

Workstations

Buyer's Guide

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Office workstations range from individual freestanding desk setups to large-scale benching systems and panel-based open-plan configurations. OfficeFurniture2go.com has helped businesses across every industry specify the right workstation solution for more than 30 years. This guide covers the core system types, surface sizing, adjacency planning, cable management, ergonomic requirements, and the key comparisons buyers need before committing to a workstation configuration.

1. Workstation System Types Defined

The term "workstation" describes the complete furnished environment for one employee — not just the desk surface. The three dominant system types serve fundamentally different operational needs.

System Type	Description	Best For
Freestanding Desk	Individual desk; no structural connection to adjacent stations	Private offices, small teams, maximum layout flexibility
Benching System	Shared-frame system; multiple stations on one continuous spine	Open-plan offices, hoteling, collaborative environments
Panel-Based / Cubicle	Interconnected panels create enclosed stations; components hang from panels	Focused work, privacy-sensitive roles, HR, finance
L-Shaped / Corner	Two-surface freestanding config in an L or corner arrangement	Power users needing maximum surface area in a compact footprint
U-Shaped	Three-surface wrap-around; desk, return, and credenza or bridge	Executives, supervisors, needing simultaneous surface access

2. Surface Size Requirements by Role

Surface dimensions should be matched to the task, not chosen arbitrarily. Undersized surfaces reduce productivity; oversized surfaces waste floor space and increase cost per station.

Role / Task Type	Recommended Surface	Notes
Single-monitor knowledge worker	60"W x 24"D minimum	For monitor, keyboard, and document work
Dual-monitor workstation	66"–72"W x 24"–30"D	Wider surface for side-by-side monitors
Call center / data entry	48"–60"W x 24"D	Minimal footprint; headset storage needed
Creative / design workstation	72"W x 30"D or L-shaped	Large monitors, drawing tablets, dual surfaces
Supervisor / team lead	L-shaped: 66"×66" or 72"×72"	Return surface for guest or secondary monitor
Executive	U-shaped: 66"–72" main + return + bridge	Maximum surface area; formal presence

3. Benching Systems: Key Specifications

Benching systems connect multiple workstations to a shared structural frame, dramatically reducing cost-per-station and floor area requirements versus equivalent freestanding setups. Buying decisions hinge on these specifications.

- **Station width:** 48", 60", and 72" are standard. 60" is the commercial default for single-monitor roles.
- **Depth per side:** 24"–30" per station; back-to-back benching puts two stations sharing one frame.
- **Height:** Fixed-height benching sits at 28.5"–30". Sit-stand benching adjusts from approximately 23.5" to 48.5".
- **Frame capacity:** Most commercial benching frames support 6–12 stations per run. Longer runs require additional structural supports.
- **Privacy screens:** Acrylic or fabric screens, 12"–18" tall, mount between stations to reduce visual distraction. They do not provide meaningful acoustic privacy.
- **Cable spine:** An integrated cable management spine runs the length of the bench, housing power units and data cables below worksurface level.

4. Space Planning: Square Footage Per Workstation

Building code does not mandate a minimum square footage per workstation, but industry standards and fire egress requirements shape practical minimums. Circulation aisles between workstation clusters must remain clear.

Workstation Type	Typical Sq Ft / Person	Includes Circulation
Dense benching (open plan)	40–60 sq ft	Yes — assumes shared aisles
Standard freestanding desk	60–80 sq ft	Yes
Cubicle / panel system	80–110 sq ft	Yes — panels add footprint
L-shaped workstation	80–100 sq ft	Yes
U-shaped / executive	120–160 sq ft	Yes

Primary aisle width: 60" minimum (ADA) between facing workstation clusters. **Secondary aisles:** 36" minimum between individual station backs.

5. Cable Management Requirements

Exposed cable runs on workstation floors create tripping hazards, fail IT audits, and look unprofessional. A proper workstation cable management plan addresses four zones.

Zone	Solution	Notes
Floor-to-desk vertical run	Floor cable cover / raceway	J-channel or D-line raceway; paintable
Under-desk horizontal routing	Cable tray (wire mesh or steel)	Mounts to desk underside; holds power strip and cables
Desktop entry point	Grommet insert (60mm standard)	Plastic or brushed metal; 2 per worksurface minimum
Benching spine	Integrated cable spine with power unit	Built into frame; 6-outlet units per 3 stations typical

6. Ergonomic Height Requirements

Fixed-height workstations should be specified at 28.5"–30" above finished floor — the ergonomic target for a seated adult user of average height. For multi-user or shared environments, height-adjustable workstations eliminate the need to accommodate every individual with separate furniture.

Measurement	Target Range	Notes
Seated work surface height	28"–30"	Elbows at 90° with shoulders relaxed
Monitor top of screen	At or slightly below eye level	20"–28" horizontal distance from user
Keyboard tray height	1"–2" below elbow	Negative tilt preferred; wrists neutral
ADA accessible surface	28"–34"	30"x48" clear floor approach required
Standing work height	38"–46" (role dependent)	Sit-stand desk range should span seated and standing needs

7. Storage at the Workstation

Adequate per-station storage prevents desktop clutter and reduces demand on central filing systems. Commercial workstations support four primary storage options.

- **Pedestal drawers (box/box/file):** The standard under-desk storage unit — two small box drawers above one full-suspension file drawer. Mobile pedestals roll out for easy access; fixed pedestals are more stable.
- **Overhead bins:** Panel-hung or wall-mounted bins recover vertical storage space without consuming desk or floor area. Typical capacity: 50–75 lbs. Flipper doors are preferred over hinged doors in tight spaces.
- **Credenza:** A separate low storage unit positioned behind or beside the desk. Provides lateral file drawers, shelf storage, and additional work surface.
- **Bookcase / open shelf:** For reference materials, binders, and equipment. 36"–48" wide units are standard workstation companions.

8. Workstation System Comparison

Factor	Freestanding	Benching	Panel / Cubicle
Privacy	Low (no enclosure)	Very low	High
Acoustic control	None	None (screens help marginally)	Good (fabric panels absorb sound)
Cost per station	Low–moderate	Lowest	Highest
Sq ft per person	60–80	40–60	80–110
Reconfigurability	High	High (within frame)	Moderate (panel moves require labor)
Storage	Pedestals only	Limited (under-bench)	High (bins, pedestals, shelves)
Lead time	1–5 business days	1–5 business days	1–14 weeks
Best for	Small/private offices	Collaboration, hoteling, dense plans	Focused work, confidential roles

9. Hoteling and Unassigned Workstations

Hoteling workstations — shared desks used on a reservation basis — have different specification requirements than assigned workstations. The goal is maximum hygiene, minimal personalization barrier, and fast daily setup.

- **Surface:** Non-porous laminate (easy to wipe down); avoid fabric-heavy surfaces.
- **Storage:** No fixed pedestal drawers — personal items go in a rolling locker or day locker assigned at booking.
- **Monitor:** Fixed arm or monitor riser (not a personal monitor) with universal docking station.
- **Connectivity:** USB-C hub or docking station built into the desk surface for zero-configuration connection.
- **Height:** Sit-stand adjustable strongly preferred — enables quick height personalization without tools.

10. Workstation Planning Checklist

Before placing a workstation order, verify the following for each deployment zone.

- Measured usable floor area per station (exclude columns, HVAC, and egress paths)
- Confirmed primary aisle clearance (60" minimum; 44" ADA minimum for secondary aisles)
- Power access points mapped — outlet locations per zone drive benching configuration
- Data/IT drops confirmed at or near each workstation cluster
- Ceiling height verified (panel systems above 66" require confirmation of overhead clearance for HVAC and sprinklers)
- Role-appropriate surface size confirmed (see Section 2)
- Storage needs assessed per user category
- ADA accessible stations planned (minimum 1 per area, confirmed dimensions)
- Chair selection confirmed alongside workstation spec (seat height range must pair with desk height)
- Lead time confirmed for opening date or phased move-in schedule

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