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The Best Desks for Kids, According to Parents and Teachers

By Lauren Ro



Lauren Ro is interested in baby gear (she's a new mom) and the



ins-and-outs of decorating a home. Prior to the Strategist, she was a writer at Curbed, and before that was Wes Anderson's assistant.

Photo: retailer

Remote learning, while far-from-perfect, is still a necessary alternative to in-person classes for many while the pandemic rages on. For kids schooling from home, Julia Niego, a certified educational therapist and a consultant at Organizational Tutors, says one of the most important things parents and caretakers can do is to create a workspace that “works for the student and is responsive to their needs.” Fashioning a dedicated school space, she continues, will not only help a kid focus on schoolwork, but also help them “feel prepared for what’s coming down the pipeline” — like the possibility of lots more time spent learning remotely.

At the center of any workspace is of course a desk. Niego says that anyone looking to buy a desk for their child should start by considering “the age and development of the child, and the work they’re going to be doing in this space.” Dr. Sanam Hafeez, a neuropsychologist and a member of the faculty at Columbia University’s Teachers College, agrees. “A younger student will likely be focused on places to store crayons, markers, and some toys,” she says, “while an older child will need a surface area for laptops, other electronics, and a place to plug in.” Size matters, too. “The desk that my 16-year-old likes to work at is a different size than what my 9-year-old is using,” says Andrea Thorpe, a 12-year homeschooler of three and the founder of website African-American Homeschool Moms. And don’t discount your child’s preferences. “They should have a say and perhaps even design or create the desk or work area,” says Laurie Block Spigel, a writing teacher and homeschooling parent who runs the website Homeschool NYC. “A personalized desk that has room for the things they need, and is also inspiring, is best.”

To help you find the best desk for your kid to use while schooling from home, we spoke to Niego, Thorpe, Hafeez, Spigel, and 12 other experts — including teachers, educators, and parents — about their favorite desks for kids. Read on for their picks, which we’ve organized by age group from preschoolers through high-schoolers.

Best desks for preschoolers and kindergartners



ECR4Kids Bentwood Multipurpose Kids Table and

Chair Set

\$155

~~\$165~~ now 6% off

Even the youngest of learners need a place to do their work. Tze Chun, the mother of a 3-year-old and founder/CEO of online gallery [Uprise Art](#), chose this bentwood table and chair set from ECR4Kids for her daughter. As it happens, Chun says she actually found it on the Strategist, where contributor [Laura Perciasepe](#) wrote about how it looks like a much more expensive piece from Herman Miller. “We were looking for a desk and chair set for our living room that could live alongside our other furniture without sticking out like a sore thumb,” says Chun. Because the middle of her living room was the best spot for her daughter’s workspace, Chun says the desk’s super-discrete look, coupled with the fact that it can transform into a coffee table and two ottomans (or small side tables) at night when her kid isn’t using it, made this a no-brainer. Importantly, she adds, it’s a more-than-serviceable substitute for her daughter’s at-school desk. “It’s a great height for her to put puzzles together, either sitting or standing, and the past six months she’s been using it as her ‘work station’ while her Montessori school has been closed.”



Ikea Lätt Children's Table and 2 Chairs

\$30

Rose Aka-James, a homeschooler and member of [mater mea](#), an online community for Black moms, chose this set from Ikea for her 3-year-old son who loves to do arts and crafts and different types of hands-on activities. “I needed a desk that was durable, easy to set up, and, most importantly, easy to clean,” she told us, adding that the Lätt checks all her boxes. “I knew I’d be homeschooling and we would be spending a lot of time at this desk, and this is cost-effective and simple for our needs.”



Ikea Flisat Children's Table

\$50

For something similar (but without included chairs), [Laura Fenton](#), a mom to a 5-year-old boy and the author of *[The Little Book of Living Small](#)*, suggests Ikea's Flisat table. While she does not own it, Fenton says she's been eyeing this for her son and likes how the top of the solid-pine desk is cleverly designed with two removable panels that you can place storage bins beneath, giving you places to store kids' supplies right below their work surface. Simply slip two [Trofast bins](#) (sold separately) into the tabletop, and your child now has a place for the stuff they'll need every school day.



Lifetime 5' Essential Fold-in-Half Table

\$40

For another super-simple option, Justo Garcia, a principal product designer at Vox Media, uses this inexpensive table that folds in half as a desk for both his 4-year-old and 6-year-old. It's smaller than your standard folding table, which Garcia says makes it a great option for families in apartments. He also likes how its design makes it super portable. "The table doesn't weigh much, which allows us to bring it everywhere or move it from place to place inside the house," he says. While he promises it's kid-proof, Garcia does think this would work best for younger students. "Our 4-year-old is only doing books, cards, and light reading and writing on it, so he does not require much space right now," he says.



Crate and Barrel Pint Sized Toddler Table and Chair Set

\$198

In her daughter's bedroom, Chun has this table and chair set from Crate and Barrel as a workstation specifically for arts and crafts. "We put her caddy of supplies in the middle; this way she can walk around the table or sit to make her drawings and collages," she says, adding that the desk works so well, she even bought a second one for when her daughter goes to grandma's house. The chairs are light but sturdy, she promises, adding that the set "takes up a very compact footprint and the table has no sharp corners to worry about." Plus: "Glue stick residue and crayons wipe off very easily."



Elfa Kids' White Mesh Coloring Table with Rounded Corners

\$303

~~\$405~~ now 25% off

Architecture and design critic [Alexandra Lange](#) says that she used this Elfa desk for years before her daughter started using it as her school-from-home desk. (While Lange's daughter is using it at 9 years old, Lange says it's probably best for kids up to 7 years old because the desktop is long, but not very wide, so it becomes harder to fit more supplies that may be needed as kids age.) It has a melamine desktop with rounded corners and comes with six mesh drawers that Lange promises can hold a lot. You can even add a roll of craft paper to the desktop, so that your child will always have a surface to draw on.

Best desks for elementary school students



UrbanBabe Einstein Kids Desk Set

\$126

~~\$136~~ now 7% off

According to Hafeez, choosing a desk that grows with your elementary school-aged child would be a wise investment. “Buying an adjustable desk with various height settings,” like this one that she recommends, means that “you won’t have to replace the desk as your child’s needs change.” She likes that this desk-and-chair set (designed for children up to 10 years old, according to the maker) is adjustable and therefore ergonomic, telling us this makes it ideal for drawing and homework. It has a tilting desktop like you’d find on a drafting table and can also be raised to become a standing desk. (The chair’s legs are adjustable, too.) The fact that it’s affordable is another plus, according to Hafeez. “Even when children go back to school in person, this will be a good setup for studying and homework,” she says. Niego, who also recommends something similar, agrees that it’s a good idea to invest in something that will grow with your child in their elementary-school years.



ApexDesk Little Soleil Dx 43" Children's Height Adjustable Study Desk

\$250

Melissa Young, an engineering manager at Vox Media, has a similar but souped-up version of the above desk for her 5-year-old twins. (Technically, she has two — one for each child.) Although they are currently in kindergarten, Young says she plans for the twins to use these well into their elementary years, noting that the desk can go high enough for her to use it, too (she's 5-foot-3). "My hope is that the desks will grow with the kids," she says. This is larger than the Einstein desk above, and has both a tilting section and a flat area on the desktop. The desk, she adds, is "really sturdy and big enough for their materials and a laptop."



Ikea Pål Desk

\$50



Ikea Pål Add-On Unit

\$20

This Ikea desk that Niego recommends is a more affordable option if you want something adjustable. “It’s just a simple desk, but it can be adjusted to three heights as your kid gets taller,” she says. By simply turning the knobs on the legs, you can have three different heights — 23 inches, 26 inches, and 28 inches. For an extra \$20, you can get a made-for-this-desk storage unit that stands right on top of it.



Pottery Barn Kids Camp Storage Desk

From \$549

Like the Ikea Pål desk, this one from Pottery Barn Kids that Niego recommends can be expanded to include a hutch (that's shown with the desk here, but sold separately). "It is designed to be a simple desk with some drawers and shelves but it can also grow with your child," she says, making it a great option for a student as they go from their elementary years all the way up to high school. While the desk height is fixed, pairing it with an adjustable chair means your kid can raise or lower themselves when needed. Niego adds "there's lots of hideaway storage and cut outs for management of computer cords and things like that, so it can really grow with them into their teen years."



Eureka Ergonomic Small White Desk

\$100

“When we were looking for a desk, we wanted something neutral, sturdy, and good for both our 7- and 10-year-old, who are a little taller for their ages” says home-schooler [Autumn Colon](#), who works as a strategic marketer and is also a member of [mater mea](#). She says this desk meets all that criteria, and notes that it can also be used with multiple types of chairs, making it even more versatile. “We use yoga balls, stools, and regular chairs, and this is a good height for all of them,” Colon says.



Ikea Alex Desk

\$149

Stony Pak, a professor of education and mom to 5th- and 2nd-grade boys, also stresses the importance of every kid having a designated work space if possible. “A desk with some materials like pencils and paper in a quiet area makes it much more conducive to doing school work,” she says. Pak’s 5th-grader uses the Alex desk from Ikea, which she likes for its small footprint and its two slim drawers that provide plenty of storage. Another nifty feature told us about is the desk’s built-in cable-management system, which allows her son to easily store and access his chargers for all the devices he needs.



ECR4Kids The Surf Portable Lap Desk

\$26

“One of the benefits of doing school from home is the flexibility and freedom kids have to choose where they do their work,” says Pak. The movement and freedom can help students stay engaged, she adds. If your kid is working on a laptop and wants to be able to bop around your home, Niego recommends this ingenious portable lap desk from ECR4Kids. It’s a

single piece of polypropylene that incorporates a built-in seat and attached desk, making it perfect for on-the-go situations where a child might not have access to a work surface. It can be used as easily on the floor or a chair, as your body weight keeps it upright. While Niego says it's appropriate for elementary-school aged students, this of course will work for older ones, too, because they'll likely be doing a lot of their work on a computer. "They're going to be more comfortable with that kind of seated focused work," she says.



Crate and Barrel Kids Paxson Desk

\$399

For older elementary-school-aged kids (and their parents) who might prefer something a little more stylish, Niego likes the Paxson desk from Crate and Barrel, which she says is small and portable. It has an open shelf of sorts for keeping supplies that your kid might need to reach for more regularly, as well as a drawer to hide other things better stored out of sight.



Bludot Stash Desk

\$499

Lora Appleton, the founder of children's design gallery kinder MODERN and Female Design Council, says that one of her favorite proper desks for children grades two and up is the wooden Stash Desk from Bludot, which her son uses at home. "He's in 6th grade and it is meeting all of his needs," she says. "There's room for his Chromebook and desktop-attached camera, with plenty of space to still write with pens and pencils." Its single drawer offers just the right amount of storage, she adds.

Best desks for junior high and high school students



Ikea Micke Desk

\$49



Ikea Besta Burs Desk

\$199

As many of our experts have noted, if you buy a desk that can grow with your child, they can have it from elementary school all the way through their teen years. But for those who may be shopping for their teen's first home desk, we heard about a few that experts say are great for older kids. Homeschooler Emily Nicolson says that she uses these two minimal desks from Ikea for her 9th- and 7th-grade sons. In her experience, avoiding too many drawers or shelves actually helps with organization at this age. "All kids do is stash their papers and junk without cleaning or organizing," she says, which is why she likes that both of these desks have small drawers that offer just enough storage without becoming bottomless pits of clutter. The Micke, which has a hole for easy cord management, is a good option if you're looking for something more compact, while the Besta Burs has a larger workspace for spreading out.



Home Office Multi-Layer Storage Frame Computer

\$100

Desk

Retired teacher Gabe Lewis (the mom of Strategist senior editor Casey Lewis) says that having ample surface area is so important, especially for older students who rely even more on laptops and iPads (in addition to their other supplies) while schooling from home. She pointed us to this desk as an option for teenage students, noting that it's "wide enough to spread out, but not so deep to take up much room" in whatever space that serves as their at-home classroom. Lewis likes how this has two drawers, as well as a "shelf below so your books don't take up too much room on your work surface." The fact that it's wooden is also a bonus: "It's been studied that the more nature you can bring to a work space, the better it is for your mental space," she says.



Pottery Barn Teen Blaire Smart Storage Desk

\$1,199

Older students schooling from home will probably have the most opinions on their desk, which is why Hafeez suggests this model as a fancy option "for teens developing a sense of personal style while confined to classes at home." She says the desk's sleek silhouette and gold hardware make it look clean and modern, while its ample surface and seven drawers make it multifunctional and offer plenty of storage. Adding to its functionality is a very-teen-friendly built-in power strip with four outlets, which should be plenty for all their school gadgets. While available to order now, the desk will not ship until late January–early February, according to the retailer.



NE Kids Lake House Loft Bed With Desk - White

From \$1,599

~~\$3,199~~ now 50% off

While it might be too much for some, anyone looking to fashion a sustainable home workplace for an older student could consider a piece like this that does double duty. Vox Media's Chief Legal Officer Lauren Fisher says her 13-year-old daughter (who's currently in 8th grade) loves the lofted bed-and-desk combo that they splurged on, telling us that the "all-in-one piece of furniture allows us to essentially make one room feel like two." (Those two rooms being a bedroom and a classroom, of course.) "We love that the full bed over the desk area makes the desk area feel like more of a dedicated workspace — and a little bit like a clubhouse," Fisher adds. It's definitely an investment piece, but its current sale price makes it slightly less so. The piece is also available in a stone-gray color, and if you want to further customize it, we think those knobs on the drawers could easily be replaced, too.