



Open Office Layout for 50 Employees

Space Planning Guide

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A 50-person open office is a major planning undertaking — at this headcount, fire egress, ADA accessible routes, density management, and acoustic performance all require systematic planning beyond individual furniture decisions. The choice between assigned seating and activity-based working, benching and individual desks, open collaboration and enclosed focus rooms determines the overall character of the space. This guide provides the density calculations, zone allocations, clearance standards, and furniture specifications for a functional 50-person open office.

Room Dimensions & Available Floor Space

A 50-person open office requires approximately 4,000–5,000 sq ft at standard commercial density (80–100 sq ft per person), or 2,750–3,250 sq ft at high-density benching (55–65 sq ft per person).

Zone allocation for a 4,000 sq ft 50-person standard floor:

- Workstation zone: 50 × 60 sq ft = 3,000 sq ft (75%)
- Primary circulation (48"–60" aisles): ~400 sq ft (10%)
- Support spaces (focus rooms, phone booths): ~300 sq ft (7.5%)
- Shared storage and print/copy stations: ~150 sq ft (3.75%)
- Collaboration zones: ~150 sq ft (3.75%)

Density Model	Sq Ft/Person	Total for 50	Typical Footprint
High density (benching)	55–65 sq ft	2,750–3,250 sq ft	~55'x55' or 50'x65'
Standard (mixed)	80–100 sq ft	4,000–5,000 sq ft	~65'x70' or 60'x75'
Activity-based working	70–85 sq ft (ratio: 0.7 seats/person)	2,450–2,975 sq ft for 35 stations	~50'x60' with support spaces

Workstation Zone: Benching Rows

- Ten 10-seat benching runs (each run: 120" long × 48" deep for back-to-back seating at 24" per person) — 5 rows on each half of the floor
- 60" back-to-back aisles between facing benching runs — total per pair: 48" (run) + 60" (aisle) = 108" (9') per double-run pair
- 48"–60" primary aisles flanking each double-run pair, running the full length of the floor

- 50 adjustable monitor arms — mounted to benching spine instead of individual desk bases, reducing desk clutter
- 50 mobile 2-drawer pedestals, 15"×24" — one per seat, stored under bench; serves as both personal storage and a secondary guest seat

Support Spaces

- 4 focus rooms (6'×8' each): enclosed glazed rooms for phone calls and concentrated work — requires 4 × 48 sq ft = 192 sq ft of dedicated floor area
- 2 phone booths (4'×4' each): acoustic pods for brief private calls — 32 sq ft total
- 2 open collaboration tables (36"×72"): each with 6 chairs — 2 × 80 sq ft = 160 sq ft including clearances
- 1 print/copy station: 48"×24" credenza with 36" front clearance = 18 sq ft footprint + aisle

Clearance Requirements

A 50-person open office exceeds IBC occupant load thresholds that trigger specific egress requirements. A floor with 50 or more occupants must have at least two accessible egress paths leading to separate exits.

- Primary aisles (60" minimum for 50+ person floors): The main aisles should be 60" wide — accommodating two wheelchairs passing (60" total), or three people walking abreast. At 50 occupants during emergency egress, 60"-wide aisles move people out significantly faster than 48" aisles.
- Back-to-back benching clearance (60"): Same as smaller open offices — 30" per person behind each bench face. With 10-seat back-to-back benching runs, the 60" aisle serves 20 people (10 on each side). At peak exit times, this aisle handles significant pedestrian load — 60" (not 36") is mandatory.
- ADA accessible routes: At least one fully ADA-compliant route (36" minimum, 44" preferred) must connect every workstation to every exit. With 60" primary aisles, this is satisfied. Additionally, at least one full ADA route must connect from the entrance to each workstation area — confirm this in the layout.
- ADA 60" turning circles: Required at each primary aisle intersection and at each focus room/support space entrance. With 60" × 60" primary aisle crossings, a 60" turning circle fits exactly at 90° — adequate, but tighter than recommended. At key turning points, widen to 66"×66" to provide margin.
- Focus room door clearance (36"): Each focus room door has a 36" arc. Plan 36" of clearance on each side of focus room doors before placing adjacent workstation furniture.
- Travel distance to exit (≤200 feet per IBC for office occupancy): In a 4,000 sq ft floor, the maximum diagonal is approximately 90 feet — well within the 200-foot IBC limit. However, if occupants must navigate around workstation clusters to reach an exit, the actual travel distance may exceed the straight-line distance. Map actual travel paths, not diagonal distances.

Option A: Activity-Based Working (ABW)

In an ABW model for 50 employees, reduce the workstation count to 35–40 (0.7–0.8 ratio) and allocate the freed space to a varied mix of work settings: 8 open-plan benching seats, 12 focus desk seats (with higher screens for privacy), 6 lounge-style seats, 4 standing-height bar seats, 4 enclosed focus rooms, and 2

phone booths. Total fixed desk count: 30–35, supplemented by 15–20 supplemental work settings. Requires a desk booking system. Minimum floor area: 2,800–3,500 sq ft for a 50-person ABW environment. Best for organizations with $\geq 30\%$ remote or travel-heavy employees.

Option B: Departmental Zones with Dedicated Storage Spines

Divide the 50-person floor into 5 departments of 10 people each. Between each pair of adjacent departments, position a 10-foot storage spine (a row of lateral files or storage towers) that serves as both shared storage and a visual/acoustic partition. Each storage spine is 18"–24" deep and 120" long — sufficient for 3–4 lateral files or storage towers. The spine-and-zone strategy reduces cross-departmental foot traffic noise and creates a more navigable floor plan at 50+ people.

Option C: Perimeter Private + Open Center

Position the 50 workstations as a perimeter ring around the floor edges (desks facing windows, back to room), with all collaboration, storage, and support functions in the open center. This reversal of the typical open-office layout gives every employee natural light and eliminates the "windowless interior desk" phenomenon. A 4,000 sq ft floor with a 60'x67' footprint has approximately 254 linear feet of perimeter — more than enough for 50 desks at 24" per person ($50 \times 24" = 100$ feet of desk run required). The center zone (~2,000 sq ft) accommodates all collaboration, focus rooms, storage, and circulation.