

## COMPARATIVE FUNCTIONALITY AND FOOTPRINT OF POPULAR DESK SHAPES

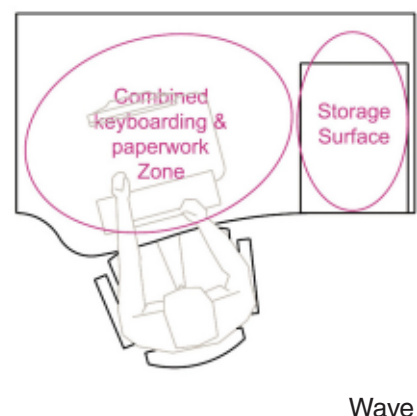
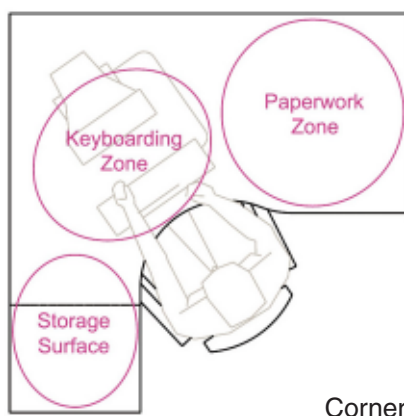
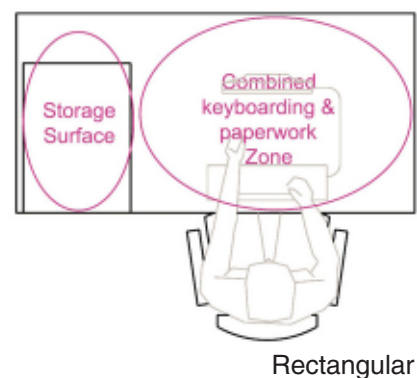
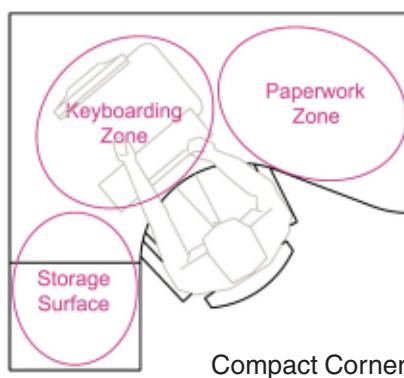
Four of the most popular current desk shapes are Corner, Compact Corner, Wave and Rectangular. Each provides a different work surface area, but the simple measured area of each top is not in direct proportion to the conveniently usable area. Furthermore, a desk with a small surface area does not necessarily require less floor space than a desk with a larger surface area. The accompanying diagrams seek to explain some of the reasons in visual form.

### Functionality

With a corner desk or compact corner desk, the primary working position provides the user with easy access to a significantly larger area of work surface than on a rectangular or wave desk. In addition, on a corner desk or compact corner desk the user can very conveniently access two distinct work zones: a keyboarding zone into the diagonal of the corner, and by rotating and perhaps moving very slightly, a paperwork zone. In addition, the surface above the pedestal provides storage space for papers, letter trays, a printer or other items.

With a rectangular or wave desk it is more difficult to create distinct work zones. As the pedestal is positioned under the main work surface the accessible portion of the work surface is reduced. In addition, to access a different portion of the top it is necessary to roll the chair consciously to one side. In consequence, keyboarding and paperwork have shared or overlapping zones, frequently resulting in the user pushing the keyboard out of the way, and subsequently keying in an inappropriate posture with head or body twisted.

For the reasons outlined, corner and compact corner shapes generally offer greater functionality than wave or rectangular shapes. The main user benefit is the ability to separate keyboarding and paperwork into two distinct zones. The advent of LCD screens makes it possible to position a screen and keyboard within the depth of a rectangular desk, but this does not mean that a rectangular desk so equipped offers the same functionality as a corner or compact corner desk.

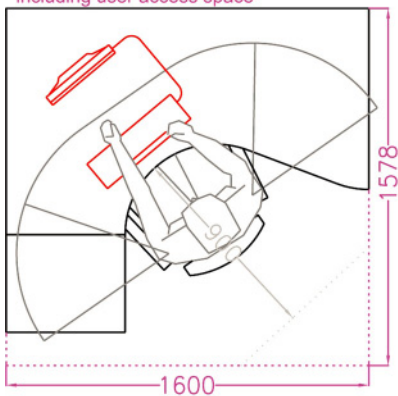


## Footprint

Initial logic suggests that a rectangular or wave shape must take up less floor space (footprint) than a corner or compact corner desk. However, this reasoning does not take into account the need to allow space for the user to push their chair back from the desk when sitting down or standing up to come to or leave their workstation. For a desk backing on to a wall, screen or other barrier, a space of approximately 850mm-900mm must be allowed between the edge of the desk at which the user sits and the barrier. In the case of a rectangular desk, this measurement must be taken at 90° to the straight edge of the desk, because this is the direction in which the user's chair moves when they get up. On a wave desk, the measurement must be taken at 90° from the wave section of the desk. On a corner desk, two measurements are appropriate, because the user may start from a position facing into the diagonal of the desk or into the straight section of the desk. On a compact corner desk, the relevant measurements are from the diagonal into the corner and diagonal onto the main work surface.

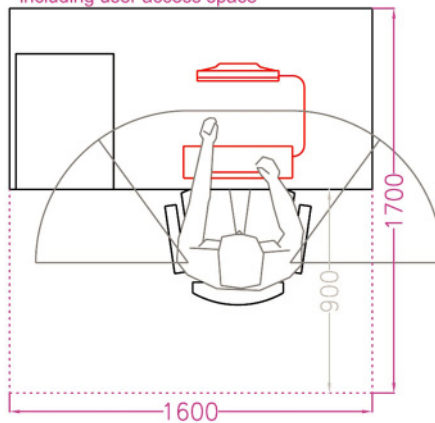
The measurements described above, added to the footprint of the appropriate desk shapes, define the overall area that should be allowed for each workstation. As may be seen on the accompanying diagrams, for a given popular desk width (1600mm) the areas required for a corner desk and a rectangular desk are the same, the area required for a wave desk is theoretically larger, and the area required for a compact corner desk is the smallest of the four.

2.52 m<sup>2</sup> Workstation footprint including user access space



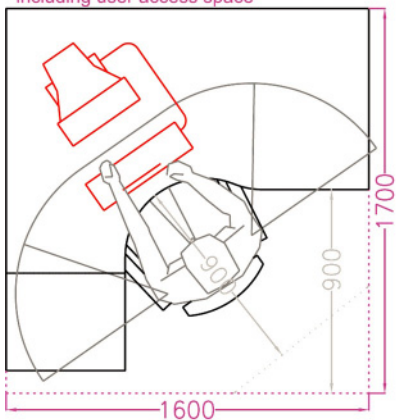
Compact Corner

2.72 m<sup>2</sup> Workstation footprint including user access space



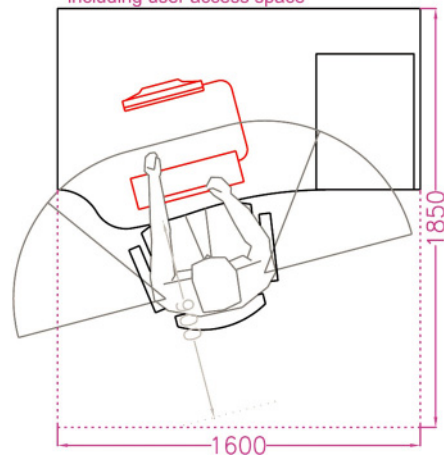
Rectangular

2.72 m<sup>2</sup> Workstation footprint including user access space



Corner

2.96 m<sup>2</sup> Workstation footprint including user access space

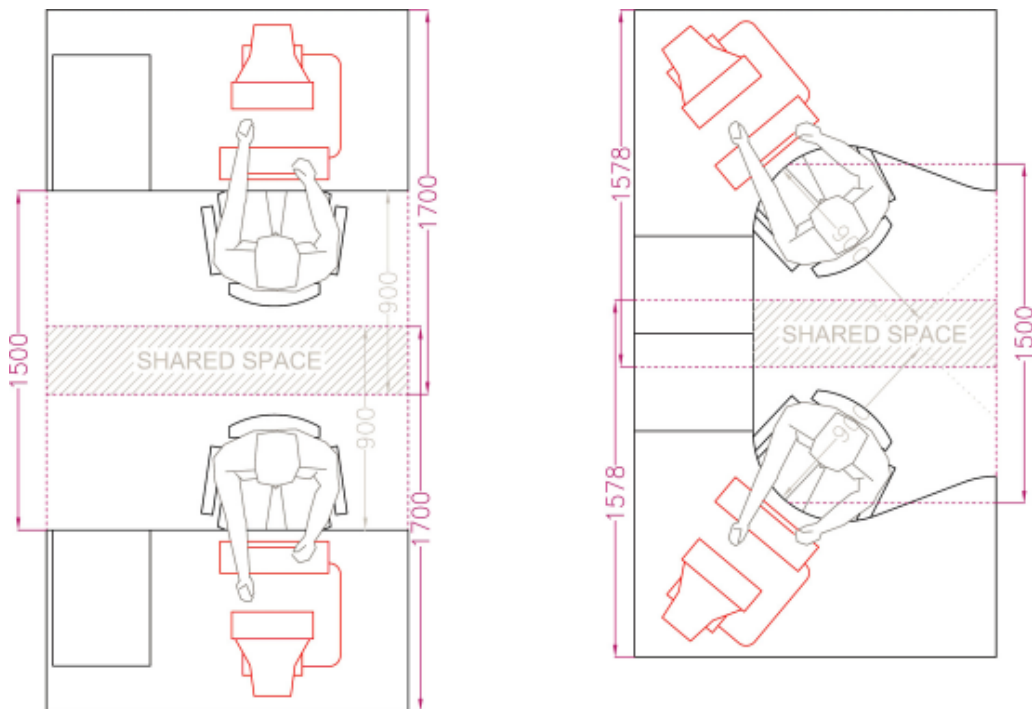


Wave

## Other Considerations

Greater functionality is only a benefit where it is required, and desk shape may sometimes be a more important factor than theoretical work surface footprint. For example, it may make perfect sense to specify a row of rectangular desks side by side if the application is “touchdown” workstations for visiting or short-term users. They may only need somewhere to work briefly on a laptop with a few papers to one side, and the rectangular shape of the desks will allow a straight corridor behind the desks that may result in optimal use of the available space.

If workstations are planned in pairs facing away from each other, some of the “chair space” required for each workstation may be shared between the users. Whilst an individual workstation may require a minimum of 850mm behind it, two workstations with the users back to back may only need to be spaced 1500mm (rather than 1700mm) apart: it is not necessary to allow for both users getting up and pushing back their chairs simultaneously. The relative space-efficiency of different workstop shapes remains the same, but thoughtful planning of workstations in pairs can minimise the overall footprint required.



## Conclusions

In choosing desk shapes careful consideration should be given to the purposes for which the desks will be used: for example, it may be false economy to save a little money by specifying rectangular desks if this reduces functionality for the users and makes the users less efficient or less satisfied with their workspace – especially if in practice it saves no space. If LCD/flat screens are used, compact corner desks arguably offer the optimum combination of space-efficiency and functionality.

There are many factors to consider when selecting desk shapes, but the issues explained here may help guide purchasers to more informed decisions. Desk shapes should also be considered in the context of the space in which they are to be used, and the possible layouts that are achievable within that space. Considered together, these factors will help steer the purchaser to the best choice in any given combination of circumstances.