picture frames dressed up on a photo wall? Now that's a showstopper.

You can even add frames to the various end tables and other surfaces in your living room that may look bare at the moment. Simply pick a frame that matches your other décor, and you're all set.

3. Plants/Natural Décor

There's no simple way to describe what effect plants and natural décor have on a place other than to say it makes it more lively. You don't need to break the bank here, but a couple of plants in your living room will really add something to it.

If the budget is really tight, don't bother going shopping. Simply bring home some elements from the outside world you like such as pine cones, and create a DIY centerpiece by filling a clear jar with them. Simple, effective and won't cost you much at all.

4. Mirrors

Mirrors are not exclusive to the bathroom, nor should they be. You should be bringing mirrors into other areas of your living space as they not only add dimension but can actually change the perceived dimensions of your space.

Add a large mirror to the top

of a fireplace, or a farmhouse-style mirror to an otherwise empty wall and you've just taken your living from relatively boring and bland to absolutely stunning in a matter of seconds, and with limited spending.

5. Candles

If you're anything like me, you likely use candles on a daily basis for the calming aromas as well as the way they look in your room. However, have you ever actually left them out, or selected candles based on their appearance?

Adding candles to your décor is actually a great way to improve the look of your space, and again, this is a design option that isn't

going to break the bank. Choose candles with colors that match your room, or choose show-stopping containers that really elevate their look. You'll not only get more usage out of them, but you'll also find that you love what they do to the space around them.

6. Books

There's something to be said for the decorative power of books, crazy as that may sound. And no, this isn't to say you should have a giant bookshelf with only the classics.

Adding a coffee table book to the center of your room can add something to it, and again, it's not going to cost you much. You can stack a few of your favorite books to a shelf, or maybe even add a book with a beautiful jacket to your end tables for an elevated look there. However you utilize them, they can really do wonders to your space.

Living rooms are beautiful places to hang out and decompress from the day, but when you're on a budget, it's more than possible they're simply a room with a couch, television and little to no décor.

Your bank account is safe and your décor is fit to be upgraded at a fraction of the price that you originally thought. These six, inexpensive items will not only transform your living space by giving it the upgrade it desperately needs, but you'll also find that you look forward to spending time there, making the money spent totally worth it.



From plants to books, there are plenty of ways to give your living room a fresh look without breaking the bank. **PIXABAY**

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