

SETTING UP YOUR WORKSTATION



Use this guide to assess your computer workstation (at work or at home – this includes laptops). It will assist you in identifying office workplace factors that can cause or contribute to health problems such as aches and pains, tiredness and eyestrain. Advice on adjustments to your workstation and work practices is provided.

Be aware that it can take a while to get used to any change, so allow a few hours or better, a few days, to determine your most comfortable position.

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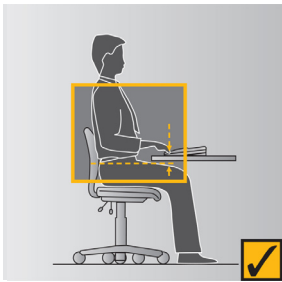


Fig 1: Elbows just above the desk top

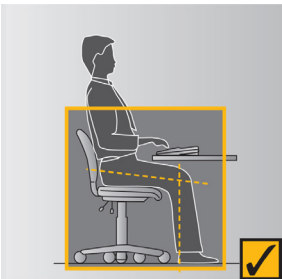


Fig 2: Thighs horizontal, lower legs vertical.

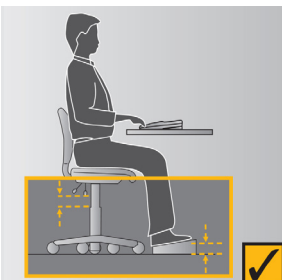


Fig 3: You may need a footrest

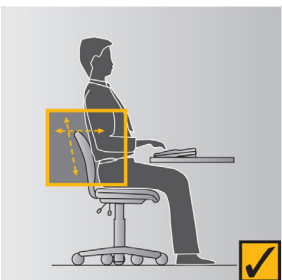


Fig 4: Adjust the backrest to the curve of your back



Fig 5: Check your armrests

CHAIR

Seat Height

- ▶ To determine your ideal seat height, sit in the chair, relax your shoulders & bend your elbows at 90°.
- ▶ If your feet do not comfortably reach the floor, with your thighs horizontal and your lower legs vertical (knees at right angles – see Figure 1), you will need a footrest (see Figure 2). If the desk is too low, consult an Ergonomist.
- ▶ If you have a fixed-height desk, you will need to adjust your chair height to the desk, as follows. For an adjustable desk, see the next section.
- **Adjustable desk:**
 - ▶ Adjust the height of your chair so that your feet are flat on the floor when you are sitting, as described in the previous bullet point. Then adjust your desk so the desk surface is just below elbow height (see Figure 1).
- **Fixed-height desk:**
 - ▶ Adjust the height of your chair to accommodate your upper limbs. Your elbows should be just above the desk top so that when you type, your elbows are at 90° to 110°.

Seat Tilt (if available)

- ▶ Set the tilt to horizontal initially. You may wish to adjust the tilt slightly forward to suit your comfort (you will need to recheck your seat height if you do).
- ▶ Armrests are not normally recommended for seated computer work. If your current chair has armrests ensure that they can be lowered to a height that allows them to move freely under the desk without catching or interfering with your elbow posture (see Figure 5).

Armrests

Back Support Height

- ▶ Sit in the chair and check the fit of the backrest to the curve of your lower back.
- ▶ Ensure your buttocks are positioned against the back of the seat (see Fig 4).
- ▶ If not comfortable, raise or lower the backrest until the hollow in your lower back (generally around your waistline) sits comfortably within the backrest.
- ▶ Ensure the front edge of your chair isn't touching the back of your knees. If it is, you will need a smaller chair.

Back Support Tilt

- ▶ Your chair may have a back rest tilt function, either as a separate lever or in conjunction with the seat tilt lever. Adjust the forward/backward tilt position of your backrest until a comfortable pressure is exerted on your lower back area while seated in a comfortable, near-upright working posture.
- ▶ The backrest should not feel as though it is pushing you out of your chair.
- ▶ The seat tilt function should be adjusted according to point b) above. To bring your seat back to the horizontal, pull up on the front of your chair (between your legs) while making the adjustment.



Fig 6: This under-desk area is too cluttered

CLEARANCE UNDER DESK

- ▶ Ensure the area under the desk is clear. Items such as handbags, boxes, rubbish bins, wiring and/or mobile drawers may interfere with leg space and inhibit good posture of the spine (see Figure 6).

GENERAL DESK STORAGE

Reach areas are considered in three zones (see Figure 7).

Optimum Sector:

For items most frequently used (e.g. keyboard, mouse).

Maximum reach sector:

For items used intermittently throughout the day (e.g. telephone, calculator).

Outer reach sector:

For items that are used infrequently. In-trays should be located in this zone and should not be located above shoulder height.

Large or heavy reference materials should be stored where the user does not have to reach above shoulder level (either while seated or standing). Place more commonly used folders closer to you. Place less commonly used folders further away and stand up to access them.

If you are reviewing printed documents or writing, either move elsewhere or make space for them by moving your keyboard out of the optimum zone. You may need to lower your chair to reduce the amount of neck forward tilt required when writing.

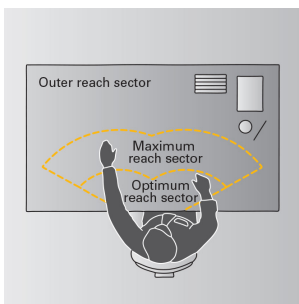


Fig 7: The three reach zones

KEYBOARD



Fig 8: Place the keyboard close to the front of the desk.

→ Position on the Desk:

Place the keyboard as close to the front edge of the desk as is comfortable (remember to consider elbow angle). If you do not touch type, place the keyboard a little further away to avoid excessive neck bending. Do not place documents between the keyboard and the front edge of the desk when using the keyboard (see Figure 8).

If you are regularly entering information into the computer, whilst reading from printed material, you may require a document holder.

→ Keyboard Tilt:

It is usually better to have the feet of the keyboard lowered so the keyboard sits flat on the desk.

→ Mouse:

Place the mouse directly beside the keyboard on your preferred side (see Figure 8). If you find you are using the mouse outside of the optimal zone – move it back to the side of the keyboard.

Clean the underside of the mouse regularly to keep it in good working order.

Consider learning to use your mouse with either hand so that you can share the workload between hands.

→ Telephone:

Place the telephone at the limit of the optimum sector (see Figure 8).

If you have frequent or prolonged telephone calls, consider using a hands-free telephone set with earphones, e.g. wireless Bluetooth.

Call-centre staff should use headsets.

COMPUTER SCREEN



Fig 9: Check the screen height

- ▶ The screen should be adjusted once the chair and desk heights have been established.

Screen height:

- ▶ The screen should be positioned so that the top of the screen is level with, or slightly lower than, your eyes (see Figure 9).
- ▶ If the screen does not have a monitor stand or similar, you can use telephone books or scrap paper to set the screen/monitor height temporarily.

Screen distance:

- ▶ Place the screen so that it is approximately an arm's length away from your usual seated position or as far as is comfortable for your vision. Ensure your screen is close enough to allow you to easily read from it, and that you can read the font comfortably whilst sitting upright in your chair. You may need to adjust the font size, or the screen distance, but be careful not to bring the screen too close.

Positioning of the screen:

- ▶ The screen should be placed directly in front of you so that you do not twist your spine. Position it so that you avoid glare and/or reflection from overhead lights and windows.
- ▶ You may have to change your setup to achieve this, or perhaps your desk. It is best to position your screen (and desk) side-on to windows. Adjust blinds or curtains to optimise viewing comfort.

Also:

- ▶ Adjust the brightness/contrast of the screen as required. Laptops have a function which controls brightness – usually press 'ctrl' and an "F key"; e.g. F7
- ▶ Clean the screen regularly using an appropriate cleaner (LCD screens require special attention)
- ▶ Use a screen filter only as a last resort – they tend to make the screen difficult to read from

If you require any further information or have any questions regarding this document, please contact **Dohrmann Consulting**

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LAPTOPS

Permanent and prolonged use of stand-alone laptops (greater than about four hours per day) is not recommended. One alternative is to use a height-adjustable docking station with a separate, full-sized keyboard and mouse.

REST BREAKS

Remember to try to avoid sitting for long periods. Some form of break from sitting every 30 minutes is helpful. Even getting up for 20 to 30 seconds to go to the printer or standing while talking on the telephone will allow for postural change.

It is also a good idea to carry out some simple stretches throughout the day. *Officewise*^{*1} has some suggestions for this.

Give your eyes a regular break too. Looking into the distance (such as out through a window) is helpful.

1. *Officewise* – a guide to health and safety in the office, 2006. Published by WorkSafe Victoria.