

Office haven

When Malcolm Cameron began working from home, he had to sort out his home office. *Life etc's* clutter-buster to the rescue!

Life is busy at the Camerons' home with two children, Tiffany, 14, and Dean, 12, so the prospect of a new job working from home was exciting.

But just walking into his home office was daunting for father and property surveyor Malcolm. His desk was falling apart and wasn't big enough to spread out plans on. The room was disorganised and the limited space in a built-in wardrobe was filled from floor to ceiling with boxes of junk. Another old cupboard was filled with folders and files, paperwork, stationery, equipment — and more junk.

Cameron, 46, had worked as a property valuer for 25 years when he decided it was time to find a job with more flexibility. His new company gave him the option to work from home, which meant he'd have more time for day-to-day family life.

While Cameron coaches an under-12s rugby union team, his wife Liane works part-time in a solicitor's office and helps Tiffany look after her horse and compete in gymkhanas. So there was no time to plan and execute a home office makeover. And Cameron's biggest problem was he didn't know where to start.

Life etc's declutterer, Carol Posener, says the first step to a home office is to plan the space before you buy or build anything.

"When your office is organised, with specific places for everything needed to run things effectively, you're not distracted when you walk in — it saves time and energy," says Posener, who runs a professional organising business, Get Organised.

She culled the paperwork and sorted it into two piles, "to keep" and "to discard, set up an archive system, transferred all the paper files into specific files,

erected a wall shelf, bought a new chair and desk and finally decluttered the wardrobe.

"You don't need a lot of space, just the right storage for everything you need. Organising it properly will help you get to work quickly without distraction.

"Organise the space and contents first, then buy the storage products and fittings





From chaotic (below) to clever (above).



you need so you don't over-buy. People often have too many storage products and don't know how to use them wisely."

Post Posener's makeover, Cameron's decluttered office is working well: "It's just the rest of the house I need to work on. The office is such a good work environment now, it entices me to go in there and work."

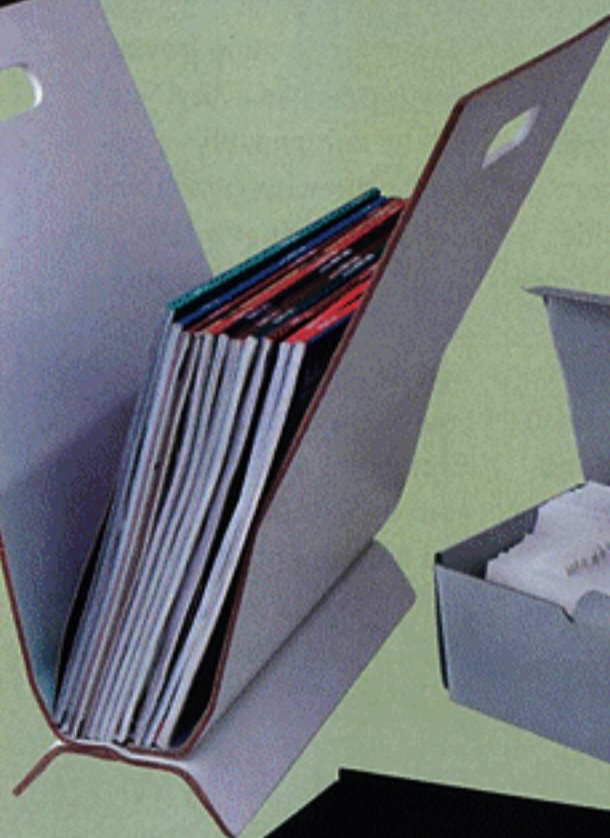
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JULIE HOWARD

IN ITS PLACE



Domayne Homewares: Mia disc file, nutmeg, \$24.95 each; Sumo round tote, olive, \$99.95; wood magazine rack, white, \$59.95.

IKEA: Morker lamp, \$9.



Kikki.k: My Receipts Folder, \$39.95; black in trays, \$35 each.



Main picture: IKEA: Galant Combination desk in white, \$559; Sonne mobile unit, \$129; Jules green swivel chair, \$119; Lack wall shelf 190cm, \$89; Fniss waste bin, \$3.95; black & white chair, \$169. Kikki.k: lever arch ring binders, \$19.95; standard ring binders, \$14.95; magazine boxes, \$19.95; black calculator, \$24.95;

Lucite stapler, \$22; green Bison Pot (pen holder), \$16.95; black magnetic strip, \$24. Zetta Florence: Photo Treasure Box, \$79.95. Domayne Homewares: Mia suede magazine boxes in nutmeg, \$39.95 each; Mia office storage box in nutmeg, \$49.95; Mia concertina file in nutmeg, \$79.95. \$2 variety shop: white plastic storage bins.

STOCKISTS

Domayne Alexandria 02 8339 7000
Kikki.k 02 9386 0804, www.kikki-k.com.au
Zetta Florence 1300 555 124

IKEA Sydney 02 9313 6400
Melbourne 03 8416 5000
Brisbane 07 3340 2000 www.ikea.com.au

Office clutter: simple rules

- 1 Maintenance is the key: tidy your desk each night so you don't come back to a mess each morning.
- 2 Archive paperwork at the end of the financial year so you have clear files to start each new year. Let it slide and soon you'll have two years to sort and this will take double the time.
- 3 Set up a simple archive system for all the things you want to store; number boxes with a label machine. Log the contents of each box on a computer document to which you can refer rather than sorting through boxes to find an item. It's quicker and totally efficient.
- 4 Store paperwork and memorabilia in plastic storage bins with lids to alleviate damage from moisture, dust, dirt and insects. Stack the boxes on top of one another.
- 5 Set up an efficient filing system that works for you and your space. If folders suit your style, group categories and separate into a series of folders so you're not trying to fit everything into one folder. For filing cabinets, simple, generic categories organised alphabetically are best.
- 6 Cull paperwork regularly. It's a quick job to sort items from one file. When you take out a file that's full, discard outdated items on the spot — you can even do it while you're on the phone! At the end of each financial year, cull all files and archive must-keep information into your archive system.
- 7 Keep business records and information for five years.
- 8 Store magazines, bulky paperwork and even stationery in magazine boxes.
- 9 In trays are efficient as long as you only have two: one for "In" or "Action" and the other for "Pending". Never have a filing tray or a reading tray as everything will be dumped into it, which can become overwhelming.
- 10 File paper on the spot. After opening mail, discard unwanted envelopes and papers and file the items you've read immediately. Everything else goes into your In or Action tray until you have the time to action it.
- 11 Assign a regular time to action items. Half an hour a day will help you keep on top of everything.
- 12 If your In tray looks full and you're feeling overwhelmed, de-stress by going through the tray and attaching post-it notes to each piece of paper. Write a time frame on each for how long it will take to action.
- 13 Set a timer to do quick 10-minute tidy-ups. Take everything off your desk, wipe it down and replace only the absolutely needed items.
- 14 Get things out of your head. Write lists or, better still, use a computer task list to offload ideas.
- 15 Laying things flat takes up space. Think laterally: look for available wall space so you can free up floor space. Shelving will give you extra space on your desk.

Working wonders

Smart desktop accessories that work as hard as you do



Rosendahl black cube digital calendar clock, \$150, from Top 3 by Design.

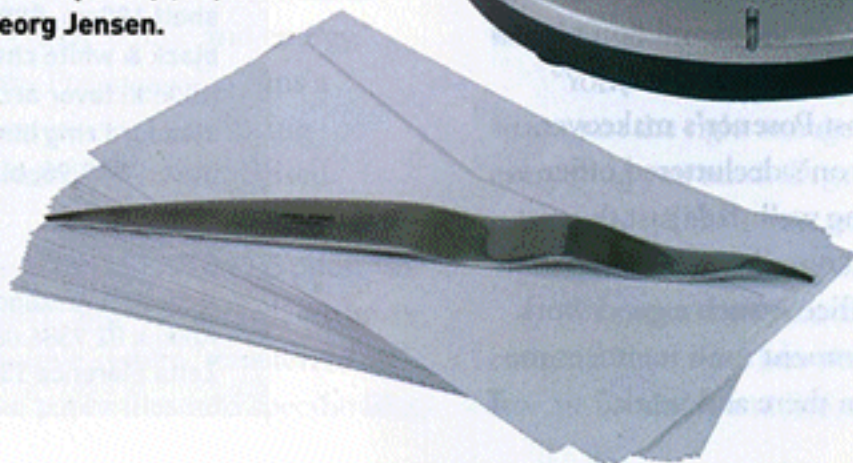
Millo vase, \$99, from Country Road Home, and pencils, \$14.95 a pack, from Lantern Paper.



Brown leather-look desk organiser, \$29.95, from Freedom.

Sony Ericsson P910i smartphone PDA, \$1599.

Stainless steel Wave letter opener, \$85, from Georg Jensen.





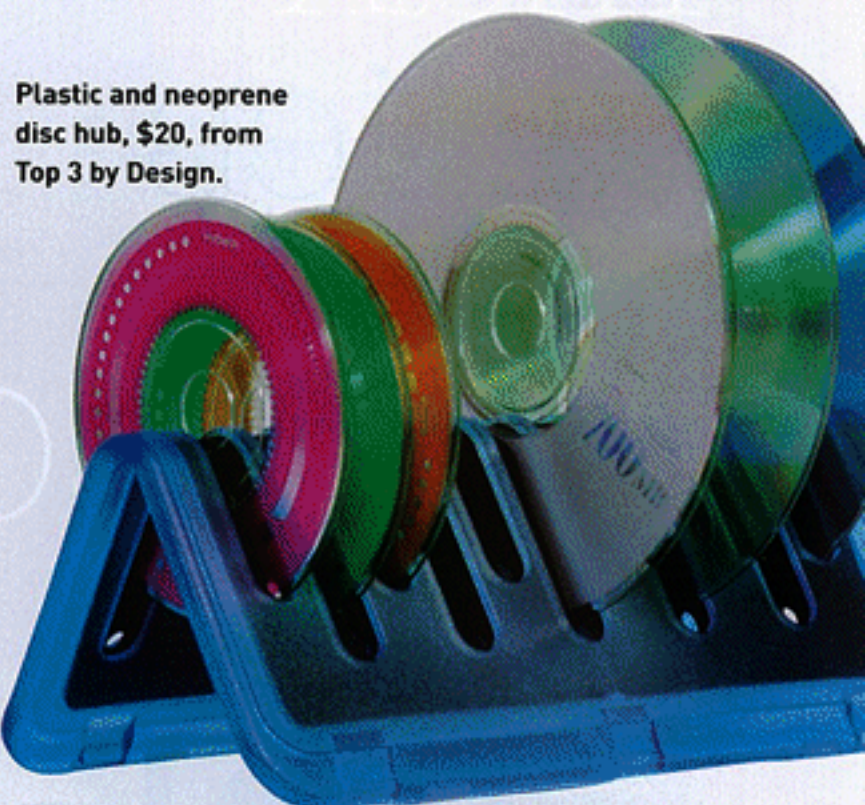
Squirt desk lamp, \$49.95, from Freedom.



White board with storage and clock, \$49, from Ikea, magnetic pots, \$1.50 each, from Big W.

Trokia mini metal desk set, \$134, from Top 3 by Design.

STOCKISTS Georg Jensen 02 9913 2022 www.georgjensen.com.au; Country Road Home 1800 801 911 www.countryroad.com.au; Lantern Paper 02 9399 8855 www.lanternpaper.com.au; Top 3 by Design 02 9906 4433 www.top3bydesign.com.au; Freedom 1300 135 588 www.freedom.com.au; Pepe's Paperie Sydney 02 9389 5700 Canberra 02 6162 4448 www.pepespaperie.com.au; Sony Ericsson 1300 650 050 www.sonyericsson.com.au



Plastic and neoprene disc hub, \$20, from Top 3 by Design.



Prik receipt splice by David lusman, \$15, from Top 3 by Design.



Chrome and black pencil holder, \$59.95, from Georg Jensen.



Kolo magazine holder, \$24.95, notepad box, \$19.95, photo box, \$49.95 and flat box, \$54.95, all from Pepe's Paperie.