

IS THE WORK TRIANGLE DEAD?

The concept of the "Work Triangle" originated in research done at the University of Illinois, under the auspices of the Small Homes Council, founded in 1944. The council coined the phrase "Kitchen Work Triangle" and created guidelines for locating appliances in relation to counter space. Their work evolved into the five-volume set of Kitchen Planning Principles, prepared for the American Institute of Kitchen Dealers (AIKD). Subsequently, they wrote the first set of standardized exams that had to be passed as part of becoming a Certified Kitchen Designer.

Fifty years later, kitchens have more than three appliances, and the "Work Triangle" too often has little to do with the way real life actually happens. "Real life" is: coming in from shopping, beginning to distribute the groceries throughout the kitchen, the phone rings, the kids start using the microwave to make a snack, you need to begin making dinner and you really want to use the espresso maker! Many, many dream kitchens with perfect work triangles can become a nightmare for the cook when reality hits. What is needed, therefore, is some way to extend the fundamental utility of the "work triangle" concept. In reponse, I created the Designed by L.I.F.E.TM Zoning process.

The L.I.F.E.TM Triangle

Instead of focusing on appliance placement, I observed that the activities of a kitchen tend to ebb and flow in identifiable patterns, with particular storage and counter needs. Subsequently, I identified three kinds of activities that must relate well to each other -- Collective, Circulative, Distributive. When motions flow and shift easily between these activities, the kitchen is a satisfying room in which to work, otherwise stress occurs. These collective, circulative, and distributive activities form the three corners of what I call, "The L.I.F.E.TM Triangle."

The well-planned kitchen and, by extension, the well-planned home, considers activities and their related storage, counter and appliance needs. In other words, we zone the activities and this leads us to where the appliances and counters need to be.

I developed and continue to refine processes for effectively arranging these patterns and the ten different "zones" related to the L.I.F.E.TM Triangle. I understand that having everything in its place is preferable to and different from having a place for everything!

