



HOW TO CHOOSE: CONFERENCE FURNITURE

Traditionally, conference rooms consisted of one main conference table and chairs where people gathered to listen and exchange ideas. This mainstream view of a conference room's function has been rapidly devolving into one of smaller more intimate gathering spaces outfitted with easy to access sharing technology.

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Redefining the conference room in the modern context has been rapidly changing. Traditionally, conference rooms consisted of one main conference table with chairs for people to gather, listen to lectures and, probably, take notes on laptop computers or note pads.

Today, they have become smaller and more prolific around the office as huddle spaces and dedicated meeting rooms that serve a much wider function. Large corporate conference rooms are still used by some Fortune 500 company's for annual board-of-directors' meetings. But most corporations are downsizing conference rooms into multi-use spaces for training centers, video learning, and teleconferencing with global colleague. Conversions to "break-out" rooms, and overflow offices for mobile workers are becoming more common.

In today's more open plan office design, limited physical space necessitates that all areas serve multiple purposes. Entertaining, training, video conferencing and face-to-face meetings tend to happen quickly. Furnishings and spaces that can adjust quickly are more sought after.

Multiple smaller conferencing areas near work zones where teams can quickly come together, discuss a problem, then disperse back to their own work space are far more efficient for how we work today. A forward thinking meeting agenda also encourages recruitment and talent acquisition.

Ask yourself some pertinent questions about how your team works and what sort of meeting style your company embraces, and how your brand can benefit from reevaluating meeting spaces will be a great place to start:

Define Your Conference Needs

If you carefully consider this question, you may be able to expand your conference room's function by giving the space more flexible options. Then you can begin to shop furniture.

Traditional Conference Rooms, where a group of people gather at one table for discussion around a large conference table makes this a primary piece of furniture that needs to be selected first. Plus comfortable seating. Other furniture needs may include a credenza or podium. Audio-visual and remote conferencing equipment, would follow. You will need to know the distance required from a projector to the screen and you need to make sure there are power outlets where you need them.

Once you determine what furniture you need, you must then determine the maximum outside dimensions of the table as well as the number of people that must be accommodated at the conference table. The next step is to pick the shape of your conference table. Then, select the style of the furniture as well as what the materials, finishes and fabrics for the chairs.

Flexible Conferencing Solutions would include mobile tables that can be configured in a variety of ways, incorporating small huddle spaces around the office where people can easily gather for quick discussions, and options for training new staff.

Once you know the level of functionality you need, your Office Furniture NOW! consultant can help you find the best solutions for your teams.

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON CONFERENCE ROOM OPTIONS, DOWNLOAD OUR E-BOOK!



What Size Meeting Spaces Are Needed?

To determine the maximum dimensions of the table that can fit in your space, first measure the room's length and width, not counting obstructions such as columns and other furniture.

The clearance is defined as the space between the table and the closest obstruction, increases with the size of the room to give the space the right feel. We recommend using these dimensions:

Length of Space	Min. Clearance	Best Clearance
16 feet	42" (3.5')	48" (4')
Up to 22 feet	48" (4')	60" (5')
Over 22 feet	60" (5')	72" (6')

Once you determine what type of furniture you want in your conference area, you must determine the maximum outside dimensions of the table as well as the number of people to be accommodated at the conference table.

Shapes

The type of organization you are purchasing for is a big factor in choosing the type of conference table that will be appropriate for your needs. With regards to shape, the organizational structure of your business can play a surprising role in what you will need.

A corporate environment that is very hierarchical, may opt for a traditional boat shaped or rectangular shaped conference table that will have a specific head of the table for the person at the top to occupy. If your organization is more even in its power distribution, a round, square or U-shaped conference table might be best so that everyone can face one another and the table fosters multilateral communication.

Download our [Conference Room Furniture e-book](#) for more detailed information on the shapes available in conference tables, here is a list of the most frequently used:

- Racetrack
- Boat
- Square
- Round
- Elliptical



Connectivity

Many people bring their laptops and other powered peripheral devices into meetings to take notes, look up details and host PowerPoint presentations. As a result of this, many models now come with recessed areas containing power outlets and other options like Ethernet ports and runners for additional connectivity, via fiber optic or some other connection.

Videoconferencing

With advances in telecommunications, the trend towards decentralization in business culture and overall globalization of the economy, most conference tables are now adaptable to videoconferencing. Retrofitting a traditional conference room to work as a videoconference area is not as straightforward as it seems, but it can be done.

With a traditional conference table, seating is typically arranged in two rows down the side of a table, or in a square or circle around a central point, videoconferencing requires a more V or U shaped layout so that all of the participants will be visible to the camera. For a traditional conference table with two people sitting in rows on either side, a camera tends to mainly capture the table itself, with computers and other items sitting on it, rather than the faces of the participants on either side of the table. At the same time, people on either side of the



table have to crane their necks around the person in front of them in order to be able to see the faces of the people in the monitor. Fortunately, new thinking in conference table design has led to designs which are adaptable to both. In particular the nutcracker configuration is a good choice for organizations needing to provide for both conferencing and video conferencing.



Nutcracker conference tables can serve as a traditional rectangular or boat shaped for regular conferences. Then when videoconferencing is required, either side of the table can slide apart on wheels or sliders into a V-shaped configuration so that everyone sitting at the table is visible to the camera and they are all able to see the central monitor. Options include:

- Modular
- Nutcracker
- V-Shaped
- U-shaped

Another adaptable conference table design is [mobile](#) or modular conference table systems. These are made up of multiple smaller tables that are designed to fit together in various ways. Their legs have either caster wheels or sliders so they can be moved around easily. Typically, these modular conference table systems can be adapted into boat shaped, square and V shaped layouts. They can also multi-task for training desks and classroom style desking in rows.

Single Table Versus Modularity & Huddles

While modular conference table systems have the benefit of being flexible many traditional layout large conference tables have dedicated recesses and connectors for power and network connections. Planning for modular and huddles should account for direct wifi and power connectivity.

TV, Camera and Computer Mounts

Combine table solutions with a mobile TV mount for a flat panel TV and camera. Our mobile TV mounts have a place to attach a computer that can be used to connect your TV and camera to your network.

At Office Furniture NOW! we sell both new and gently used conference tables. If you are interested in information about used conference tables, give us a call.

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