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The 10 Most Dynamic Desks

Designers Sara Bengur and Scott Sanders get behind ELLE DECOR's picks of the top worktables

Photography by Pierre Chateau · Produced by Alison Hall

It's one of the most straightforward and useful pieces of furniture, so why does it seem virtually impossible to find a good desk? Just look at today's offices, where a vast army of metal and plastic desks is engineered to work first and look great last—and that mission has been accomplished. Conversely, any number of lovely pieces out there would add charm to a home office, but too few are functional.

And in these days of online shopping, e-mail, and telecommuting, with bills and bank statements piling up, a practical desk for the home

is more crucial than ever. Sara Bengur, known for her light hand in endowing Modernism with an international flair, and Scott Sanders, lauded for his fresh, cleaned-up take on '50s Americana, understand that in order to find the right desk, you must first know what your needs are: Do you require storage? Lots of legroom? Plenty of workspace? A surface that can take a beating? And, of course, it shouldn't resemble some office-supply overstock. Here, the designers share their thoughts on ten of the most versatile and best-looking desks out there. ▶



1 TIDES TURN WRITING DESK BY MARTHA STEWART SIGNATURE FURNITURE WITH BERNHARDT

"This one has enough character and quirks, like the faux-ivory drawer pulls and the paper-lined drawers, to make you think it's a vintage find," says Bengur. "And it's an excellent value." Sanders agrees. "Feminine but not too," he says. "It's a good size, and it will get better with age, which is key." Height: 31"; width: 51"; depth: 29"; material: cherry veneer in espresso finish; delivery: 4-6 weeks; price: \$900



2 WRITING TABLE BY JACKSON SIEGEL AARON

"Great for a small room," remarks Sanders. "It's distinctive, though the parchment-and-bronze combination enables it to meld with styles from classic to modern." Bengur is even more enthusiastic: "A gorgeous little table, so glamorous you'll want to write love letters. It's hard to find a diminutive desk that's also functional, but here it is." Height: 29.5"; width: 39.5"; depth: 19.5"; material: parchment and bronze (available in other sizes); delivery: 10-12 weeks; price: \$2,800



3 CAMPAIGN DESK BY CRATE & BARREL

"This has a nice strong oak feel, and the decorative metal hardware adds Asian flair," Bengur says. "It's generously scaled, and it's quite comfortable to sit at." Sanders is impressed with its value. "Fantastic for the price," he says. "You could put it in a teenager's room, a den, a family room. It has a masculine, Mission feel to it." Height: 30.5"; width: 56"; depth: 21.5"; material: French oak in lacquer finish with antiqued-brass pulls; delivery: 1-2 weeks; price: \$1,000



4 EILEEN DESK BY ANTONIO CITTERIO FOR B&B ITALIA

"With its graphic lines and colorful metal frame, it's playful—almost like a piece of sculpture," says Bengur. "And it's refreshing to see the cutout for cords and wiring." Sanders agrees about its practicality but finds the appeal primarily visual. "It's not that deep," he says. "I would put it in a modern living room." Height: 28"; width: 52"; depth: 18"; material: gray oak and metal (available in other colors, finishes, and sizes); delivery: 12 weeks; price: \$3,827



5 FRANK DESK BY JULIAN CHICHESTER

"French '40s meets neoclassical," says Sanders. "The materials and details are lovely—a true signature piece. It's not huge, but it's a comfortable height, and you get plenty of storage space." Bengur raves, too: "A beautiful piece. Elegant and chic, dainty yet strong, and useful but not intrusive—perfect for a bedroom." Height: 32"; width: 43"; depth: 26"; material: bleached oak with vellum-covered drawers; delivery: 8-10 weeks; price: \$4,195



6 KEITH DESK BY THOMAS O'BRIEN FOR HICKORY CHAIR

Bengur calls this desk "dressy and well made. The wood is so exceptional, in fact, that you'd probably want to use a blotter to protect it. The low apron, however, could be a problem for someone with long legs." Sanders finds it "stately but not stuffy. It would work in a study or even as a console table in a living room." Height: 31"; width: 58"; depth: 28"; material: striped-kingwood veneer with polished-nickel pulls (available in other finishes); delivery: 10-12 weeks; price: \$2,700



7 ONDINE DESK BY SALON MODERNE

"Such clean lines," says Bengur. "It's practical, yet it doesn't shout 'Desk!' It's contemporary but versatile. It could easily go in other settings, since it comes in a variety of colors." Sanders is also a fan. "It's gutsy, strong, nothing fussy," he adds. "And the textured leather contrasts smartly with the slick lacquer." Height: 30"; width: 60"; depth: 27"; material: lacquered wood with leather top (available in other colors, finishes, and sizes); delivery: 8-10 weeks; price: \$4,600



8 JEAN-PIERRE DESK BY HÉLÈNE AUMONT FROM PROFILES

"The Arts and Crafts look is very attractive," says Sanders. "And it's comfortable. I see it in a ski house or a cabin." Bengur, on the other hand, finds it ideal for a more sophisticated, urban interior. "The angles and joinery remind me of the Eiffel Tower and fin de siècle Paris," she says. Height: 30"; width: 71"; depth: 35"; material: walnut with leather top (available in other leathers, finishes, and sizes); delivery: 12 weeks; price: \$7,000



9 SPENCER WRITING TABLE BY BRITISH KHAKI FURNITURE

"This one has lasting charm," Bengur notes. "It goes with many styles, so it's a solid investment. And it's well made." Sanders appreciates its flexibility. "It's traditional but not uptight," he says. "And with its Anglo-Indian touches, it would look equally good floating or against a wall." Height: 30"; width: 54"; depth: 28"; material: reclaimed teak in standard teak finish with brass hardware and leather top (available in other finishes and sizes); delivery: 8 weeks; price: \$4,995



10 BRIGHTON WRITING TABLE BY BAKER FURNITURE

"Terrific for a rambling country house, in a sunny room filled with books or flower prints," says Sanders. "The center drawer flips down for a keyboard—you won't find that in an antique." Adds Bengur: "This desk would lend a homey English touch to any room. It has an open and informal ease, plus it can handle lots of clutter." Height: 30.5"; width: 56"; depth: 28"; material: Malacca rattan with painted-hardwood panels (also available in black); delivery: 4-6 weeks; price: \$2,450