

Reception Desks

1 The transaction counter height (42"–48") and work surface height (28"–30") serve different functions
The high counter creates a natural barrier and standing transaction surface for visitors. The lower work surface is where staff actually work. Both heights must be present in a functional reception desk — a single-height desk is a compromise that serves neither function well.

3 Visitor sight lines determine desk orientation — not just floor space
The reception desk should be visible immediately upon entering. A visitor entering and not seeing the desk creates confusion and a poor first impression. Orient the desk to face the primary entrance, even if this isn't the most space-efficient layout.

5 Allow 42"–48" behind the desk for staff movement — not just seated clearance
Reception staff frequently stand, move to printers or files, and turn to assist colleagues. A 30" clearance behind the desk is enough to sit but not to move. 42"–48" allows comfortable movement and prevents the workspace from feeling like a cage.

7 Glass or acrylic accents elevate the perceived quality of laminate desks significantly
A laminate reception desk with tempered glass or acrylic accent panels reads as considerably more premium than laminate alone. This is a cost-effective way to achieve a high-end look — the accent material does the visual work.

9 Curved or peninsula configurations improve traffic flow in high-volume lobbies
Straight reception desks create bottlenecks in high-traffic lobbies because visitors approach from one direction. Curved or peninsula designs allow visitors to approach from multiple angles, reducing queue formation and improving the overall flow of the entry space.

2 ADA requires at least one accessible transaction counter section at 28"–34"
A standard 42"–48" counter is inaccessible to wheelchair users. ADA guidelines require at least one section of the transaction counter to be 34" or lower with knee clearance beneath. Plan for this in the layout from the start — retrofitting is expensive.

4 Back panels are as important as the front — they're seen by staff all day
Most buyers focus on the visitor-facing front panel and neglect the back. The work side of a reception desk should have organized cable management, storage, and a finished appearance. An unfinished back creates a cluttered, unprofessional staff environment.

6 Integrated locking storage is essential for security and compliance
Reception areas often hold visitor logs, ID documents, medications, or confidential intake materials. Specify locking drawers or cabinets in the desk configuration. Surface-level storage without locks creates security and compliance exposure.

8 Plan for monitor placement before specifying the work surface depth
A reception staff member using a monitor needs at least 24" of surface depth to maintain proper viewing distance. A shallow reception desk (18" deep) forces the monitor too close. Confirm monitor size and placement before finalizing desk depth.

10 Specify the finish before the furniture — not after
Reception desks are showpiece pieces. The finish selection should be driven by the overall lobby aesthetic (flooring, wall color, signage palette) — not picked from a catalog in isolation. Request physical finish samples and view them in the actual space before ordering.