

# Planning Kitchen Work Centers

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Reference Number: **KB-01071**

Last Modified: **July 21, 2021**

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The information in this article applies to:



## QUESTION

In my family, we do a lot of cooking and baking together, and we want to remodel and add on to our kitchen to accommodate all of this activity. Do you have any suggestions?



## ANSWER

Good kitchen design features a work triangle, which is a work area defined by the location of the sink, stove, and refrigerator. Work triangles are a valuable tool for planning an efficient kitchen for one cook, but may not be enough to create a good design for a kitchen used by more than one cook at the same time.

When a kitchen is routinely used by multiple people at once, it's a good idea to incorporate work centers into its design.

Also called work zones, kitchen work centers are areas of a kitchen dedicated to a particular task. They are designed to house the equipment and ingredients necessary for that task, and also take into consideration the kind of space and work surfaces best suited to it. Common examples of work centers include:

## Prep Station

A Prep Station is the work center where food is prepared and combined prior to being cooked. Activities that take place here include washing, cutting, measuring, and mixing ingredients.



Prep Stations should:

- Be close to the refrigerator and either the kitchen's primary sink or its own sink.
- Have ample countertop space for working.
- Provide storage for items like cutting boards, knives and utensils, and mixing bowls.
- Offer easy access to towels, kitchen towels, aprons, and hand soap.
- Be within reach of commonly used ingredients and seasonings.

## Cooking Center

As the name implies, a Cooking Center is the zone where food is actually cooked. The primary task performed is stove-top cooking, although baking or roasting may also be done here - particularly if the kitchen has a range rather than separate cooktop and oven.



Cooking Centers should:

- Be centered on the kitchen's cooktop.
- Provide countertop space on either side of the cooktop as a staging area.
- Include storage for pots, pans, lids, utensils like spatulas and trivets.
- Offer easy access to oven mitts and safety equipment such as a fire extinguisher or fire blanket and first aid kit.
- Be within reach of commonly used seasonings like salt and pepper.

If large pots of water are often heated, a wall tap near the cooktop is also a convenient option.

## Cleanup

Again, as the name implies, the Cleanup Center is where items used during the cooking process and the meal are cleaned.



Cleanup Stations should:

- Be centered around the kitchen's primary sink. A deep sink is ideal for both washing large items and hiding dirty ones from guests until they can be washed.
- Provide storage for cleaning supplies like soap, dish washing detergents, sponges, cloths and towels.
- If the kitchen has a dishwasher, it should be located within 36" of the primary sink.
- Include sufficient countertop space to collect dirty dishes and also allow clean items to air dry.

When planning a Cleanup Center, consider its proximity to storage for the things used in the other work centers, including: tableware, mixing bowls, utensils, and pots and pans.

## Eating Center

The Eating Center is where visitors in the kitchen eat, rather than cook.



An Eating Center should:

- Provide seating and countertop or table space that is used only for dining or snacking.
- Be within reach of dishes, silverware, drinkware, and table linens.
- Have easy access to condiments, the refrigerator and, if the kitchen has one, the Snack Center.

If the kitchen will often be used as a place for entertaining, you may want to design an Eating Center that offers a view of the other work centers and allows interaction between cooks and guests.

## Baking Center

Households that do a lot of baking may want to consider a kitchen baking center. A baking center is similar to a food prep center in that foods are measured and mixed here, but differ from a standard prep area in that prepared foods are usually finished in the oven.





A Baking Center should be located near the oven(s) and can include:





- Storage for baking pans, sheets, and cooling racks, as well as baking ingredients.
- Easy access access to utensils like spatulas and spoons.
- A thick marble or granite surface for rolling pastry.
- A lowered countertop surface for easier dough kneading.
- Appliance garages to house heavy countertop appliances without lifting.

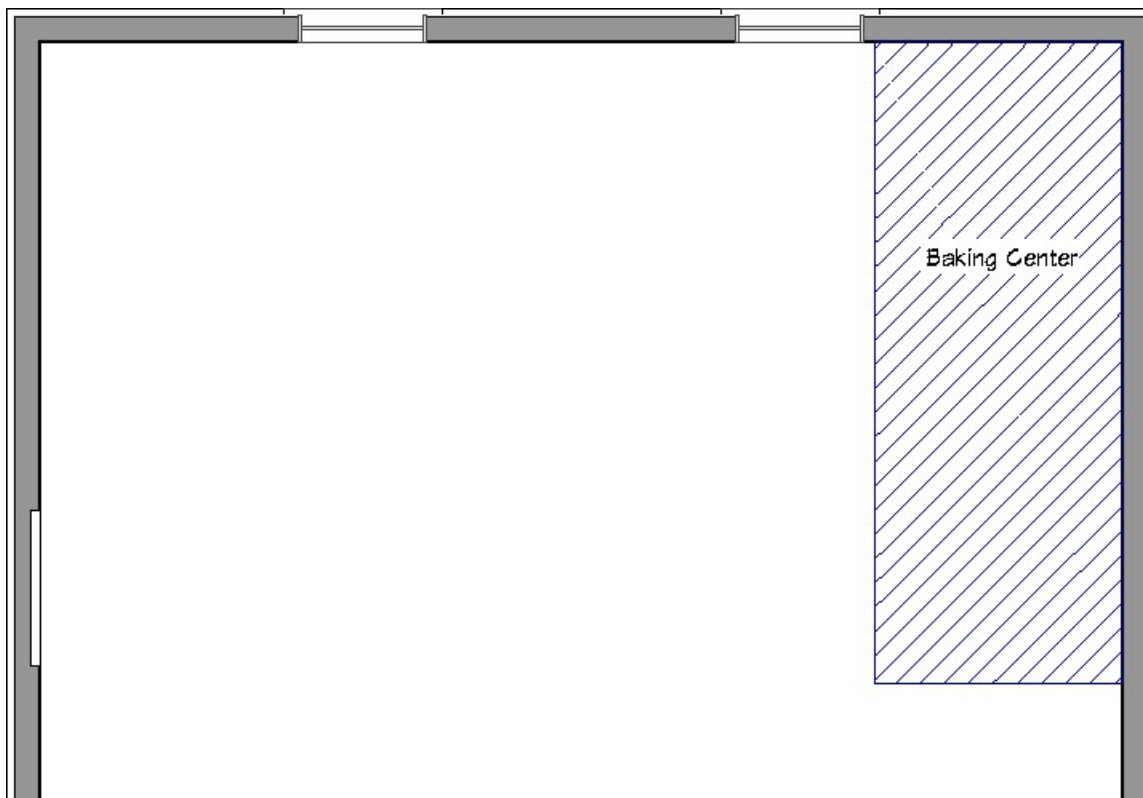
## Other Work Centers

Other possibilities for kitchen work centers might be for canning, a mail sorting station, or a homework desk. If your family does a lot of entertaining, you may want to consider a butler's pantry as part of your overall plan.

## To plan a kitchen's work centers

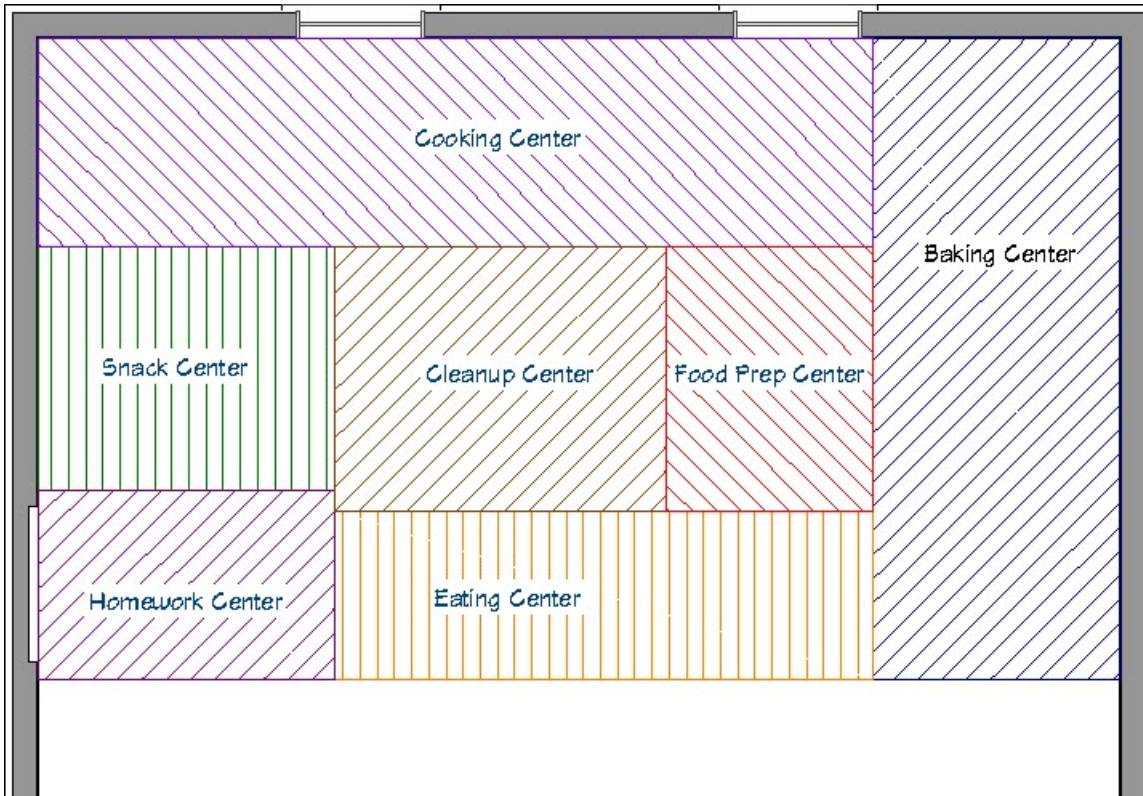
1. The first step to planning a kitchen design is to determine the total space available for the kitchen, as well as examine the traffic patterns through the room. To learn more, see the Related Articles section.
2. Once the kitchen's space is defined, think about the tasks that are performed frequently enough that they would benefit from having a dedicated work space. In this example, we will create a busy and spacious kitchen with seven different work stations:
  - Food Prep Station
  - Cooking Center
  - Cleanup Center

- Eating Center
  - Baking Center
  - Snack Center
  - Homework Center
3. Before we start placing cabinets and fixtures, we can visually divide the space into different zones using closed polylines. Select **CAD> Draw Polyline**  from the menu, then click and drag to draw a rectangle.
4. Click the **Select Objects**  button, then click on the rectangular polyline to select it and click the **Open Object**  edit button. On the **FILL STYLE** panel of the **Polyline Specification** dialog:
- Specify a pattern type, color, and any other settings.
  - Check the box beside **Transparent Pattern Background**.
  - Click **OK** to close the dialog and apply your changes.
5. Use the polyline's edit handles to move and reshape the polyline as needed so that it represents the first of your work center areas.
6. Select **CAD> Text> Rich Text** , then click inside the polyline to place a text object at that location. In the **Rich Text Specification** dialog, type the name of the work center associated with the polyline, then click **OK**.

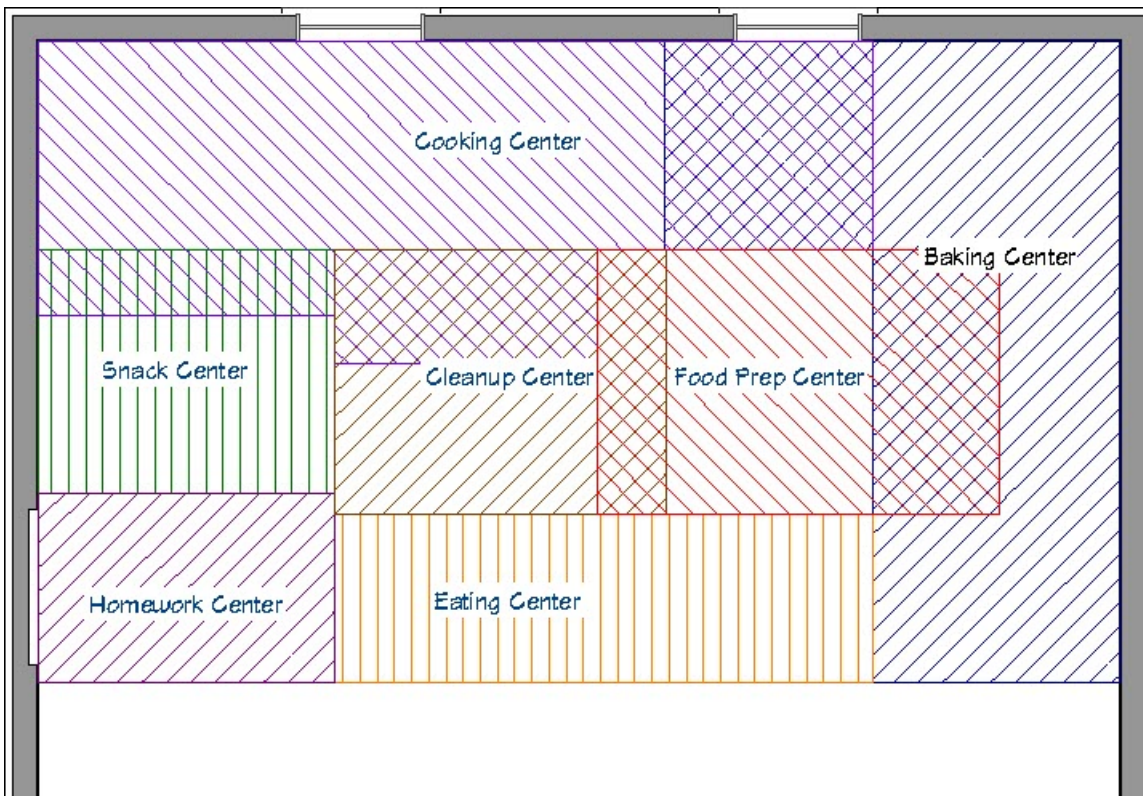


7. Repeat steps three through six as needed to create a polyline for each of the work centers you want to design.

8. Using the polylines' edit handles, move, resize, and reshape them as needed until they are arranged in a manner that suits your needs.




9. Bear in mind that these polylines are meant to give you a rough idea of how your kitchen will lay out. They are a visual aide only and can be edited at any time or even deleted. You may find that as your work progresses, centers with similar purposes actually overlap one another.



10. Once you have an idea of where the different work centers in your kitchen will be, you can begin to place



cabinets.

11. Select **View> Library Browser**  from the menu to open the Library Browser, then browse to **Home Designer Core Catalogs> Architectural> Appliances**.

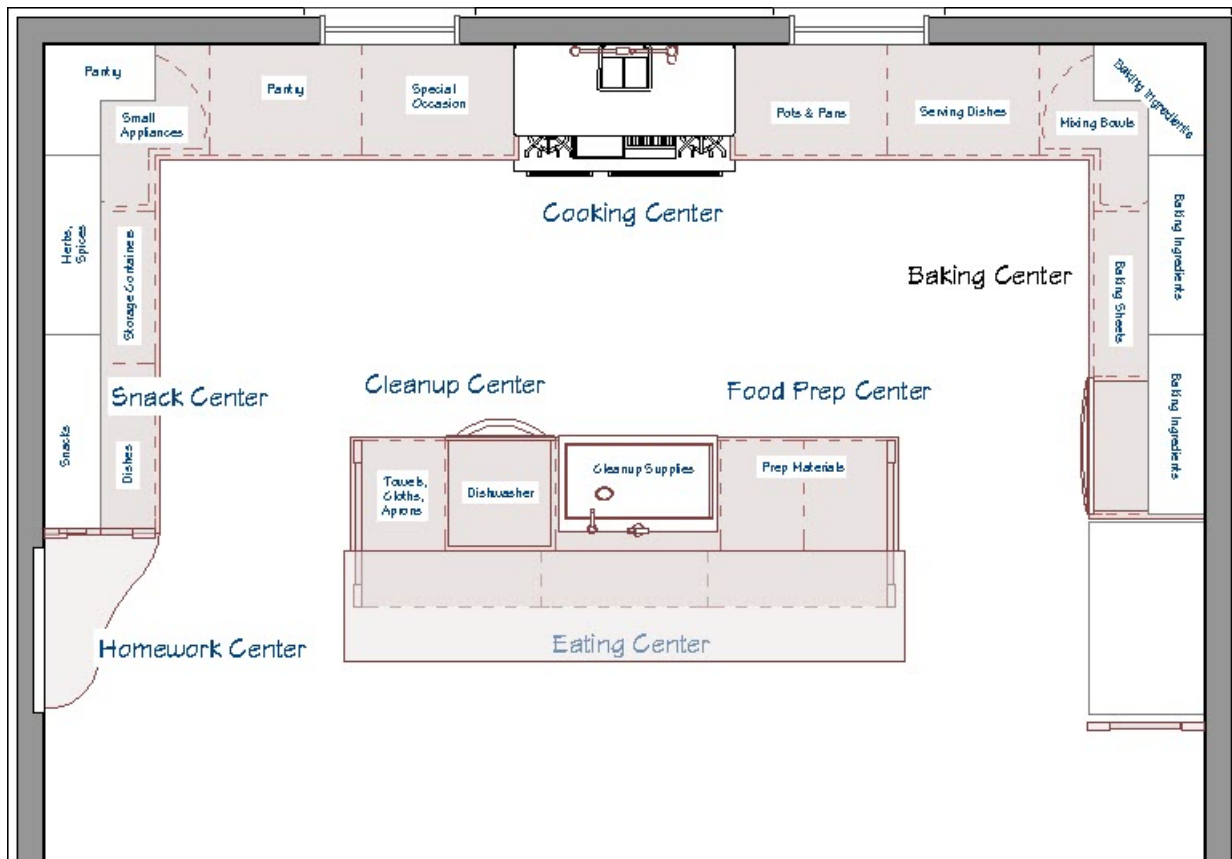
- A selection of different kitchen appliances is available here. Browse to an item, click on its name, then move your cursor into the drawing area and click to place the object at that location.
- Some appliances, including most sinks, cooktops, and dishwashers are built-in fixtures, which means that they must be placed into a base cabinet wide enough to accommodate it.
- A few appliances, like built-in refrigerators and wall ovens, must be placed in a full height cabinet. Again, the cabinet should be wide enough to accommodate the fixture.

## To plan storage and shared areas

While different work centers are dedicated to different tasks, they may still have certain requirements in common. For example:

- Both the Prep Station and Baking Center should be within reach of ingredients like flour, sugar, and spices as well as equipment like mixing bowls and utensils.
- The Prep Station, Baking Center, and Eating Center should have easy access to the refrigerator.
- The Cooking and Baking Centers should be adjacent to the oven(s).

You can help ensure that your storage is organized to meet these overlapping needs using the same strategy used to initially map your work centers - using polylines and text.



Related Articles

[🏠 Planning a Kitchen Work Area \(/support/article/KB-00844/planning-a-kitchen-work-area.html\)](/support/article/KB-00844/planning-a-kitchen-work-area.html)