

design exposé

GUIDELINES. TIPS. INFORMATION.



THE BOOTH, THE NOOK, THE BANQUETTE

The new banquette can adopt nearly any style and serves a multitude of purposes. They come in every imaginable configuration, from horseshoe shaped, to nook, to corner, to running the length of a whole wall. They can be cozy or spacious. And with today's trend toward more reasonably sized homes, they have two big advantages: you can seat more people comfortably at the table with less space. The seats can even house drawers for extra storage. All that, and they look good doing it.

CUSTOMIZED FOR COMFORT

Obviously the banquette isn't a one-size-fits-all proposition. The shape and size of the banquette you recommend to your clients will have to be designed while considering the space it occupies and the number of people it should seat. Will it be by a window? Will drawers be built into the bench? Is the space conducive to facing benches? Is it to seat four or fourteen? Will anyone want to use the space to work on their laptop? If so, is there a convenient electrical outlet or will one need to be put in? There's much to be considered, but that's what makes this such a flexible solution. And this is all before you get to style.

The essential requirement for any style of nook or banquette is comfort. For the built-in breakfast nook there are a few musts, mostly having to do with dimensions, to keep diners happily seated.

WARMING THE BENCH

Bench cushions. It's perfectly acceptable to use throw pillows for backs, but don't even consider skimping on bench seat cushions. Whether we're talking about a style of long bench cushion or upholstery, be sure seat padding is not only stylish but comfy—no two-inch pads or anything likely to flatten. Also, let the cushion extend slightly beyond the bench itself so it won't cut into the back of peoples' legs.

Bench depth. A bench cushion that's 20 inches from front to back will make for a comfortable depth for most people.

Bench height. Between 17 and 18 inches is a good floor-to-cushion top distance.

Bench overhang. Whether bench support is solid or open, allow three or four inches of bench overhang at the bottom-front of the base to prevent the heels of people's feet from banging against the bottom portion of the bench. It adds to overall comfort when people can slide their feet back.

Bench back. There are three dimensions here that may not be immediately obvious, but are important to conditions that encourage lingering. Leave a minimum of two inches between the top of the bench-back and the wall lest diners finish their meals with concussions and the walls become peppered with dents from the back of

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their heads. Remember, people will want to throw their heads back in laughter from exhilarating conversation during the course of the meal.

Allow the bench-back to angle backward. A 90-degree angle from floor to bench-back does not promote relaxation. If the bottom of the bench is three to five inches farther from the wall than the top of the bench back, lounging is likely to occur.

The height of the bench-back depends mainly on the environment. If there are windows, don't allow the bench back to encroach on the sill. Allow people to gaze out the window without feeling they are peeking over the sill. This means the bench-back can be as low as 27 inches from floor to top of back cushion. If there is no window, let the bench back be as tall as 33 or 34 inches from the floor.

Bench storage. Clever designers often take advantage of the space within the bench box for extra storage accessed through flip-up bench-seats, or drawers that match the kitchen drawers. What homeowner doesn't appreciate more storage? Having extra place settings, candles and napkins at the ready is more than handy.

SUGGESTIONS ON THE TABLE

Table Overhang. Let the edge of the table overlap the bench by four or five inches so diners can get

close to their plates without having to sit on the edge of their seats.

Table Height. 28 to 30 inches from floor to tabletop is comfortable for most adults.

Table Width. A minimum of 30 inches wide is recommended to ensure a roomy feeling, but you can go as wide as 36 inches before dining partners begin to feel far away.

Table Type. Be aware that if you use a table with four legs, the legs will be in the way as people slide in and out. A pedestal table is the only way to go.

If you are building a nook that fits in a predefined space, and find yourself with more space to fill, add that air to behind the seating. This way you'll have an arrangement that feels open and spacious, respects dimensions best suited to the human form and promotes intimacy.

A WORD ABOUT THE L-SHAPE

An L-shaped banquette with a pedestal table is a wonderful and versatile thing. When tucked in a corner with a round table and two chairs, you have a breakfast spot for four. Extend the bench down the length of a wall with a long table and chairs, and host a banquet in a fraction of the space that a conventional long table surrounded on all sides by chairs consumes.

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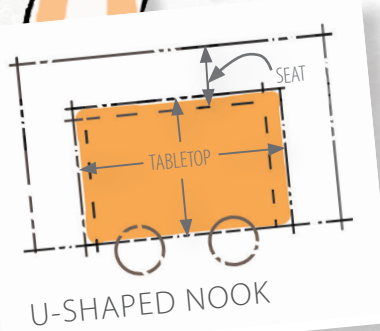
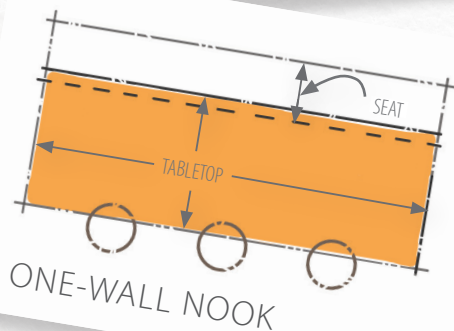
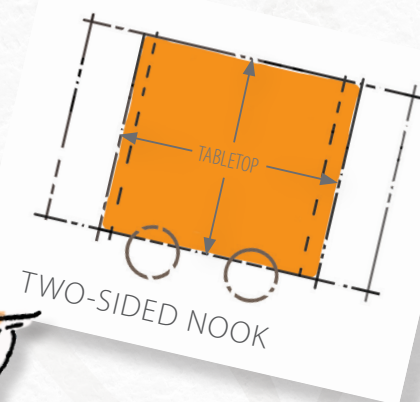
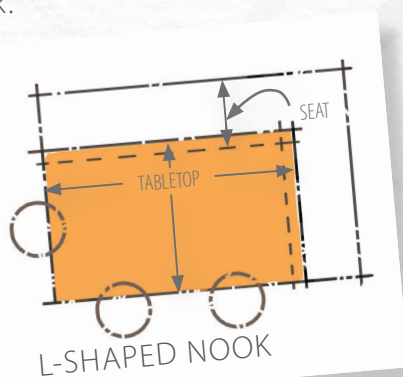
The same requirements for the booth-style nook apply to the L-shape banquette, but with a nice difference: the bench seating with pedestal table and chairs means the table-to-bench distance and chair-to-table distances can be adjusted at will. A long legged guest can push away from the table to stretch out, while his son can pull up close to the table (and plate).

TIE IT ALL TOGETHER

Create cohesiveness between the dining area and kitchen by extending cabinet moldings from the kitchen to the bench-base and along the wall at the top-back.

LIVING LARGE IN A SMALL SPACE

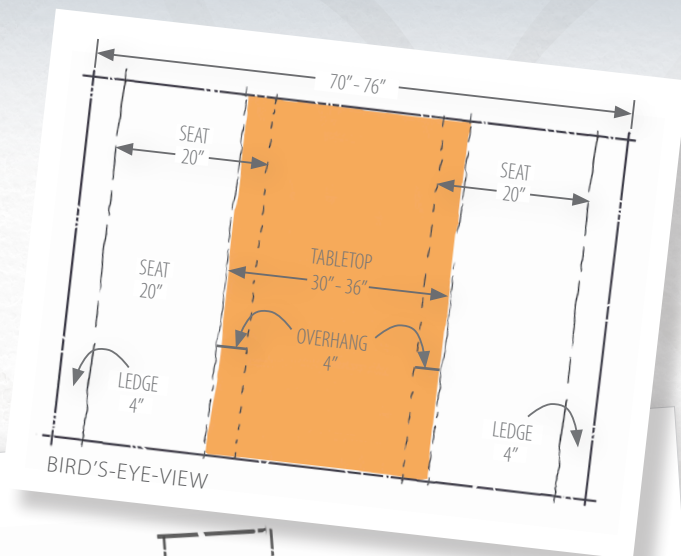
The modern banquette offers designers and their clients an opportunity to incorporate creativity, versatility and style into the home in a way that is different. This is a chance to build a space that allows for memorable evenings spent with family, hosting dinner parties large and small or even for some precious alone time with a good book and a cup of tea. We predict big things.



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