
Benching

Q1. What is benching and how does it differ from traditional workstations?

A: Benching is a long, shared desk surface (the 'bench') that multiple workers use side-by-side without individual cube partitions. Unlike traditional workstations with high panel walls creating semi-private offices, benching is open and low-profile. The key benefits: significantly lower cost per workstation, higher space density (more people per square foot), a collaborative and open feel, and easy reconfiguration. The trade-off: less acoustic privacy, limited personal storage at the workstation, and a one-size-fits-all approach to the work surface.

Q2. What is a typical bench run configuration?

A: A bench run consists of workstations sharing a continuous surface or a series of connected panels. Typical configurations: back-to-back (two rows of workers facing away from each other across a shared spine), face-to-face (workers facing each other across the bench), and single-sided (all workers facing the same direction). Back-to-back configurations are most common for open-plan offices — they maximize density while keeping wire management in a central spine. Widths range from 24" to 36" per person, with 30" being the most common standard.

Q3. What's the typical linear footage per person in benching?

A: Industry standard is 5-6 linear feet per person (60-72"). At 60" per person, teams fit efficiently while each person has adequate elbow room and screen space. Some ultra-dense hot-desking setups go as low as 48" per person, but below 60" starts to feel cramped for full-day workers. For leadership or senior staff who work at a bench, 66-72" per person is more appropriate. Never spec bench widths purely on density targets without considering the human comfort factor.

Q4. What's the difference between benching with screens and without?

A: Screens (privacy panels) can be added to benching at various heights. No screens: fully open, maximum visibility and collaboration feel. Low screens (12-18"): minimal visual separation, some sense of space ownership, looks intentional. Mid-height screens (24-42"): moderate visual privacy, still feels open, most popular in contemporary offices. Full-height screens (60"+): approaches traditional panel system territory. Acoustics, brand culture, and space feel all influence the right screen height decision. Many organizations use no screens or low screens for collaborative culture and add acoustic ceiling baffles to manage sound.

Q5. How is power and data managed in benching systems?

A: Power and data management is one of the most important specification elements in benching. Options: in-furniture power raceways (hardwired power strip running through the desk structure — cleanest but requires licensed electrician), above-surface power units (plug-in units that sit on or attach to the desk surface — flexible but visible), and floor-mount power poles or floor boxes (power comes up from the floor — clean look but requires floor core drilling). For any benching installation, plan the power and data infrastructure early — it often involves contractor coordination.
