

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several modern skyscrapers with glass facades, creating a sense of height and urban density. The buildings are arranged in a circular pattern around a central point, with the sky visible in the background.

QUICK START GUIDE TO
FINDING OFFICE SPACE



SQUAREFOOT

This guide is for anyone looking for office space.

WHY WOULD FINDING AN OFFICE REQUIRE A GUIDE, YOU ASK?

Because the search for office space can be confusing, frustrating and costly - much more so than finding an apartment (if you can imagine). In fact, commercial real estate is sort of designed to be impenetrable to the average person to give landlords, investors, brokers, agents... pretty much everyone except you the upper hand.

At **TheSquareFoot**, we want to change that with fast, simple and applicable information to help you navigate the process of finding and securing an office you can be proud of.

Let's get started!



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First rule of office hunting; it takes longer than you think!

Finding the right space in the right neighborhood that fits your budget, negotiating a concession or two from the landlord, and finally signing a lease can take up to 3 months, no problem. Add another 2-3 months for renovations aka the office “build out,” and it could be 6 months before you move in.

That means you should give yourself at least six months to find an office.



We recommend using a [Space Calculator](#) to figure out how many square feet (sf) you need for your office.

If you know how many employees will use the office, you're well on your way to figuring it out.

As a general rule, you should err on the side of extra space to account for future growth. In cases where you're paying for a substantial amount of unused space, you may be able to sublet it to another tenant.

As you begin researching commercial space, honing in on the optimal size will also help you figure out which neighborhoods can best accommodate your budget (commercial space is priced by dollar per square foot).

2 FIGURING OUT HOW MUCH SPACE YOU NEED



An easy commute for employees is usually what companies are looking for in office location.

Other factors like proximity to clients, gyms, and restaurants usually aren't far behind.

SURVEYING EMPLOYEES

Since your team is going to spend most of their waking hours at your future office, it's a good idea to field some input. Probably the most critical information you can get from them is where they live so you can factor the difficulty of the commute into your decision.



4 ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN AFFORD THIS?

Paying rent on an office will be one of your biggest operating expenses.

The security deposit alone can be considerable, as landlords typically ask for more than one month's worth of rent. If your business is in "survival mode" or you're depending on a big deal to go through to fund the move, now may not be the best time to throw down on an office.

AFFORDABLE ALTERNATIVES

OFFICE SUBLETS

If you can get your hands on an office sublet, they often come a bit cheaper and more flexible than a standard lease. [Just be sure to do your homework first.](#)

CO-WORKING

Co-working is popular for small companies not quite ready for an office. For what is usually a monthly fee, you can rent a number of desks in a shared work environment with other small companies and entrepreneurs.



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A tenant broker is someone who can save you a ton of time and worry during the process.

Here's why:

- They know the market and what to expect in terms of price
- They know where to start looking
- They do all the legwork for you
- They negotiate savings and amenities on your behalf
- They (usually) come at no cost to you
- **Salaried brokers** are becoming more popular, as they're less likely to pressure you into a lease for the sake of commissions.

We recommend getting a broker on the case ASAP.



6 TOURING SPACE

Once you have some basic criteria like price, neighborhood and size in place, your broker will make some recommendations on spaces to check out.

A few things to keep in mind while touring commercial space:

TRY TO VISUALIZE

Unlike houses and apartments, most commercial spaces won't be furnished when you view them, so you'll have to imagine on your own what a finished office would look like.

KEEP YOUR POKER FACE

For any given property you tour, the listing agent and the landlord's broker will likely be present. Even if you love everything you see and hear, don't let on. You risk losing some leverage if the landlord has the slightest inkling their property is your top choice.



6 TOURING SPACE

KEEP TRACK OF “LOSS FACTOR”

You will hear “loss factor” come up frequently in your search. Loss factor refers to the percentage difference between the total space you’re renting, which includes common building areas like lobbies and corridors (Rentable Space), and the space that is exclusive to your office (Usable Space).

For 30,000 sf of Rentable Space and 20,000 sf of Usable Space, the resulting Loss Factor would be 33%. You have to decide how much Loss Factor is tolerable.

ASK ABOUT A TENANT IMPROVEMENT ALLOWANCE

A Tenant Improvement Allowance is the amount of money a landlord is willing to contribute to construction and renovation of the space. Not every landlord offers one, but they’re fairly common. Be sure your broker’s on top of it.

BRING A CHECKLIST

The more commercial spaces you see, the harder it will be to remember the details. We’ve built something called a [TourBook](#) that can help, but you’ll also want to bring a [checklist](#) with you just to make sure you’re not leaving anything out.



If you see a space and you think it might be your future office, make an offer. Seriously. You have nothing to lose.

Making an offer is a non-binding step that simply lets the landlord know you're interested in a space and that you're not afraid to move on it. In return, the landlord will take you more seriously as a prospective tenant.

If push comes to shove, you can always drop out of contention if you'd rather keep looking or you want to move ahead on another space.

WHAT IS A LETTER OF INTENT?

A Letter of Intent acts as a rough first draft of the lease and provides a framework for negotiations. The amount of rent you'll pay, the term of the lease, and who pays for renovations are just a few items preliminarily agreed to in the Letter of Intent.



Once you've settled on a space, it will likely require a "build-out" to transform it into your new office.

You can negotiate how the cost of renovations is covered during the leasing process, but here are two basic options you might encounter.

OPTION 1: TURNKEY BUILD-OUTS

In a turnkey build-out, the landlord pays for and manages the construction of all agreed-to modifications to the space. If the landlord is in the driver's seat, though, he also determines the cost and quality of the materials and contractor. As you might expect, some landlords have no qualms about cutting corners, but overall, a turnkey build-out can be a great hassle-free option.




8 RENOVATIONS AKA “THE BUILD-OUT”

OPTION 2: TENANT IMPROVEMENT ALLOWANCES

Landlords who don't offer turnkey build-outs will usually offer the Tenant Improvement Allowance in the form of free rent (expressed in \$/sf) up front to help offset the cost of renovations.

You can select your own contractor, architects, alter construction to better fit your budget, upgrade or downgrade materials when desired... you get the picture. The drawback is of course the amount of time you'll spend project-managing the renovation, but if the end result is an office you're proud of, it's worth it.

A hand holding a pen, ready to sign a document. The background is a solid teal color with a faint, semi-transparent image of a hand holding a pen, positioned as if about to sign a document.

It's your broker's job to get you a lease that fits your business like a glove, but unlike a lease on an apartment, commercial leases can take a while to negotiate and close.

Lawyers on both sides (yes, you should enlist the services of a lawyer for this part) review the language in the lease meticulously and circulate red-line corrections until both sides are satisfied. That can take several weeks, and in most cases, you'll be glad it does: You'll want to make sure the language in the lease reflects exactly what you intend to agree to. What's left unclear or out of the lease entirely is just as important as what's in it.



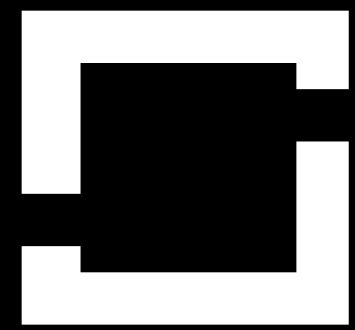
Once you have a move-in date and the build-out is nearing completion,

Make sure you communicate clearly to employees the expectations around the move: the last day at the old office (if you have one), the first day at the new office, what they should pack, how they should pack it, and how to find their spot in the new office.

You should also inform all partners, clients and other strategic contacts of your new address and how they can reach you.

“Office-warming” parties are all the rage.

Once you’ve settled into your new home, you should celebrate your hard-won victory.



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ABOUT SQUAREFOOT

We help companies like yours find office space that empowers them to do great work. With user-friendly tools and a team of experienced brokers to guide you every step of the way, a new era of convenience and accessibility has come to commercial real estate. Every business deserves a place to call home. With TheSquareFoot, it's never been simpler to find yours.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

You can reach us at [**contact@squarefoot.com**](mailto:contact@squarefoot.com) with any questions about your office space needs or just to say hello.