

HOME PLANNING IDEAS™

March/April 2003
Display until April 29

Build Your
Dream
for thousands less

See page 34

Spacious Living

Design ideas for today's open plans

20 Ways to a Healthy Home
Cut Clutter Now with a Family Studio
16 Planning Tips from the Pros
Fabulous Front Yards — Fast!

www.homeplans.bhg.com
AOL Keyword: BHG





Custom cabinetry, painted with a glazed, crackled finish, complements artistic touches such as the mosaic tile backsplash in Phil and Carolyn Feldsine's family studio. Baskets in lower cabinets are for flower-arranging tools and other odds and ends. Cupboards hold laundry supplies, vases, gift wrap, toys, and other items that don't belong in the kitchen.

today's hot new room: the family studio

by Susan Bady

*m*udrooms, laundry rooms, and home offices are common in many new homes, but when square footage is limited, a family studio efficiently combines several functions into a single space.

The family studio integrates chores and hobbies as diverse as doing laundry, completing school projects or office work, potting plants, arranging flowers, sewing, making crafts, and wrapping gifts.

"Activity rooms have become quite popular," Seattle architect Mark Elster says. "They're an alternative to [using] the kitchen counter." In most house plans, the mudroom or utility room is near the garage and kitchen. That's also a prime location for a family studio. With wine storage or an extra freezer, the room becomes an extension of the kitchen.

Storage requirements usually prevent a typical mudroom from being large enough for a family studio, however. The home Elster designed for Phil and Carolyn Feldsine of Mercer Island, Washington, has a family studio that's 13½x16 feet.

A true crafts room would have a 3x5-foot island or peninsula as a work surface, but the Feldsines' family studio wasn't large enough to include one, so a small, freestanding table was used instead. "There's room for ironing and circulating around it," Elster says.

In other homes, Elster has included flat drawers for oversized items such as wrapping paper and cardboard. Steve Mead, a Des Moines residential designer who has also worked on his share of customized family studios, prefers vertical pantry cabinets and undercounter storage to wall cabinets.

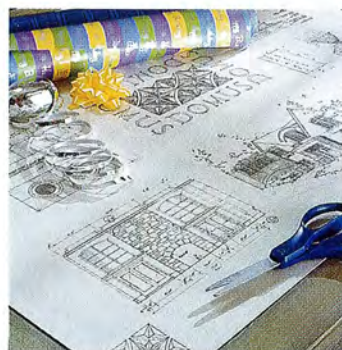
Natural light from windows above the computer and telephone center supplements recessed lighting in the ceiling, undercabinet lighting for the countertops, and an adjustable lamp for the desk. "We'll have some recessed lighting in the ceiling, but we also do a lot of task-specific lighting under cabinetry or in the wall," Mead says. Halogen lighting is good for sewing, crafts, and other activities that require light concentrated on small areas.

A wall of windows brings sunlight into the family studio. The worktable was placed in the center of the room, allowing enough space for easy traffic flow.



“Ergonomics — seating, lighting, and the amount of space required for movement — are very, very important.”

—residential designer Steve Mead



Flooring, countertops, and work surfaces should be durable and easy to clean. “In one room, we did a floor with 2-foot plywood squares painted in primary colors,” Elster says. “The homeowner was a painter, and her goal was to let paint spatter on it so that it became a more interesting floor over time.”

For a sewing area, Mead recommends a floor of low-profile commercial carpet because it’s stain-resistant and can be vacuumed. Ceramic tile or a good-quality vinyl floor works well in a potting area.

“Everyone works a little differently,” Mead says. “Think things through. Ergonomics—seating, lighting, and the amount of space required for movement—are very, very important.”

For example, the Feldsine’s poured-concrete desktop isn’t for everyone, Elster says: “They stain more easily than most stone, but on the other hand, they take on more character as they age.” Plastic laminate countertops are the most cost-effective option.

“I don’t think there’s a need to go to stainless steel or solid-surfacing, unless it’s a fairly upscale garden room,” Mead says.

Julie Bova, an Indianapolis interior designer, expects to see more such spaces where families can gather. “They need a place to organize schedules and communicate with each other,” she says. “The activity room puts the head of the household in a place where he or she can do the laundry and, at the same time, work on the computer and have a craft going for a younger child.”

Bova’s family studio is about 14x16 feet, has a countertop that seats three, and space for a computer at either end. School, office, and crafts supplies are in baskets, and a large bulletin board displays notes and schedules. The room is also wired for stereo.

“We’ve made it a very nice place to spend time,” she says. HPI

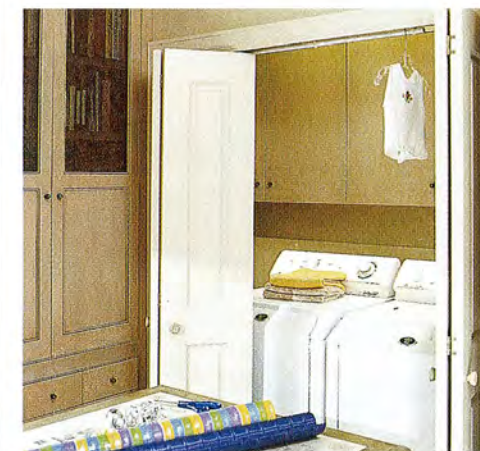
Buying information, page 111.

◀ The Feldsines’ home office incorporates a computer, household intercom, phone center, and cubbyholes for storing mail. She requested that the desktop be made of poured concrete, which takes on character as it ages.

TOMORROW’S LAUNDRY ROOM

During the past year, Whirlpool Corp. has shown a version of the family studio at various trade shows and public exhibitions. This concept room is now making its way into private homes. Billed as “tomorrow’s laundry room,” it combines Whirlpool’s fabric-care products with a multifunctional space, says Mara Villanueva, Whirlpool brand manager.

In focus groups conducted by Whirlpool, consumers said they would prefer to move the planning desk out of the kitchen and expand the laundry room into a work-and-crafts room. “The kitchen has become sort of an entertainment space, and the desk just looks like clutter,” Villanueva says. “The family studio is a place where everybody can get things done. We’ve had some people say they’d put it in the basement with their exercise equipment, or put a comfortable chair in there and read while they’re doing the laundry.”



▲ The washer and dryer are housed in a closet with folding doors that conceal them when not in use. Inside the closet is a rod for hanging wet clothes.

◀◀ Plastic laminate is an inexpensive surface that can be customized. Architectural drawings of the Feldsines’ home were scanned onto paper that was drenched in resin, sealed with plastic, and applied on the worktable in the family studio.

View another hard-working family space at www.bhg.com/sipactivityroom.