

A Guide to Finding the Right Office Space

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Looking for office space can be confusing and stressful. There are many things to consider, but we've broken it down into manageable steps for you.

How to Use This Guide

At every property you look at, write down your first impressions and any questions you may have for each of the categories below. You can even assign ratings to see which property has the best overall rating. It is important to do this in writing as your impressions can get muddled if you look at multiple office spaces.

Neighborhood

- Traffic: Is it light or heavy? Is it difficult to get to the building from either direction?
- Approach: Is the approach pleasant and welcoming?
- Other businesses: What are the businesses in the nearby area? Is the building next to a noisy restaurant, or somewhere that is quieter? Is the building close to referral partners?
- Accessibility: Is the building near public transportation? Is it wheelchair accessible?

Building Exterior

- Parking: Is there enough parking close to the door? Is there a cost for you, staff and patients to park? Is the lot clean and are the lines recently painted? If not, it may be an indication that the owners are not keeping up with maintenance. Would you have a dedicated parking space(s)? Are ADA requirements in place?
- Signage: Is the building well marked? Will you have signage outside, in the lobby, on your office door?
- Lighting: Is the building well lit? Is the parking lot and garage lit at night, even after working hours (in case you work late or on weekends)?

- General look and feel: How do you feel when you arrive? Is this the sort of place in which you and your patients will feel comfortable?

Building Interior

- Common areas: Are they tidy and professional? If there are public restrooms, are they tidy and clean? Are they wheelchair accessible?
- Lobby: Is it welcoming? Is it clear how to find the office, and the elevators?
- Signage: Does the lobby sign look well maintained? Can your name be on that sign? Is there a cost for your signage?
- Smells: Does the building smell unpleasant or of food?
- Lighting: Is the lighting appropriate and sufficient? Are lights on after typical business hours in case you have late appointments?
- Elevators: Do they appear to be working well? Are ADA requirements addressed if you are not at ground level. Do the elevators work after hours?
- Security: What security features does the building have? Will they need to be modified to fit your needs beyond the building's typical office hours?

Office Suite

- Windows: Is the view pleasant? Is there privacy? Does the sun shine in at different times of the day? Do the windows need to be tinted? Will you need to buy window coverings?
- Sound attenuation: Can you hear sounds within the suite, or from other offices? Do the walls simply go to the ceiling, or do they extend to the floor above? Is there insulation in the walls and ceiling?
- Waitroom: Is there ample space for patients/families who are waiting for their next session?
- Exit: Do you and your patients have a private exit, or does one need to walk through the waiting room to leave the suite?
- Walls: Is there space between some walls and windows? Are the walls freshly painted?
- Doors: Are they solid or hollow? How well will they reduce sound from within and outside the suite?
- Carpeting: Is it clean and fresh? Does it need to be updated?
- Improvements: What improvements will the suite need so that your needs will be met? How much will the improvements cost and who will pay for them?
- Heating/Air Conditioning: How much control do you have over the temperature; especially in your clinical room(s)?

Lease Terms

- Term of the lease: This can often be negotiated and may be accompanied by a change in the rate or even predetermined increases.

- **Cost:** Be certain that this is clearly specified. Is there a maximum increase that is agreed to for lease renewals?
- **Utilities:** What utilities are included in the lease?
- **Sublet option:** Can you partially sublet the space to a colleague?
- **Maintenance:** Who will pay for common area maintenance and maintenance of the suite? Is there a cap on common area maintenance increases over the term of the lease?
- **Early termination:** Under what circumstances can you terminate the lease before the expiration date?
- **Legal issues:** Are all the terms legal in your state? It's best to have the lease reviewed by a commercial real estate attorney. Be sure you fully understand your obligations and those of the landlord.

Other Considerations

- Who are the other tenants? Could any of them seem antithetical to your professional philosophy and values? Might some be potential referral sources?
- It can be helpful to talk to current and previous tenants about what they like and don't like about renting in the building, and whether the landlord is responsive to their requests. Sometimes you can find prior tenants by looking at the directory; especially at the potential office(s) that you are viewing.
- Take your time. Don't feel pressured to make a decision. Remember, you will spend many of your waking hours in your office. It should be comfortable, and it will represent you to your patients and referral partners.
- Can your space be set up for internet usage? How will you assure HIPAA compliance?

After the lease is signed, move in and enjoy!

The practice of your dreams can be your reality. If you're looking for personalized guidance or more on this topic, consider a one-on-one consultation with a TPI consultant. Contact us at support@thepracticeinstitute.com to arrange a convenient time.

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