

ERGONOMIC WORK STATION SET-UP GUIDE

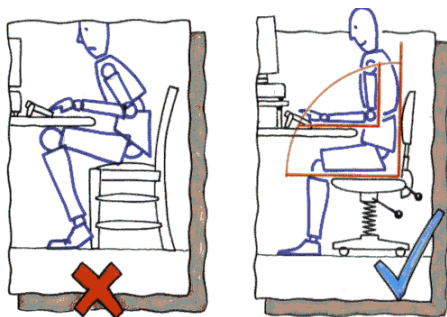
This sheet is designed to give you the knowledge and skill so that you can 'make to measure' and individually tailor your computer workstation to you. Take your time and follow this guide through carefully to ensure you set-up your workstation correctly. You may identify only minor problems with your equipment. However making the necessary modifications will inevitably help your condition, and the treatment you are receiving, work.

Chair

First ensure all your equipment mechanisms are in working order and that you know how to use them. The whole chair should be adjustable to suit users of different heights.

Make sure your feet are in contact with the floor or a footrest. Having feet firmly supported enables the whole body to balance and support itself properly with less fatigue.

Your hips and spine should be at right angles and the back rest, which should be adjustable, should be in the small of your back. It should help and encourage you to sit in a good, upright position. It should be comfortably padded and either spring-loaded so that it moves with you as you change position, or independently adjustable on the back of the chair. If the back rest is in the wrong place you will tire more easily and your back will stiffen up and be more likely to ache.



Desk

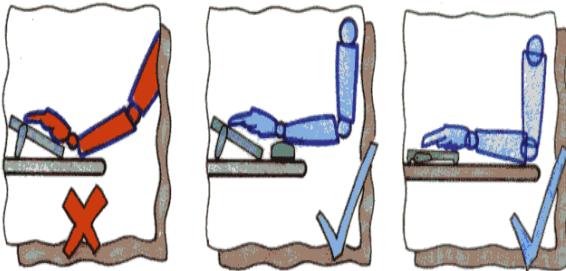
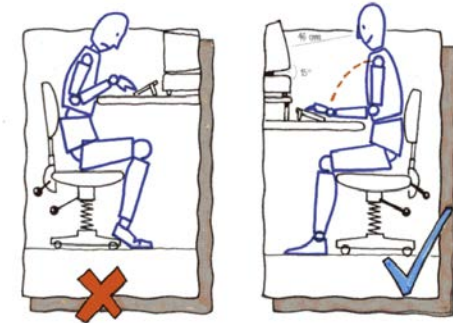
As mentioned before, the chair should be adjustable to different heights. If you are too high you will have to bend your neck excessively to see what you are doing. If you are too low it will make your shoulders ache from holding your arms up to do your work. With your shoulders relaxed and elbows at right angles, your arms should rest on the surface of your desk. If they do not, you could be at risk of Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). This will be approximately level with your abdomen when seated comfortably.

Screen

The screen should be just below the height of your eyes and immediately in front of you.

Place it at a distance where you can easily read what is on it (around 18 inches or 46 cms on average) and it should be tilted back about 15°.

If the screen is too low it will make you hunch your neck and shoulders and develop 'PC hump', which will soon become sore. If it is too near, you may get eyestrain.



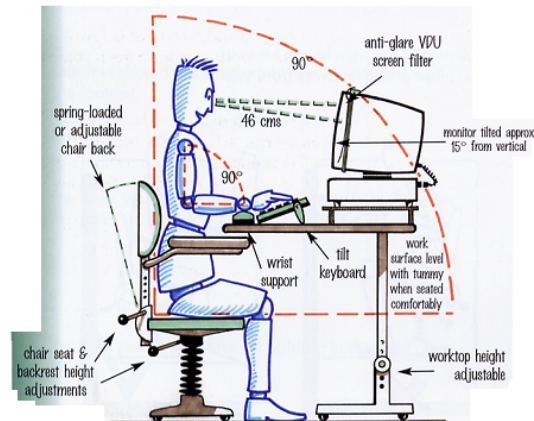
Keyboard

The keyboard should be modern and fairly thin in cross-section – no more than 1 inch (2cm). This means that the forearm muscles do not have to constantly pull your hand up in order to get your fingers above the keys. If the keyboard is too thick, or has too steep a rake, i.e. it slopes down too steeply from back to front, then it will make your forearms overwork and you run the risk of RSI. If you cannot change the keyboard, use a wrist support. This raises the forearm to the necessary amount and prevents the problem occurring. A higher seat may also solve the problem.

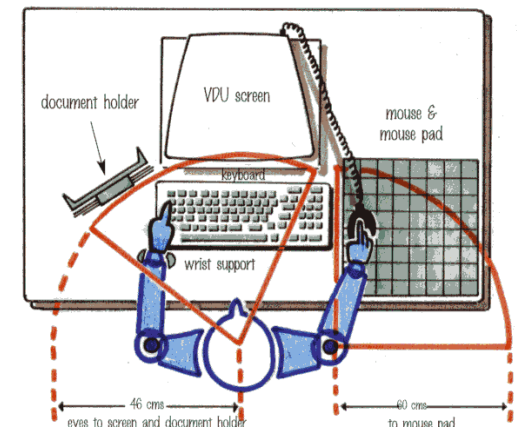
The idea is to have the forearm and wrist more or less level when typing. So, only use a wrist rest if necessary. Try taking the keyboard support down first.

Mouse

Make sure your mouse and mouse pad are within a relaxed, comfortable distance, i.e. within 24 inches (60cm) from your side and at the same height as the table you are working at.



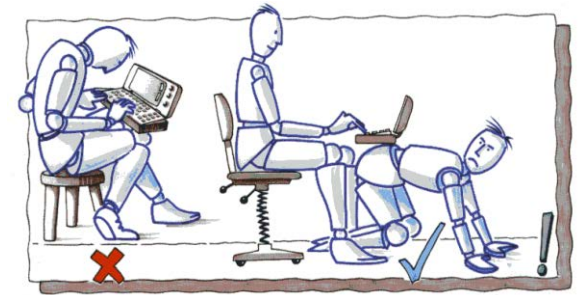
Finally, make sure everything is positioned as in the diagram to the left. You can now begin to work at your 'Ergonomically Friendly Workstation!'



OTHER ERGONOMIC WORK STATION GUIDELINES

Laptop Computers

The problem here is their size. They are designed for portability not for extended use. As laptops are small, they force the user to look down and adopt the 'computer hump', thus fixing the head and neck into a bad position. If you must use one, then raise it on a support so that it is easier to see. Rest your arms on a support and try not to use the laptop for longer than half an hour at a time, or you will get a stiff neck and shoulders and perhaps worse.



More Detailed Information

Armrests – They can be a problem in that they can prevent the chair and user getting close enough to the work surface. If your table is high enough to allow the armrests under it, then they can be useful in supporting the elbows.

Seat Tilt – Some chairs allow the seat to tilt from level. This must remain a matter of personal taste, as there is no clear benefit shown from research into this matter. On grounds of reducing lumbar vertebral flexion and consequent disc damage, a slight forwards and downward tilt (5° or so) might be better.

Copy/Document Holder – This should be at the same height as the computer screen and preferably next to it (or as close by as possible) so that the user can look straight at both easily, with the minimum of repetitive head turning.

Keep yourself Mobile

The secret to healthy working at a computer is to realise it is actually an unnatural thing. It is unnatural in the fact you are sitting still for long periods of time and doing this in one posture, i.e. seated. The human body is designed for activity and variety of posture during that activity: therefore you should not stay at the computer for longer than twenty minutes. Get up, walk about, do some stretches for a minute and return to work. Three minutes in one hour is not much and current regulations and advice to computer users all suggest these kinds of micropauses. The aim of the stretches and walk about is to stop your muscles tightening and reduce the risk of injury. It also improves circulation to these muscles which stops them from getting tired and then overworked and painful.

What Stretches? – Your Osteopath may give you specific unique stretches to do. However, the following simple routine may suffice: -

Do each of these exercises for 10 seconds. If you can combine these stretches with walking about, so much the better, but be careful not to fall over!

