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Conference Tables

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The conference table is the centerpiece of every meeting room — and choosing the right one takes more than picking a size and a finish. It means matching length, depth, base style, and power integration to the room, the headcount, and the way your team actually meets. With 30+ years of experience helping businesses furnish conference rooms of every size, OfficeFurniture2go.com offers hundreds of conference table options across every major size, shape, and finish — all backed by a Lifetime Warranty and free shipping. This guide covers everything you need to spec the right table the first time.

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1. Sizing by Seating Capacity

The most important specification for any conference table is matching its size to the intended seating count. Too small, and attendees are elbow-to-elbow; too large, and the table dominates the room with no space for chairs to pull back.

Space Per Person

Setting	Width Per Seat	Use Case
Economy	24"–30"	Training rooms, temporary setups, internal huddles
Standard	30"–36"	Daily meetings, team collaboration, internal conference
Boardroom	36"–48"	Executive meetings, client presentations, board sessions

The quick rule: 1 chair per linear foot of table length. An 8 ft table seats up to 8, a 10 ft table seats up to 10, a 12 ft table seats up to 12. This is the maximum at standard 12-inch spacing. For comfortable daily-use seating, apply 30" per chair and subtract the two end positions, which are typically left open on rectangular tables. Boat-shaped tables retain end seating due to the wider center.

Seating Capacity by Table Length

Table Length	Max Seats (1 per ft)	Comfortable (30" per seat)	Boardroom (36"+ per seat)	Typical Depth
6 ft (72")	6	4–5	4	36"
8 ft (96")	8	6–7	4–6	44"–48"
10 ft (120")	10	8–9	6–8	48"
12 ft (144")	12	10–11	8–10	48"
14 ft (168")	14	12–13	10–12	48"
16 ft (192")	16	14–15	12–14	48"
18 ft (216")	18	16–17	14–16	48"
20 ft (240")	20	18–19	16–18	48"

48" is the industry-standard depth across conference table lengths from 10 ft through 18 ft. The 6 ft table in the PBD PL Series measures 36" deep; the 8 ft steps up to 44"–48" depending on the collection. From 10 ft onward, 48" is the consistent standard — it provides comfortable reach across the table, clear sight lines, and room for laptops and documents on both sides.

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2. Shape Selection by Meeting Style

Conference table shape affects sight lines, collaboration dynamics, and room utilization. Choose the shape that aligns with your most common meeting type.

Shape	Best Meeting Style	Strengths	Considerations
Rectangular	Formal presentations, status meetings	Efficient use of space, clear presenter position	People at ends may feel distant; harder sight lines
Boat-Shaped	Board meetings, client presentations	Wider center improves sight lines; executive appearance	Higher cost; requires wider room at center
Racetrack (Oval)	Collaborative sessions, brainstorming	Softer feel; no sharp corners; good traffic flow	Slightly less seating density than rectangular
Round	Small team huddles, equal-status discussions	Everyone faces everyone; no head-of-table hierarchy	Practical only for 8 or fewer people
U-Shape / Classroom	Training, seminars, workshops	All participants face the presenter; writing surface	Requires modular or separate table components

Boat-shaped tables are the most popular choice in commercial settings. The slight bow widens the center of the table, improving sight lines so everyone can see each other clearly. The tapered ends give the table a refined boardroom presence. Available in slab, cube storage, and boardroom base configurations.

Rectangular tables are the most space-efficient option. They work well in standard rooms and accommodate the widest range of meeting sizes — right choice when maximizing seating density is priority.

Racetrack (oval) tables soften the room aesthetic, eliminate sharp corners for safer movement, and improve traffic flow around the perimeter of the table.

Round tables (commonly 36", 42", or 47" diameter) eliminate head-of-table hierarchy and are ideal for small teams of 4–6 people. Above 6 people the distance across makes normal conversation difficult. X-base pedestal is the standard base for round conference tables.

3. Room Size and Clearance Requirements

A conference table must fit the room with enough clearance for chairs, movement, and safety. The most common mistake in conference room planning is choosing a table that is too large for the space.

Minimum Clearance Guidelines

- 48" minimum from the table edge to the nearest wall on all sides. This allows chairs to be pushed back and people to walk behind seated attendees.
- 36" is the absolute minimum clearance and should only be used against a wall where no seating is planned.
- 60" is recommended if the room will serve as a wheelchair-accessible meeting space.

Room Size by Table Size

Table Size	Minimum Room Size	Recommended Room Size
6 ft × 3.5 ft	14 ft × 11.5 ft	16 ft × 12 ft
8 ft × 4 ft	16 ft × 12 ft	18 ft × 14 ft
10 ft × 4 ft	18 ft × 12 ft	20 ft × 14 ft
12 ft × 4.5 ft	20 ft × 12.5 ft	22 ft × 15 ft
16 ft × 4 ft	24 ft × 12 ft	26 ft × 14 ft
18 ft × 4 ft	26 ft × 12 ft	28 ft × 14 ft

Always measure the actual room — including columns, built-in cabinetry, and door swings — before specifying a table. A room that measures 18 × 14 on a floor plan may have usable clearance of only 16 × 12 once obstructions are accounted for.

Room obstructions — check before you specify

These four obstructions are the most common reasons a conference table does not fit after delivery:

- Doors and door swing: Identify every door in the room and the full arc of its swing. An inward-opening door must have at least 36" of clear floor behind its arc — this can consume significant clearance on the short end of the room. If the door swings into the table clearance zone, either choose a shorter table or reconfigure the room before ordering.
- Windows: Windows affect both furniture placement and occupant comfort. Avoid placing chairs with backs to windows in rooms used for presentations — occupants face glare and the presenter appears backlit. Windows with low sills or under-sill HVAC units may also limit where chairs can be pulled back, reducing effective clearance on that wall.
- Columns and structural posts: Columns inside or at the perimeter of a conference room interrupt clearance on the affected wall and can prevent chairs from being pulled back at certain positions.

Measure from the column face — not the wall — when calculating clearance. Plan the table position so no seat is directly adjacent to a column.

• Built-in cabinetry and millwork: Credenzas, AV consoles, and built-in cabinetry reduce the usable floor area. Account for open cabinet door clearance as well as the footprint of the unit itself when measuring available room length and width.

4. Surface Materials and Durability

Conference table surfaces endure daily use from laptop bags, coffee cups, writing instruments, and cleaning chemicals. Material selection should balance appearance with practical durability.

Material	Durability	Appearance	Best For
Laminate (HPL/TFL)	Excellent — scratch, stain, heat resistant	Wide finish range; realistic woodgrains	High-use rooms, training, daily meetings
Wood Veneer	Good — susceptible to scratches, water rings	Natural grain, warm, premium	Executive boardrooms, low-frequency use
Glass Top	Moderate — tempered, but shows fingerprints	Contemporary, open aesthetic	Small meeting rooms, huddle spaces
Solid Surface	Excellent — seamless, repairable	Smooth, modern, clean lines	Design-forward conference rooms

Laminate dominates commercial conference tables. Over 95% of commercial-grade tables use laminate or thermal-fused melamine (TFL) surfaces because they resist scratches, heat, and stains while offering a wide range of realistic woodgrain and solid-color finishes. Common options include Walnut, Espresso, Cherry, Mahogany, Aspen, Coastal Gray, Newport Gray, Silver Birch, and White. A 1½" thick top with 3mm PVC edge banding is the commercial-grade construction standard — look for this specification in any table you purchase.

Wood veneer is appropriate for executive boardrooms where the natural beauty of real wood is valued. It requires more careful maintenance and is vulnerable to heat marks and water rings.

Common Finish Colors — What They Actually Look Like

Finish names can be ambiguous. Here is what the most common options look like:

Finish	What It Looks Like	Best Paired With
Espresso	Very dark, near-black brown — like dark roast coffee. Reads almost black in low light.	Black or silver base, modern rooms
Charcoal	Very dark gray — closer to black than brown. No warm undertone.	White/gray walls, chrome or black bases
Cherry	Warm reddish-brown, honey-red to deep red-brown. Traditional boardroom look.	Traditional interiors, wood bases
Mahogany	Medium-dark reddish-brown, warmer and lighter than espresso. Classic executive finish.	Formal boardrooms
Walnut	Warm medium brown with visible grain. Modern executive aesthetic.	Contemporary rooms, brushed metal bases

Gray (various)	Ranges from silver-gray to near-charcoal. Coastal Gray lighter; Newport Gray darker.	Modern conference rooms
White	Clean, bright white. Shows wear more than darker finishes.	Creative agencies, minimalist rooms

If coordinating with existing office furniture, note the manufacturer and finish name. Shades vary slightly between brands even when names match. Request a color description before finalizing a finish on a large order.

5. Power and Data Integration

Today's meetings rely heavily on technology. Laptops, tablets, phones, and presentation equipment all need power — and increasingly, hardwired data connections. Power and data access should be planned during the table specification phase, not added as an afterthought.

Power Access Options

- Surface-mount power grommets: Pop-up or flip-top modules in the table surface provide AC outlets, USB-A/C charging, and sometimes HDMI or Ethernet. Place one module for every 2–3 seats.

- Below-surface conference boxes: Mounted under the table edge with a drop-down door. Cleaner appearance when not in use but less accessible.

- Center-mounted power columns: Vertical conduit from table center to floor. Best for very large tables where edge modules cannot reach center seats.

Wire Management

- Route all cables through internal wire channels within the table legs or base.

- Use floor boxes or poke-through fittings to bring power from below the floor to the table location. Avoid running extension cords across the floor — they are a trip hazard and violate fire codes in many jurisdictions.

- Specify tables with integrated wire trays under the surface to manage excess cable length and adapters.

Plan for at least 50% more power capacity than your current needs. As technology evolves, the demand for power at the conference table will only increase.

Pre-powered tables are available that ship with a built-in power unit already installed — no retrofitting required. Look for tables with dual USB + dual AC outlets per grommet, wire cutouts at the top and bottom of each base section for clean cable routing, and included steel connector brackets for multi-section tops. Some collections route wiring through the base columns themselves, keeping both the tabletop and the floor completely cord-free.

6. Bases and Leg Configurations

The base of a conference table affects stability, legroom, aesthetics, and the ability to route power cables. Choose a base style that supports the table's size and your room's functional needs.

Base Type	Best For	Legroom	Notes
Slab Base	6–14 ft; clean modern look	Good — open underneath	Most common; solid panel ends; cables route along interior
Cube Storage Base	8–12 ft; rooms needing built-in storage	Good — open underneath	Access door on each base unit — stores AV remotes, cables, supplies
Boardroom Base	8–14 ft; executive and client rooms	Excellent — columns set back	Dual metal column posts; silver or black — two-tone top/base combos available
X-Base Pedestal	Round tables (36"–47" diameter)	Excellent — no corner legs	Standard for round tables; laminate or metal finish
Modern Tapered Leg	8–10 ft; contemporary settings	Excellent — legs set back from edges	Clean contemporary profile; pairs well with integrated wire management

Cube Storage Base is a particularly practical choice for conference rooms that lack built-in cabinetry. The access door in each base unit provides concealed storage for AV remotes, extension cords, presentation supplies, and spare cables.

Boardroom bases with two-tone top/base color combinations — such as a Walnut top with a black metal base, or a Gray top with a silver base — are a cost-effective way to add visual distinction to a boardroom without moving to a veneer surface.

7. Modular vs. Fixed Conference Tables

Conference tables fall into two broad categories: fixed (one-piece or permanently assembled) and modular (multiple sections that can be rearranged or separated).

Fixed Tables

Fixed conference tables are stronger, more stable, and typically have a more seamless appearance. They are the right choice when the room has a single purpose and the table will not need to be moved or reconfigured. Most boardroom-quality tables are fixed.

Modular Tables

Modular conference tables consist of two or more sections that connect together. They offer significant flexibility:

- Reconfiguration: Separate sections to create smaller breakout tables, a U-shape for training, or a classroom layout.
- Scalability: Add sections as your team grows rather than replacing the entire table.
- Delivery: Easier to move through elevators, stairwells, and narrow corridors.
- Storage: Sections can be stored separately when the room is needed for non-table events.

The tradeoff is that modular tables may have visible seams at connection points and can be slightly less stable than one-piece designs. High-quality modular systems minimize these issues with precision alignment hardware and steel connector brackets.

Factor	Fixed	Modular
Stability	Superior — single structure	Good — depends on connectors
Appearance	Seamless surface	Visible seams possible
Flexibility	None — one configuration	Multiple layouts possible
Delivery	May require special logistics	Sections move through standard doors
Expandability	Not expandable	Add sections as needed

8. ADA and Accessibility Planning

Conference rooms must be accessible to all participants, including those who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices. Accessibility planning starts with the table itself.

Table-Level Requirements

- Knee clearance: Minimum 27" from the floor to the underside of the table apron at the seating position. Most standard conference tables provide 28"–29".
- Toe clearance: Minimum 9" high and 17" deep under the table edge.
- Reach range: Power grommets and shared materials at the table center should be within 24" reach of all accessible seating positions.

Room-Level Requirements

- Door clearance: Conference room doors must provide at least 32" clear width (36" recommended). Lever handles, not knobs.
- Maneuvering space: A 60" turning radius must be available within the room for wheelchair users.
- Floor surface: Low-pile carpet or hard flooring. Thick carpet impedes wheelchair movement.

Designate at least two accessible seating positions at the table — one near the door for easy entry and one near presentation equipment for presenters with mobility needs.

9. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Buying a table that is too large for the room — allow 48" clearance on all sides as a starting point.

- Choosing economy spacing (24" per seat) for rooms that host client meetings or board sessions — crowded seating makes a poor impression.

- Neglecting power integration — running extension cords to a conference table is a trip hazard, fire code violation, and unprofessional appearance.

- Selecting glass tops for high-use conference rooms — glass shows fingerprints, scratches, and requires constant cleaning.

- Ignoring delivery logistics — a 16-foot one-piece table may not fit through your elevator or stairwell. Measure all access points before ordering.

- Placing all power grommets at one end of the table — distribute power access evenly so every seat has reasonable reach to an outlet.

- Forgetting ADA clearance — a single pedestal leg at the wrong position can block wheelchair access.

- Underestimating table width — a 36"-wide table is tight for two people facing each other with laptops; 42"–48" is the practical minimum for comfortable face-to-face work.

10. Ordering and Lead Time

Most commercial conference tables are made to order — manufactured after your order is placed. Lead time planning is critical if you have a room opening or event deadline.

Typical Lead Times

Order Type	Typical Lead Time	Notes
Standard made-to-order	2–4 weeks	Most conference table configurations
Quick-ship / in-stock items	1–5 business days	Select popular sizes held by distributor
Large or modular orders	4–6 weeks	Multi-section tables or complete room packages

If you have a hard deadline:

- Order at least 4–6 weeks before the date you need the table in place.
- Share your deadline with your sales contact upfront so they can confirm lead time and identify quick-ship options if needed.
- Conference tables ship via freight; confirm you have a loading dock or need lift-gate service.
- Plan for assembly time: modular tables take 1–2 hours; large tables with power modules 2–4 hours.
- Confirm the delivery path — large tops must fit through building doors. Most tables ship in sections.

11. Buyer's Checklist

[] Determine seating capacity needed — account for typical and maximum meeting sizes

[] Measure the room: length, width, ceiling height, column positions, door swings

[] Calculate clearance: table dimensions + 48" (minimum) on all seated sides

[] Select table shape based on primary meeting style (rectangular, boat, racetrack, round)

[] Choose surface material matched to usage intensity (HPL for daily use, veneer for boardrooms)

[] Specify base type: panel, trestle, pedestal, or four-leg — considering legroom and cable routing

[] Plan power and data: number of grommets, locations, outlet types (AC, USB-A, USB-C, HDMI)

[] Decide fixed vs. modular based on room flexibility needs

[] Verify ADA compliance: knee clearance, accessible seating positions, room maneuvering space

[] Measure all delivery access points: doorways, elevators, hallways, stairwells

[] Request surface material samples before finalizing finish selection

[] Confirm lead time, warranty terms, and installation requirements

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