

SAFETY TALK

— Ergonomics

Setting yourself up for success in the office



Often our successes are dependent on our energy levels and our overall well-being, and our energy levels and well-being are contingent on how well we treat ourselves. Have you set yourself up for success in the office? Are you taking care of yourself at work? Take a look around your workstation. Is it arranged to support neutral postures and good body mechanics? If not, you could be making yourself tired and wearing yourself out just sitting at your desk! Let's talk about managing your workstation to your advantage.

More and more workstations are equipped with adjustable equipment. But the successful management of your workstation is not just in having adjustability; it's in setting up the equipment correctly. Your workstation should be configured to provide your body with supported neutral postures. When your body is supported in a neutral posture, you expend less energy on body mechanics and fidgeting. You allow yourself to reserve your energy for getting the job done. So what does the proper workstation set-up look like?



1. **Monitor Screen Top** – positioned slightly below eye level, lower if you wear bifocals. This supports a neutral neck posture.
2. **Body Alignment** – centered in front of the monitor and keyboard. This supports a neutral body posture and eliminates twisting.
3. **Forearms** – level or titled down slightly. This supports neutral shoulder and arm postures.
4. **Lower Back** – supported by the chair. With the chair's lumbar support at your belt line, the chair can support the natural curves of your spine.
5. **Wrists** – neutral posture – wrist rests are for resting. Wrist should be slightly above the wrist rest and in line with the forearms when typing or completing data entry. This supports a neutral wrist posture.
6. **Legs** – horizontal – this may require the use of a foot rest. Maintaining your upper legs on a horizontal plane supports a neutral hip and spine posture. Crossing your legs tilts the pelvic bone and causes the spine to move out of its neutral posture and places stress on the nerves.
7. **Feet** – resting flat on the floor or on a foot rest. This posture in conjunction with the horizontal leg posture supports a neutral spinal posture that allows the chair to properly support your back.

The knee well of the desk should be kept clear of clutter, so your knees and feet fit under the desk in front of you. Use an in-line document holder that sits between the keyboard/keyboard tray and monitor. It should be aligned with the midline of your body so you only need to look down to see the documents and raise your eyes to see the screen.

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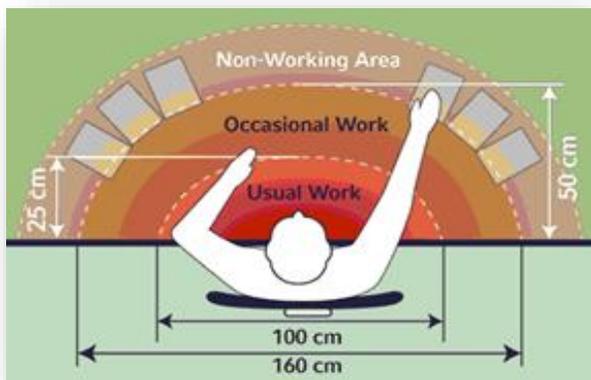
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The keyboard and pointing device should be placed side-by-side on the same level. If you are right handed, consider learning to use the pointing device with your left hand to help keep your arms and shoulders in neutral postures. The keyboard/pointing device platform should be located at a height that allows your hands to rest lightly on the keyboard or pointing device with your forearms using the chair armrests for support. The armrests should be adjusted so they just meet your elbows when your shoulders are in a relaxed posture. You should not have to reach down for them, nor lift your arms up to them.

The work surface should have adequate space for the necessary equipment, such as monitor, telephone, stapler, working files, to be located close to the user to minimize bending, flexing, or twisting of the arms, wrists or hands. Unnecessary items should be removed or located elsewhere. Purposely inconvenient items help get you up and out of your chair, which helps to relax your back.



Too much illumination can cause glare, either directly from the light source, or indirectly from reflective surfaces. Reduce direct sunlight by closing the blinds or curtains. Reposition the angle and/or slope of the computer screen to reduce glare. Cover polished work surfaces with pads or blotters to reduce glare.

Monitor your monitor. For ultimate clarity, set your monitor resolution to 1024 X 768 and a dot pitch of .28 or less. Use a black font on a white background to match the hardcopy document you work with. Clean your monitor screen at least once a week.

Give yourself a rest. Look away from your monitor and at a distance object to reduce the stress on your eye muscles from maintaining a constant focal distance. Blink to lubricate your eyes or use eye drops. Dry eyes are more common when you wear contact lens. Ask your eye doctor what drops to use. Get up and walk around periodically to increase your circulation and relax your body's muscles.

If you want to achieve anything in life, you have to prepare for it. You can set yourself up for success. Take ownership of your workstation and make the adjustments that are within your control. Ensure you maintain supported neutral postures. Take breaks periodically to refresh your muscles, your eyes, and your mind. If you need help to make adjustments contact your supervisor. Sometimes success takes team work!