

Basic Kitchen Design Principles

Understanding the basic principles of kitchen layout will help take much of the mystery out of the design process. The most basic layout principle is the **work triangle**. The work triangle is the line drawn from each of the three primary workstations in the kitchen - **the food storage area, the cooking area, and the clean-up area**. By drawing a line between each of these areas in your plan, you can see the distance you'll walk to move to and from each area.

The sum of the ideal work triangle is supposed to be between 15 and 22 feet, putting each of the three appliances within two or three steps of one another. The three primary kitchen workstations that create the work triangle are:

- 1. Food storage** - Your refrigerator and pantry are the major items here. Cabinetry, like lazy susan or swing-out pantry units add function and convenience. Options like wine racks, spice racks, and rollout trays help to organize your groceries.
- 2. The preparation/cooking station** - Your range, oven, microwave, and smaller appliances are found in this area. Counter space is important in this section. Conserve space by moving appliances off the counter with appliance garage cabinets and space-saving ideas like towel rods and pot lid racks.
- 3. The clean-up station** - Everyone's least favorite activity is one of the kitchen's most important - clean up. This area is home to the sink, waste disposal, and dishwasher. Cabinetry for this station is designed to organize with the trash bin cabinet and rollout tray baskets for storage convenience.

Your kitchen is probably more than just a place to cook and eat. You may choose to include a breakfast bar, desk, bookshelves, computer station, a TV or whatever in your kitchen.

Triangle reloaded

The work triangle however is experiencing a remodel of its own. The work triangle was designed for an age when there was only one cook, and only three appliances (fridge, stove, sink).

Here are a few top tips:

- No leg of the triangle is supposed to be less than 4 feet or more than 9 feet.
- There should be no human traffic flow cutting through the triangle.
- Place the microwave near the refrigerator for convenience
- **Walk space should be 42" wide** to account for traffic flow and clearance of large appliance doors or large relatives
- Counter space on either side of the range or cook top **should be a minimum of 15 inches**
- **An 18-inch counter should be adjacent to the fridge** on the same side as the handle
- **The food prep area (minimum counter space 36 inches)** is ideally located between the fridge and the sink; if the food prep area is between the sink and the range or cook top, it will involve more travel.
- A lower surface is best for food prep (measure 7 to 8 inches below your elbow height)
- In two-cook kitchens, the fridge and range/cook top are usually shared.
- Two triangles can share a leg, but shouldn't overlap
- An island with a second sink creates at least one more triangle, and adapts to many uses: wet bar location, flower cutting and arranging, homework station etc.