



Conference Room Layout for 20 People

Space Planning Guide

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A 20-person conference room — or large boardroom — requires precise planning of table dimensions, perimeter clearances, AV sight lines, and emergency egress. At this capacity, fire code and ADA requirements become more demanding, and the choice between a single-piece table, a modular system, and a U-shaped configuration has significant functional implications. This guide provides the exact measurements, table configurations, clearance calculations, and equipment specifications for a well-executed 20-person meeting room.

Room Dimensions & Available Floor Space

A 20-person conference room requires a minimum room footprint of approximately 18'x30' (540 sq ft) for standard clearances, or 20'x28' (560 sq ft) as an alternative. Ideal dimensions are 20'x32' to 22'x34' to allow comfortable clearances, AV equipment, and potential side buffet or credenza.

Key deductions for a 20-person room:

- Double doors or 48" single door swing: ~15 sq ft reserved near entrance
- AV wall depth (24"–36" for built-in AV or projection screen housing): 10–18 sq ft
- Side credenza/buffet zone (if present): 18"–24" along one or both long walls
- HVAC, window, electrical clearances: ~8–12 sq ft
- Net usable (18'x30' room): approximately 490 sq ft

Room Footprint	Usable After Deductions	Suitability
16'x28' (448 sq ft)	~400 sq ft	Minimum — tight; requires narrow table and careful planning
18'x30' (540 sq ft)	~490 sq ft	Standard for 20-person boardroom
20'x32' (640 sq ft)	~585 sq ft	Preferred — side credenzas and AV wall possible
22'x36' (792 sq ft)	~720 sq ft	Spacious — supports buffer, breakout alcove

Recommended Furniture Layout

For 20 people, a 48"×216" to 48"×240" (18–20 foot) rectangular or boat-shaped table is the standard centerpiece. This is typically assembled from modular sections of 30"×60" or 36"×72" tables due to transport and installation constraints of pieces exceeding 12 feet in length.

- 48"×216" (18-foot) modular conference table — three 30"×72" segments joined end-to-end, centered in the room — seats 7 per long side (28" per person × 7 = 196", within 216") plus 3 end seats = 17–18 total. For 20 seats, extend to a 48"×240" (20-foot) configuration: 7–8 per side plus 2 ends.
- Twenty 25"×23" executive conference chairs — 7–8 per long side and 1–2 per end, with 4"–6" between chairs
- Side credenza or buffet, 72"–96" length: 18"–20" deep, positioned against one long wall for refreshments and AV equipment storage — must leave 36"+ aisle on the room side
- 80"–86" wall-mounted display or 100"+ projection screen on the short AV wall
- Integrated table power modules at every other seat position

Per-person allocation: At 28" per seat along a 20-foot table, each person has 28" of table width — standard for formal boardroom settings. Documents and a laptop fit within 28", though the standard of 30" per person is preferred for working sessions.

Clearance Requirements

A 20-person room may cross fire code thresholds. Under IBC (International Building Code), rooms with occupant loads of 50 or fewer require at least two accessible means of egress when room area exceeds 250 sq ft. A 20-person boardroom of 540 sq ft likely requires two exits or exit doors.

- Side aisle clearance (44" minimum for rooms with 50+ occupancy; 36" for under 50): For a 20-person room, 36" ADA is the minimum. In an 18' (216") wide room with a 48"-wide table, side clearance is $(216" - 48") / 2 = 84"$ per side. After a 25" chair pulls back, the standing aisle is 59" — comfortably above 36" ADA and well above the fire code 44" when needed.
- Chair pullback depth (36"–42"): Executive conference chairs at 23"–25" depth require 36"–42" total from table edge to clear any person exiting the room. With 84" of side clearance, pullback of 42" leaves 42" of standing aisle — meets requirements.
- ADA 60" wheelchair turning radius: In an 18'-wide room with 84" of side clearance, the 60" turning circle fits on both sides of the table simultaneously. At least one turning circle position must be accessible from the room entrance without passing behind occupied seating.
- ADA accessible seating (at least one position per 20): One seat at each end of the table should have a 30"×48" adjacent floor space for wheelchair approach. With 96"+ of end clearance in a 30'-long room, this is straightforward.
- Presenter zone at AV wall (60"–72" minimum): A presenter in front of a 20-person room needs at least 5' to move freely in front of the display. With $(\text{room length } 360") - (\text{table } 216" + 2 \times \text{end clearance } 72") = 0"$ of margin in a 30' room, a 20-foot table is at the practical maximum for a 30' room. A 30' room with an 18-foot table provides 36" per end — presenter must stay immediately adjacent to the AV wall.
- Emergency egress with maximum simultaneous occupancy: Plan for all 20 chairs pulled back simultaneously — the combined chair-pullback zone on each side of the table is $20" \times 10 = 200"$ (chairs side by side) × 42" depth. Confirm exit paths remain $\geq 44"$ wide with all chairs occupied and extended.

Option A: Two Parallel Tables

Instead of one 20-foot table, position two 42"×120" (10-foot) tables side by side with a 30" gap between them. This creates a 114"×120" double-table surface that seats 20 (5 on each outer long side, 2 at each end, and facing occupants across the gap). The 30" center gap allows two people to sit facing each other across a very narrow gap, which works well for workshops but less well for formal boardroom sessions. Total footprint: 114"×120" vs. 48"×240" for a single table — similar floor usage, different shape.

Option B: Hollow Rectangle (Four Tables in a Rectangle)

Four 30"×96" or 30"×72" tables arranged in a hollow rectangle (perimeter only, open center) seat 20–24 people and create an inclusive configuration ideal for strategic planning sessions and working groups. The hollow interior (minimum 48"×60") functions as a shared workspace or technology platform. Minimum room requirement: 20'×24'. The hollow rectangle configuration is less suitable for presentations because participants across the rectangle are 8'–10' apart, making shared viewing of a single display difficult.

Option C: Theater or Classroom Setup

For a 20-person room used primarily for presentations, town halls, or training rather than working sessions: a classroom configuration (five rows of four chairs each, all facing the AV wall) with or without tables requires only 24"–30" per person in width. A row of four chairs at 24" each = 96" total width, comfortable in an 18' room. Rows require 36"–42" front-to-back spacing (18" for seat depth + 18"–24" for knee clearance behind the row). Five rows at 40" each = 200" (16.7') of depth — fitting within an 18'-deep room with 16" to spare for the first row and the AV wall space.