

The Kitchen Work Triangle: Still Relevant?

Lori Jo Krengel, owner, Kitchens by Krengel, St. Paul, Minn.

Have you ever tried to cook in a kitchen with a poor work triangle? If you have, you see that it still holds a strong place in design. We always make an effort to use the work triangle and NKBA [National Kitchen & Bath Association] guidelines. It has merit, but as a general guideline rather than a stiff rule.

Katie Hurst, showroom manager, Hurst Total Home, Centerville, Ohio

The relevance of the triangle is partially determined by kitchen size. In a very small kitchen, the work triangle seems to be important for function; however, when I'm designing larger kitchens, the triangle changes or I use multiple triangles or work stations. Also, as more people use their kitchens for more than just cooking, their personal use of space determines how much, or how little, I implement the work triangles.

JC Cousins, vice president, Atlantic Designs Kitchens, Bangor, Maine

The work triangle was designed for efficiency. Its purpose was not necessarily to have



a triangle in a kitchen, but to keep distances between work stations comfortable for one person. And let's face it — it was designed when men worked outside the home and ... women generally stayed home. In my opinion, it's as outdated as the way of life in the 1950s, '60s, and early '70s. It's a good base to start a design, but no longer a rule.

Charlie Allen, president, Charlie Allen Restorations, Cambridge, Mass.

As a renovation firm specializing in period

houses, we bring a lot of older kitchens up to date. While everyone still wants a functional kitchen, the room is a lot more than the workspace it once was. Rather than being the overriding design strategy, the kitchen triangle has to be integrated within a larger design that includes space for entertaining and sharing cooking duties with friends and family, for kids to do homework and parents to check email, and for dining and watching television.

Janet Hesselschwerdt, kitchen designer, Metropolitan Cabinets & Countertops, Norwood, Mass.

The kitchen triangle still makes sense as a guiding design principle. No matter what clients hope to accomplish with their kitchen, they always want improved function. But I don't employ the triangle very often. My clients want to put a personal stamp on their kitchen. The most important thing I can do as a designer is to listen and understand how they use the space, then create the unique floor plan to accomplish those goals..

Measuring Up when it comes to cabinets, the linear foot method is no longer efficient



EVERY SO OFTEN contractors or their clients ask about cabinet costs per linear foot. But that pricing method — the unitized system — is a throwback to an earlier time when a carpenter built the cabinet frontal framework and doors, the countertop held the base unit together, and drawers were options friction-fit inside the frame opening. It may have been easy to estimate costs, but it's not the best method to use today with so many cabinet options.

OPTION OVERLOAD

Now cabinets are priced using a basic entry style along with varying degrees of upgrades. When you send clients to the nearest cabinet shop or designer, have

them get answers to these questions:

Box construction: Engineered wood or plywood? The cheapest of both don't last long; the luxury side can add 10% to 20% to the cost. Frame or frameless? Inset or full overlay doors? Inset doors within a frame will add 10% to 40% to the cost.

Drawer glides: What type? At the low end are epoxy-coated side-mounted glides on ¾ extensions; high-end are undermount full-extension with soft-closing mechanisms that may add an additional 2% to 5% to the price. Not all undermount glides are created equal. Test a drawer by opening it; cheaper versions often stick.

Center panel: A ¼-inch panel or a reversed raised ¾-inch-thick panel? The difference can mean 10% to 20% added to the cost — depending on wood quality.



Stiles and rails: Today's homeowners are looking for 3-inch frames and sometimes larger. Each one of these adds to the cost. —*Kelly Morisseau, author of Kelly's Kitchen Sync, a book of insider kitchen design and remodeling tips, works for MSK Design Build, in Northern California.*