

Questions to Ask Before you Sign the Lease on a New Office Space

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Whether you're just starting out and searching for your very first office, or you've been at it for a while and ready to move to a new workspace— looking for an office can be both exciting and daunting. If it's daunting, you may feel overwhelmed and unsure of the right questions to ask. If it's exciting, you might sign on the dotted line before truly assessing if the workspace is actually the right fit for you. Location is only one of the many aspects to keep in mind. From functional to feeling, there are many things to take into consideration when choosing a place to work. If you want to feel prepared and confident for the conversations you'll have before you sign the lease, here are some questions to consider:

The Basics

- What is included in the rent?
- What isn't included in the rent? (Be sure you understand all upfront and ongoing costs.)
- Is there a deposit required?
- How long is the lease?
- Is there an option to renew the lease or will it go month-to-month?
- Do they require you to list them as an "additional insured" on your liability insurance?
- Are there any specific move in or move out policies?
- Is the space furnished?
- Are you allowed to sublet the space?

Physical Space

- How much room do you need? Does the space accommodate those you intend to have there? Individuals? Teams? Groups?
- Will you need any storage and is it available to you?
- Where do clients/parents wait if they arrive a bit early?
- How is the noise level? Can you hear what is going on in adjacent rooms? Is it distracting to you or your client(s)? Is there the ability to improve sound proofing?
- What kind of lighting is being used in your work area? Are there overhead lights in the space? Are there dark or shadowy areas anywhere?
- Do you have access to control the temperature of the room?
- Is there a window for air flow and natural light?

Maintenance

- What is the procedure for getting things fixed around the office? Who is financially responsible for any repairs, maintenance, or upgrades to the space?
- Is the restroom in your office suite or is it part of a common area? Does it require a key? Who is responsible for cleaning and stocking the restroom?
- Is there garbage removal? Where is the outside trash container and recycling located?
- Who is responsible for office cleaning? Are there office cleaning supplies?
- Who is responsible for the care of walkways and parking areas?
- Who should I call if there is a building emergency?
- Are there certain things your building management will not allow?
- Are there options for build outs? How is the process handled?

Accessibility

- What hours is the building open? Are there days when access would be limited? Will you have access to my office when the building is closed?
- Are there any access codes needed to get into the building?
- Is the space accessible if you are working with an injured or client or client with disabilities?
- What is parking like? Will it be difficult for your clients to find parking?
- What is the outside lighting like? Is it well-lit for the evenings?

IT

- Are clients going to be in your space virtually or face to face? Does the space work for both options?
- If virtually, what do they see behind you when on a virtual call?
- What is the Wi-Fi network name and password?
- Where is the modem located? Who do you call if your internet is down?
- How is the Wi-Fi speed? Do you need your own dedicated internet?

Other Considerations

- How will clients feel when they arrive to this office space? How will they feel when they are inside the building? Inside the office?

- Who else rents there? How long have they been tenants?
- Is there signage available?
- Is there access to a kitchen?
- Is there a shower?

You may not need to address every question on this list, but this gives you a good idea of the things you want to keep in mind when assessing whether an office is the right fit for your needs. Remember that no office space is perfect. It can help to make a list of needs (what are the absolute musts and dealbreakers) and a list of your wants (what are the things that would be ideal, but you could compromise on) before starting the process. Also remember that your needs may change over time and the space you choose to work in now doesn't have to be your "forever" office.