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FAMILY ISSUE
THE NEW
LIVING
ROOM

Summer COLOR

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GARDENS,
AND PARTIES

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play hard, *work smart*

Long school days are on the horizon, and rooms in these two homes reveal how dedicated spaces for hanging out or hitting the books can ease your kids' transition back to school—and keep your home clutter-free!



ALL FUN & GAMES

FIND A SEAT

Houston decorator and prop stylist Becki Griffin outfitted this “boy cave” for her 16-year-old twin sons. An affordable sofa with chaise (Ektorp from IKEA), *above*, has plenty of room for the boys to stretch out or pile on with friends for movie night. The gray slipcover “hides most of the dirt my boys bring home,” Becki says.

ON DISPLAY

Instead of splurging on custom built-ins, Becki lined up four inexpensive bookcases (Billy from IKEA). The shelves hold mementos, movies, video games, and books. To give the display a focal point, she removed two shelves so she could fit larger items like globes and a dartboard. Clip-on lights at the top of each bookcase add ambience.

IN THE DARK

“Decorating around a TV is a challenge for everyone,” Becki says. “They’re just so big!” To make this 50-inch flat-screen disappear, *left*, she coated the wall with flat black chalkboard paint, hung papier-mâché trophies, and used chalk to draw a “mount” around each one. The dark wall gives a movie-theater experience.



WELL SUPPLIED

At her stretch of countertop, *right*, each girl has a school-issued laptop and everything she needs to work independently: tape dispenser, stapler, calendar, and pencils.

THE RIGHT DIRECTION

The U-shape layout means each workstation faces a different way, which cuts down on distractions.



BACK TO SCHOOL SET UP A HOMEWORK STATION

Kids can do their homework almost anywhere as long as it's properly equipped, says Barbara Reich, professional organizer and author of *Secrets of an Organized Mom*. Here's what you need to know:

BIG ENOUGH

The work surface should be able to fit an open textbook, an open notebook, and a computer at the same time.

WITHIN ARM'S REACH

Everything you might need while working—even a trash can—should be reachable from where you sit.

“Getting up breaks your focus,” Reich says. “Research shows it can take 25 minutes to get back in the concentration zone.”

If your work spot tends to move from desk to kitchen table to dining table, keep supplies on a rolling cart.

DIVIDE & CONQUER

If the teacher isn't already using this system, show your child how to use a different color of pocket folder for each class. Keep assignments on one side and completed work on the other. ■

OPEN & CLOSED

A combo of cabinets and cubbies keeps supplies handy, *left*. Text and reference books are stored in the cabinets; the cubbies keep paper of all kinds (graph, art, and construction).

PAPER TRAIL

Making kids responsible for their own papers and supplies instills good habits. In this office, each girl has two of her own desk drawers and two file drawers.

