


What Is the Kitchen Triangle? Why Pros Say It's the Best Way to Lay Out a Kitchen

By [SARAH LYON](#) | Published on 08/28/24



 [Cohesively Curated Interiors](#)

Are you familiar with the concept of a kitchen triangle? Even if you don't know it by name, you've likely seen it at play in homes before and didn't even know it.

The kitchen triangle, also known as the kitchen work triangle, prioritizes easy movement between the sink, refrigerator, and oven.

Below, design experts weigh in on this [popular layout](#) and share its purpose, relevance, and more.

MEET THE EXPERT

- [Emily Ruff](#) is the founder of Cohesively Curated Interiors.
- [Seth Ballard](#) is the co-founder of Ballard & Mensua Architecture.
- [Mary Gordon](#) is the vice president of InSite Builders & Remodeling.

What's the Purpose of a Kitchen Triangle?


It serves to ensure that these three features are close enough together that you have easy access, but not so close that it causes congestion, according to Emily Ruff, the founder of [Cohesively Curated Interiors](#).

She explains the kitchen triangle rule of thumb: each side of the triangle should be four to nine feet long, and none of the sides should intersect the island more than 12 inches.

The kitchen triangle is especially critical when it comes to a great setup for all your kitchen tasks, says Seth Ballard, the co-founder of [Ballard & Mensua Architecture](#).

Is the Kitchen Triangle Layout Still Used?



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While the kitchen triangle is seen as an ideal setup, it is not always applicable to today's spaces.

"Open floor plans, larger kitchens, and the addition of appliances, such as microwaves, dishwashers, undercounter beverage/wine refrigerators, and double ovens, have changed the way professionals are designing kitchens," Mary Gordon, vice president of [InSite Builders & Remodeling](#), says.

In narrower homes, traditional kitchen triangles are not feasible—but the method can be adapted, explains Ballard.

"The triangle must always be respected," he says. "Things need to spread out a bit, and the triangle may need to change more into a star, or a series of triangles."

Whether a kitchen triangle is feasible also depends on one's lifestyle.

"One factor is whether one person cooks at a time or if there are typically two or more people cooking together," Ruff says. "Another consideration is the size of the family and whether everyone congregates in the kitchen while cooking and preparation is taking place."

How to Add a Kitchen Triangle Without an Island

Gordon notes that it is still possible to incorporate a kitchen triangle into your home even if your cooking space lacks an island.

You can still apply the triangle principle by strategically positioning the sink, refrigerator, and stove along the room's perimeter, she says.

There are a few specific layouts that Gordon suggests in particular, which are detailed below.

- The first possible layout Gordon recommends is opting for an **L-shaped kitchen**. Position the stove and refrigerator on one wall, with the sink on an adjacent wall, creating a triangle, she says.
- Another possibility is arranging a **U-shaped kitchen**. Place the sink at the base of the "U," with the stove and refrigerator on either side, forming a triangle.
- The last option is a **galley kitchen**. Even in narrow kitchens, you can place the sink on one side, with the stove and refrigerator on the opposite side, to form a triangular workflow, Gordon says.

Other Effective Kitchen Layouts to Consider



Design by [InSite Builders & Remodeling](#) / Photo by [Kip Dawkins](#)

If a traditional kitchen triangle does not work for your home, there are many other viable kitchen layouts to consider.

"While the traditional kitchen triangle layout remains a classic, today's diverse options enable more personalized designs that enhance functionality, style, and beauty," Gordon says.

Below, she shares three different kitchen layout alternatives.

- 01 Separate work zones:** Gordon loves creating work zones, focusing on designated areas such as a food prep zone, a cooking zone, and a cleaning zone. This approach is often favored in larger kitchens and those with multiple cooks.
- 02 Design with an island in mind:** You can also choose to make the island the center of attention in your space. Many homeowners design their [kitchen around an island](#) using the island as the central hub for food preparation and cooking, allowing for flexibility in appliance placement, Gordon says. It often includes extra seating and storage, too.
- 03 One wall says it all:** Working with a small space? A common layout is placing all major appliances along a single wall for ease of functionality and movement, Gordon says.