

Lesson 4: Massage Equipment

OBJECTIVES OF THIS LESSON

- Consider equipment required for giving body massage treatments;
- Describe the environmental conditions suitable for body massage treatment.

Equipment for massage

Massage is practiced on a one-to-one basis; it is important to inspire trust, in your ability as a practitioner, in your client. Your professionalism will be reflected in the way you prepare your treatment.

The room should be clean, warm, welcoming, private, quiet, and well ventilated with subdued lighting.

All equipment should be clean, ready for use and in easy reach. A simple therapist's trolley can help keep those essentials to hand.

You'll need a safe space to store, measure and blend your essential oils to create your massage oils.

Equipment you may need:

- Massage couch
- Face hole ring and small head pillow (folded hand towels can be used instead)
- Fabric couch cover
- Towels (2 extra-large bath sheets, 2 large bath towels & 4 hand towels) which ideally should be dark, matching colours
- Stool for giving face treatments
- Light blanket
- Plastic oil bottles with lids
- Oil bottle holster
- Therapist trolley
- Waste bin
- Small bowl for client's jewelry
- Bottled water and glass
- Dressing gown and slippers for client (multiple to accommodate one per client between laundry)
- Relaxing and soft music - Can be a great contribution to a treatment for both giver and receiver, enhancing the atmosphere and supporting your client's relaxation
- Screen - For client to undress if practitioner *cannot* leave the room
- Chair for client consultation
- Washing machine
- Accurate scale set
- Amber glass bottles for blends

Consumables:

- Couch paper roll (if used) – look out for the correct width!
- Massage medium
- Box of facial tissues
- Antiseptic or anti-bacterial wipes
- First Aid Box
- A candle or essential oil burner
- Cleaning products
- Face / make-up wipes for client use
- Sanitary products / toiletries available in the bathroom for client use
- Laundry detergent

Consider our planet!

You might want to think about how you could opt for environmentally friendly, sustainable options when purchasing equipment.

Can you buy second-hand? Are there reusable options to replace disposable ones without compromising hygiene? How could you identify ethical suppliers?

**Creating a professional massage environment.**

It is important to prepare the massage environment that you provide for your clients to ensure that the experience and treatment is not only as relaxing and comforting and professional for them as possible, but also safe. This is essential, not only for the well-being and outcome for the client but, equally, for your business so that clients are more likely to return and to refer others to your practice.

You need to have sufficient space in which to provide your massage treatment. A typical treatment room ranges from 8m² – 16m². You should have at least 1m each side of your table for you to be able to practice from. Small rooms can feel cramped, but large rooms will cost more to heat and clean etc.

Environmental aspects that you should consider include the heating and lighting and ventilation, privacy, noise levels both externally and of any music that you provide. You will want to consider the general decor and quality and appearance of your equipment. It is important to consider the ease of maintaining the general hygiene of the area and management of waste.



These considerations need to be balanced with one another. For example, you may wish to include ornaments or decorations, such as anatomy models, in your treatment room to add to the ambience or demonstrate your ethos, but it is worth recognising that these items may add to the frequency and duration of your cleaning practice. On the other hand, a practice room without any décor additions may appear sterile and uninviting and not put the client at ease.

COVID-19: Remember that in current times with the national coronavirus pandemic, additional precautions should be incorporated into your practice. For example, you should make efforts to increase the ventilation in your treatment area, which may lead to a need to have additional heating options.



Be sure to keep up to date with guidelines for working safely and make necessary adjustments.

The space you use may be a multipurpose space, such as your living room or home-office space. Consider how you might be able to minimise the impact of having additional, unrelated equipment or furniture in the space to create a treatment room which is not too overloaded.

Some of the following considerations will be covered in requirements by a special licence. Be sure to cover all conditions of your licence as a minimum.

Considerations	
Access and privacy	<p>How will your clients find you? Is the approach clean, tidy and well-lit? How accessible is your treatment room? Is there step-free access? This is not a requirement but is worth considering and making clear to clients.</p> <p>How and where will you greet clients? Is there a reception space? Is the treatment room private? Will clients have a separate space to get undressed, or will you leave the room? If treating from your home, what elements of your private life will be accessible to the client if you need to walk through other spaces?</p>
Décor	<p>Consider warm but neutral décor in your massage space to not overload senses and provide an inviting space. Plants can be a great addition to your space – consider low maintenance, air-purifying indoor plants. Depending on your marketing approach you may include decorations that complement your approach, for example anatomy models or diagrams. For some inspiration, visit this blog post.</p>
Equipment & Furniture	<p>As well as a massage couch, you may need a seat for your client for removing their shoes, or during your consultation. You might want a stool for delivering facial massage, and a trolley to store supplies required during treatment. Massage equipment is covered in the next lesson.</p>

Facilities	Are there bathroom facilities nearby for your client to access? Is there a sink space for you to wash your hands? What laundry facilities available for cleaning your linens? Where will you get drinking water from?
Heating	Your treatment space (and changing area / bathroom) should be neither too hot nor too cold. How will you cool or heat the area at different times during the year? Fan heaters/coolers can be effective but can be noisy. Storage heaters take a while to heat up but heat efficiently. Air conditioning can be expensive to install and run. Could you warm your towels in preparation for your client's use? You could invest in a massage table heating pad – like an electric blanket for your massage couch – to keep clients cosy during their massage.
Lighting	Does your treatment room have natural light? You should be able to control the light in the room so that, even on a bright day, you can darken the room sufficiently for your client's comfort and relaxation. Use soft lighting that is not directly over the massage table. Dimmer switches are great to be able to control the ambience of the lighting and indicate the beginning and end of the treatment time. Think about using energy efficient bulbs to reduce your energy bills!
Scent	Be mindful of the smells in your treatment space. Any noticeable scents may add to or detract from the aromatherapy experience. Candles, incense, or oil burners/diffusers can be used, but should be subtle and not overbearing or affect the blends. For an aromatherapy massage, unscented candles are likely to be the best option. Remember to consider safety aspects when using candles or electrical equipment. Consider asking your client in an initial consultation if they have a preference. Be conscious, too, of your own scent. Avoid overpowering perfumes, body odour and bad breath.
Sound	Try to minimize any external noise during the consultation and treatment. Also consider the tone and level of your own voice to aid the relaxing environment whilst still being clear and easily understood by your client. Background music should be at a level that adds to the atmosphere rather than distracts from the overall experience. A suggestion is that background music should be approximately 40 decibels – but you're not expected to have the means to measure that! Be aware that you may need a license to play music for your treatments. What would you do if there are scheduled, noisy, road works right outside your treatment room?
Storage	What storage do you have available for your client's belongings? Do you have somewhere to hang outdoor coats? What about wet umbrellas? Where will clients put their clothes and valuables when they change? A laundry basket with an additional container for small items such as jewellery is a great option that can be stored under the massage couch during treatment. What storage do you require for your own equipment and massage resources? Do you want storage that is open, such as shelves, or closed behind cupboard doors? How will you store items you need to be accessible during treatments?

Ventilation	There must be suitable and sufficient means of natural or mechanical ventilation in the treatment room, and wherever practicable this should be direct to the external air. How will you ensure your space is well-ventilated?
Waste & hygiene	<p>You will need access to cleaning supplies to keep your massage space hygienic for the protection of both you and your client. Anti-bacterial surface sprays are great but remember anti-bacterial products may not be effective against viruses, such as coronaviruses. Additional cleaning with bleach or alcohol-based products may be required. Be sure to provide hot running water and soap.</p> <p>Consider how you will remove waste from your treatment room. You will likely have clinical waste, i.e., that which has come into contact with bodily fluids such as sweat (e.g., couch roll/body wipes), general waste (e.g., non-recyclable packaging) and dry recyclable waste. Sanitary bins are required for washrooms.</p>

Task: Consider your equipment



Consider the location you are likely to carry out your massage treatments. Are there any alterations you might need to make to ensure it's the best environment possible? Consider if you might need to purchase any equipment.

Tip: Save this task to use in your business assignment.

Reminder: You are not expected to have all the answers at this stage. A lot of ideas and best working practices will become apparent as you continue throughout this course.

Revisit this lesson towards the end of your course and see if there are any additional considerations that you now have.



Your massage couch

As discussed in Lesson 3, working positions are designed to protect the working therapist from muscle or joint strain as well as to allow maximum mobility and pressure for the treatment. It is essential that you work with a couch that is suitable for the purpose and is the correct height to maintain your posture whilst performing the variety of massage strokes required during your treatment.

You will need to choose your couch according to the type of therapies you intend to offer. Before making your decision, the following questions should be taken into consideration:

Do my clients need to be able to sit up? If yes, you will require a couch with an adjustable backrest. If no, then a flat table will probably serve better as they are generally lighter than the ones with the backrest option.

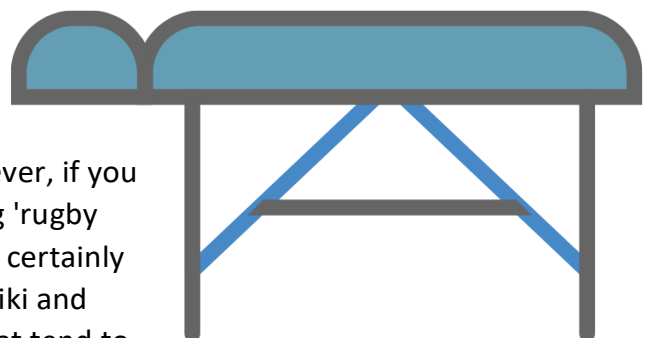
Do I intend using the couch for various therapies or intend to in the future? If you intend to use the couch for different therapies, then selecting a couch with an adjustable backrest and adjustable height offers greater versatility and may prove vital. It is important to look to the future and ask whether there are any other features you may require from your couch – it's a big investment.

Do I intend to be the only therapist using the couch or is it intended for various therapists of various heights? If the couch is going to be shared among students in a college or therapists in a salon/clinic then adjustable height is a MUST. Adjustable height couches are adjusted while the couch is on its side, typically with an easy-to-use spring clip mechanism that is fast, simple and effective. Adjustable height couches are still of great benefit to a single practitioner as it can be adjusted based on the size of the client – imagine that your hands will be much higher up on a muscly boxer physique compared with a very thin person. Adjusting the height of the bed allows you to maintain the appropriate working position.

What is the right height for me? The widely used general rule is that if you stand alongside your couch with your fist clenched, then the top of your knuckles should just brush the top of the couch. This is typically at your hip level.

What is the right width to choose?

Different therapies need different couches of different widths. The standard 610mm width suits most applications. However, if you know you are going to be working on the big 'rugby player' type then an extra width bed is most certainly recommended. Aromatherapy, Massage, Reiki and Acupuncture are among a few disciplines that tend to



require a wider couch. When choosing a wider couch, you need to bear 2 things in mind, firstly, it will add at least 1kgs to the overall weight of the couch and secondly, will you be able to reach across it.

The alternatives, to an extra wide couch, are the accessories. A face cradle will add extra length and armrests will add extra width without adding to the weight or size of the couch when folded.

Is it comfortable? Client comfort is an important factor. Couches come standard with double foam padding i.e. 40mm thick foam. Make sure the foam padding used is high density, foam which will not collapse over time.

Is it easy to clean? The vinyl covering should be hardwearing and easy to wipe clean. Just use a soft wet cloth and soapy water. Do not use any solvents.

What is the maximum weight the couch can take? On average 225 kg. Check with the manufacturer.

Is there a Warranty? Your couch should have a manufacturer's warranty, usually 2 years.

Safe Equipment

It is important to review the content around Health & Safety (Lesson 3) and consider how the regulations apply to your equipment and set up.

You should carry out a risk assessment on your equipment and environment.



Task: Consider your equipment

Consider the following questions. What equipment in your practice would require electrical testing, for example? Would any items require you to consider manual handling practices?

Useful Links:

<https://www.massagewarehouse.co.uk/blogs/blog/massage-treatment-room-design-inspiration-ideas>

<https://homeguides.sfgate.com/design-massage-room-52680.html>

<https://www.direct365.co.uk/blog/salon-waste-disposal/>

<https://www.medisort.co.uk/how-to-dispose-of-beauty-salon-waste/>