

Bow-Front Desks

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A bow-front desk is a straight desk with a gently curved front edge that extends the usable center work area by 4"–6" compared to a standard rectangular desk of the same nominal width. This guide covers what makes a bow-front unique, who benefits most from the shape, and how to specify one correctly for dimensions, materials, storage, and room requirements.

1. What Is a Bow-Front Desk

A bow-front desk has a convex (outward-curving) front edge. The curve is gentle — typically projecting 4"–6" at its deepest point at the center of the desk, tapering back to the standard depth at both sides. The back edge remains straight.

The result is a desk that provides significantly more usable surface area directly in front of the user — the primary work zone — without increasing the overall width. The curved edge also provides a more natural resting position for the user's forearms compared to a sharp straight edge.

Bow-front desks are most commonly found as the main surface in private office configurations, either as a stand-alone desk or as the primary surface in an L-shaped or U-shaped suite. They are a standard feature of mid-range to premium office furniture lines.

2. How the Bow-Front Shape Changes the Workspace

The bow-front shape has specific ergonomic and functional advantages over a straight front edge:

- **Increased center depth:** The bow adds 4"–6" of usable depth at the center of the desk, directly in front of the seated user. This creates more room for a keyboard, documents, and a wider monitor placement zone without increasing the desk's side-to-side dimensions.
- **Improved forearm support:** The curved edge provides a gentler resting surface for the forearms compared to a 90° straight edge. Users who rest their arms on the desk edge during typing and mouse use experience less pressure on the forearms.
- **Better monitor positioning:** The additional center depth allows monitors to sit slightly further back, improving the user's viewing distance without requiring a deeper overall desk.
- **Visual distinction:** The curved front gives the desk a more refined, executive appearance compared to a rectangular desk. This makes it a popular choice for private offices where aesthetics matter.
- **Dual-monitor advantage:** The center projection positions both monitors closer to the user's center line on the curve, reducing the neck rotation required to view a secondary screen.

3. Standard Dimensions

Bow-front desks are measured by overall width (the straight side-to-side measurement), side depth (the depth at the left and right edges), and center depth (the maximum depth at the peak of the bow).

Width	Side Depth	Center Depth	Bow Projection
60"	24"	28"-30"	4"-6"
66"	24"-30"	28"-34"	4"-5"
72"	30"	34"-36"	5"-6"

Height: Standard bow-front desks share the same height as straight desks: 28.5"-30" for fixed-height models, or 24"-34" for adjustable-height versions. Height-adjustable bow-front desks are less common but available in some product lines.

Important: The nominal depth listed in catalogs is usually the side depth. The center depth (with the bow) is 4"-6" deeper. Account for this when planning room clearance — the desk extends further into the room at its center than the catalog depth suggests.

4. Who Benefits Most from a Bow-Front

Bow-front desks are not needed for every workstation. They provide the most value in specific use cases:

User / Role	Why Bow-Front Works
Private office user (6+ hrs/day)	Extended center depth for monitor, keyboard, and documents in the primary work zone
Executive / manager	Professional appearance plus ergonomic forearm support during across-desk meetings
Dual-monitor user	Center curve positions both monitors closer to the user's center line
User who works with printed documents	Extra center depth provides room for documents between keyboard and monitor
L/U-shaped suite — main surface	Bow-front is the standard premium main surface in L and U configurations

Bow-front desks are not a good fit for open-plan benching (the curve creates unequal spacing between facing desks), training rooms (rectangular desks align better in rows), or shared hoteling stations (the orientation is specific to a single seated user).

5. Materials and Finish Options

Bow-front desks are available in the same material options as straight desks. However, the curved front edge introduces additional manufacturing complexity that affects material choice.

Material	Bow Edge Handling	Best For
Thermal Fused Melamine (TFM)	PVC or ABS flexible edge banding on curve	Commercial, high-traffic
High-Pressure Laminate (HPL)	Flexible edge banding; may require mitered joints at curve	General commercial
Wood Veneer	Natural wood edge, steam-bent or applied veneer	Executive, premium offices

Edge banding on the bow: The curved front edge requires flexible or pre-formed edge banding. This is the most quality-sensitive area of a bow-front desk. Poor-quality edge banding on the curve will peel, gap, or show seams within months of use. Inspect the front edge carefully before accepting delivery — this is the area most likely to have defects.

6. Storage and Pedestal Options

Bow-front desks use the same pedestal configurations as straight desks. Single-pedestal and double-pedestal options are available, and mobile pedestals can be added to any configuration.

Common configurations:

- Single pedestal (right or left): One BBF or FF pedestal on the specified side. The opposite side remains open for legroom or a mobile pedestal.
- Double pedestal: Pedestals on both sides. Provides maximum storage and structural stability. Most common on 72" bow-front desks.
- Credenza pairing: Bow-front desks in private offices are often paired with a matching credenza or lateral file behind the user. The credenza provides secondary storage and a surface for printers, reference materials, or display items.

When a bow-front is the main surface of an L-shaped suite, the return typically adds its own pedestal. Confirm total drawer count across all surfaces when planning.

7. Cable Management and Technology Integration

Cable management on a bow-front desk is functionally identical to a straight desk. The key is specifying grommet locations correctly relative to the curved front edge.

Recommended grommet placement:

- **Back center:** A grommet at the back center of the desk, behind where the monitor sits. This routes monitor power and data cables down to the floor or to a wire tray below.
- **Back corner (one or both):** Grommets at the back corners route peripheral cables (phone, charging cables, desk lamp) out of the primary work zone.
- **Surface grommet on the bow:** Some configurations include a grommet on the front curve for cables that need to run from the front of the desk to a phone or device. This is less common but useful in reception or client-facing setups.

Wire management trays mounted under the surface are essential. The curved front creates a wider gap between the desk edge and the wall compared to a straight desk, making exposed cables more visible from the visitor side.

8. Placement and Room Requirements

Bow-front desks require slightly more room than a straight desk of the same nominal width because the bow extends the effective depth at the center by 4"–6".

Desk Width	Effective Center Depth	Min Room Size	Recommended Room
60" bow-front	28"–30"	8.5' × 7'	9.5' × 8'
66" bow-front	28"–34"	9' × 7'	10' × 8'
72" bow-front	34"–36"	9.5' × 7.5'	10.5' × 8.5'

Private office minimum: A bow-front desk works best in rooms of 10' × 10' or larger. In this configuration, there is room for the desk, a chair with 42"+ behind clearance, and two guest chairs in front.

Chair clearance behind the desk: Users push back further to stand from a bow-front desk because the curve naturally positions the chair slightly farther from the desk edge at center. Plan 48" minimum behind the chair position — not 42".

Orientation: The bow (curved edge) must face the seated user. Confirm this during installation — some installers orient bow-front desks backward, placing the curve toward the wall.

9. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Using a bow-front in an open-plan benching layout — the curve creates unequal spacing between facing desks and looks mismatched in a row of rectangular surfaces.
- Orienting the bow toward the wall instead of toward the user — the deepest point of the curve should be at the center of the user's primary seating position.
- Not accounting for the bow projection when measuring room clearance — the effective depth at center is 4"–6" more than the catalog side-depth dimension.
- Failing to inspect the bow edge banding on delivery — the curved front edge is the most quality-sensitive area and the most common location for manufacturing defects.
- Pairing a bow-front desk with a bow-front credenza in the same room — the curve is designed for the primary user-facing surface only. The credenza behind the user should be a straight-front piece.
- Specifying a bow-front for a training room or hoteling station — the shape is optimized for a single dedicated user facing the curve. It adds cost and complexity without benefit in multi-user or temporary configurations.

10. Buyer's Checklist

- Confirm that a bow-front is the right fit — private office, L/U suite, or dedicated workstation
- Measure room dimensions and calculate clearance using center depth, not side depth
- Select width: 60", 66", or 72" based on equipment and room size
- Verify the bow projection adds 4"–6" to the effective center depth
- Plan for 48" minimum behind the chair (not the standard 42" for straight desks)
- Choose surface material: TFM for commercial, veneer for premium
- Inspect edge banding quality on the curved front edge — the most defect-prone area
- Specify pedestal configuration: single, double, or mobile
- Specify grommet locations: back center and/or back corners
- Confirm finish match if the bow-front is part of an L or U suite — order all pieces from one line
- Request finish samples before ordering
- Confirm delivery logistics and white-glove assembly if needed

11. Our Bow-Front Desk Collection

OfficeFurniture2go carries bow-front desks from leading commercial manufacturers -- every model backed by our Lifetime Warranty and free nationwide shipping. Here is a snapshot of our most popular bow-front lines:

PBD Furniture -- Supplant Collection (Designer Two-Tone)

Our most popular bow-front line pairs two complementary finishes in 8 curated combinations (e.g., Espresso/White Pedestals, Coastal Gray/White, Modern Walnut/Aspen). The 72in x 41in double-pedestal model includes a File/File and Box/Box/File pedestal -- both pre-assembled, with full-suspension locking slides. Thermofused melamine over MDF, 3mm edge banding.

Model	Size (W x D x H)	Pedestal	Weight
SKU 101-YLA041	72in x 41in x 30in	Double (FF+BBF)	285 lbs

WFB Designs -- Premium Bow-Front Collection

Our WFB Designs bow-front line features a 1-1/8in thick work surface with an inside curved corner for optimal user comfort, impact-resistant 3mm triple-groove reed edge banding, and 1in thick end panels. Available in extended U-desk configurations (107in x 107in overall) with hutch and lateral storage combo. 16+ color/orientation combinations.

Also Available as U-Desk Sets

Configuration	Overall Size	Includes
Bow-Front U-Desk (single tone)	72in x 112in x 65in	Bridge, credenza, 2-door glass hutch, 2 pedestals
Bow-Front U-Desk (two-tone combo)	106in x 107in x 66in	Bridge, credenza, glass hutch, lateral file combo

Every bow-front desk at OfficeFurniture2go.com ships free with our Lifetime Warranty. With over 30 years of experience, our team can help you select the right bow-front configuration, finish combination, and pedestal setup for any private office.

Ready to Find the Right Solution?

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