

## DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT – Workstation Set up and Use

The information below has been produced to assist users to achieve good working postures and to organise their workstations safely. If necessary, it can be separated from the main document and issued directly to them.

### How to Achieve Good Working Postures

There is no such thing as one correct sitting posture, so varying the way you sit during the day will help to reduce aches and pains. Certain postures should be avoided and your sitting position influences the comfort of your entire body. It is most important to adjust your seat and DSE correctly.

#### Step 1 - Adjust Your Seat Height

- Sit in front of your terminal and adjust the height of your seat so that your forearms are roughly horizontal and your wrists are straight when your hands are on the keyboard. If your feet are not comfortably on the floor, or there is pressure on the back of your thighs from the seat edge, then use a footrest.
- If you sit too high or too low you will be forced to type with bent wrists or in a hunched or stooped position. This can cause discomfort in your wrists, arms, shoulders, neck or back and therefore it should be avoided.

#### Step 2 - Adjust Your Backrest

- Make sure your bottom is towards the back of the seat and then adjust the height and angle of your backrest so that it supports your lower back. If you still need extra support put a cushion in the small of your back. If necessary, try altering the angle of the seat base so that it is tilted slightly forward. This makes it easier to maintain a comfortable upright posture.
- Try changing the angle of the backrest during the day to vary your sitting position. Avoid slouching or perching on the edge of your seat as you will not get any support from the backrest if you do. Also, the slouched 'C' shape posture is damaging to your back - discs, muscles and ligaments are stressed in this posture.

You may feel uncomfortable at first, but this is because you have to 'unlearn' bad posture habits reinforced over many years.

Do take the time and effort to achieve good posture - it is well worth it!

#### Step 3 - Adjust Your Screen Position

- The height and angle of your screen influences the position of your head and neck. If the angle is wrong you may suffer from neck and shoulder pain. Usually the most comfortable position is looking slightly down (at an angle of approximately 10-15 degrees).
- If your screen is too low you will not be able to maintain an upright posture or your neck may be bent too far forwards - try using proprietary screen raisers to overcome this. Ideally, the screen should be positioned so that the central part of the screen is at eye level.
- **Touch typist** - make sure you are sitting in the correct position, with your hands in your normal typing position. Without moving your head you should just be able to look over the top of the screen; then lower your eyes to the middle of the screen; adjust the screen height to achieve this.
- **Non-touch typist** - again make sure you are sitting correctly with your hands resting on the keyboard. Start by looking at the keyboard, then raise your eyes (not your head) and look at the middle of the screen; adjust screen height to achieve this.

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#### Step 4 - Screen/Seat Position

- The ideal position is one where the screen is in front of you, to allow your body to remain in a neutral position (not twisted).
- For some people this means the screen is in, or near, the middle of the desk; for others it may be offset in which case you must swivel your chair so that your whole body is parallel with the screen.

#### Step 5 – Keyboard and Mouse

- If necessary, support the wrists with a wrist-rest when using the keyboard. When using the mouse, try to support the whole forearm on the desk or use a mouse mat to support the wrist and forearm. Also, if you do a lot of repetitive mouse movements, try to reduce the amount of time spent using the mouse by:
  - using the keyboard controls.
  - training yourself to use the mouse with either your left or right hand.
  - taking frequent breaks, rather than continually operating the mouse.

#### Additional Points

##### Make Sure You Can Read the Screen Comfortably

Tired eyes and headaches at the end of the working day may be the result of difficulty reading your screen. This could be due to a number of factors, such as:

##### *Dirty Screens*

Screens quickly attract dust and then text becomes difficult to read, so it is important to clean screens regularly with proprietary cleaner. If you use a filter, remember to clean the screen behind the filter as well. Working with a dirty screen means your eyes have to work even harder.

##### *Vision*

DSE work, like any other close work, requires good or corrected vision. Ideally, you should have your eyesight checked on a regular basis. If you feel that DSE work is affecting your eyesight or causing discomfort, then inform your manager. You are entitled to have your eyes screened every two years, free of charge, or more frequently, if you experience discomfort.

##### Reflections and Glare

Reflections and glare from windows or artificial lights make the screen difficult to read. There are several things which will help:

- try moving your screen to a different angle.
- avoid sitting with windows or light directly in front of or behind your screen.
- if possible, sit at right angles to light coming through windows.
- use window blinds.
- if lighting levels are too high, try selectively turning off lights or use task lighting.
- adjust the brightness and contrast controls on the monitor to suit the lighting conditions.
- if you still have problems see your Health and Safety Manager.

##### Organise Your Work Area

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How you organise your work area will influence the way you sit. The best arrangement will depend on the tasks involved in your job.

If your work area is badly arranged so that you have to sit in a bent or twisted position, then back or neck ache is likely to result. This can be avoided if you think carefully about the requirements of your job and arrange your work area accordingly.

**Document Holders**

Do you spend most of your time reading from source documents, or looking at your screen? Many people assume that the screen should be placed directly in front of them. If you are reading mainly from hard copy documents the best solution could be to move the screen to one side and use a copy holder to raise documents to a comfortable height. The important thing to remember is to keep the document holder level with the screen. The idea is to minimise head and neck movement and also to reduce the need for your eyes to keep refocusing.

Try to place your screen in a position where background distractions from such things as moving people, shiny surfaces or wall notices are not visible on the screen.

**Take a Break**

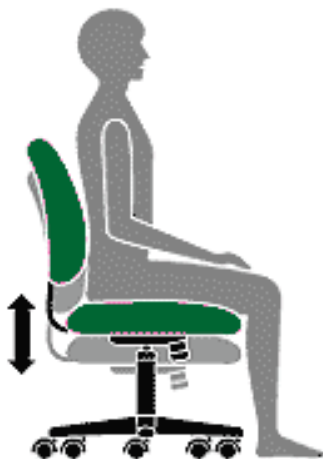
The human body is designed for movement and it does not like prolonged periods of static posture. Whenever possible, try to break up any long periods of DSE work with other activities such as photocopying or telephoning. The aim is to move around and change your posture, so that your eyes and body get a rest from DSE work.

If it is not possible to build in these natural breaks then aim to take a 5 minute break every hour. Be sensible about taking breaks.

**Report any Problems**

If you start to experience any problems when working with your DSE you must tell your line manager.

**DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT – CHAIR SET UP & ADJUSTMENT**

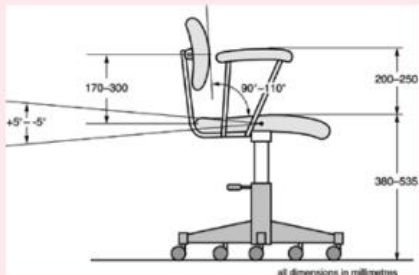


*Chairs are adjustable to suit individual needs.*

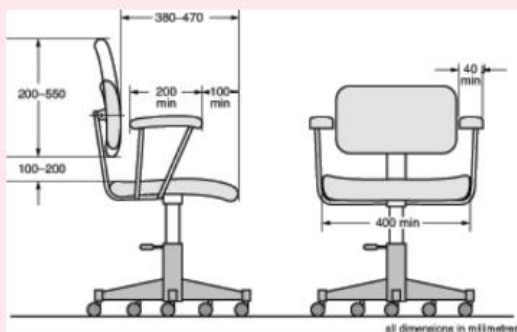
Did you know that there is no single correct chair that is 100% perfect for everyone?

Chairs are adjustable because they allow most people to adjust them according to their own individual needs. However, in order to make a typical office chair suitable for most people, there are **some minimum criteria** which should be fulfilled. For example, it should be possible, and easy - whilst seated on the chair – to independently adjust the chair's height, the position of the backrest and the seat tilt (if provided). The chair will normally have a five-point star base for stability, with either castors or gliders (which should be chosen according to the type of floor covering).

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**Figure 1(a)** Recommended adjustability



**Figure 1(b)** Recommended chair dimensions

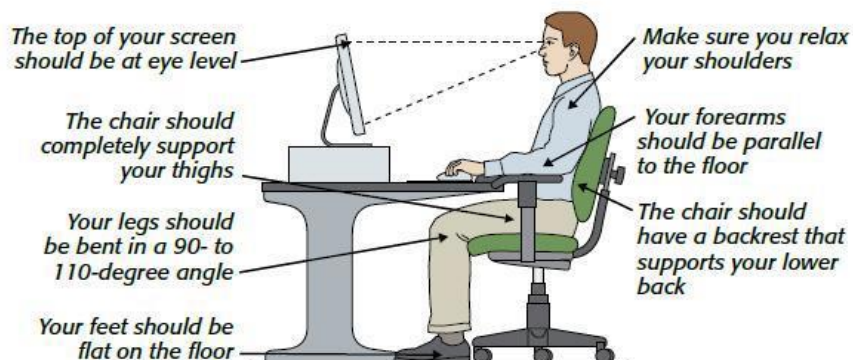
**Tips**

*The height of the chair should be adjusted so that your hands and forearms are parallel to the desk, and the keyboard at about elbow height. If your feet do not rest comfortably on the floor, then a footrest is necessary.*

*The backrest of the chair should be adjusted to support the lumbar curve with your shoulders relaxed.*

**Seating and posture for typical office tasks**

1. Seat back independently adjustable for height and tilt, and chair arms dropped
2. Good lumbar support
3. Seat height adjustable
4. No excess pressure on underside of thighs and backs of knees
5. Foot support if needed
6. Space for postural change with no obstacles under desk
7. Forearms approximately horizontal – elbows at 90 degrees, shoulders relaxed
8. Minimal extension, flexion or deviation of wrists
9. Screen height and angle should allow comfortable head position
10. Space in front of keyboard to support hands and wrists during pauses in keying



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**DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT – KEYBOARDS**

Is your keyboard separate from the screen and does your keyboard have a matt surface, legible symbols, an appropriate layout and sufficient space in front of it?

Do you experience aches or pains in your hands, wrists and arms whilst using your keyboard?

**Tips**

- Try pushing the display screen further back to create more room for the keyboard.
- If you have a raised, thick keyboard, a wrist rest may help.
- When typing, **aim to avoid:**
  - bending your hands at the wrist
  - hitting the keys too hard
  - over-stretching your fingers

Good keyboard technique is critical. When typing, your forearms should be parallel to the desktop and roughly level with the top of the keyboard. There should also be room to rest your hands when not typing.

There are an increasing number of **ergonomic keyboards** on the market, and also **left-handed keyboards**.



**DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT - USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES**



*The use of tablets, smartphones and other mobile devices in the workforce has increased significantly over the past few years.*

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The use of tablets, iPhones, smartphones and other mobile devices in the workplace is becoming more and more common, yet the long-term associated risks are still largely unknown. Short-term effects are known to include neck pain - from heads being tilted at an uncomfortable angle - and muscle fatigue from arms being outstretched for extended periods whilst waiting for screens to load. Muscle fatigue is also a risk for those who have difficulty in viewing small screens, and who therefore hold them at arms' length for extended periods of time. It is possible that longer-term effects of using mobile devices will become apparent over time.

**What you can do to reduce risks**

- Regularly look away from the screen to relax eye muscles
- Increase font size to avoid eye strain
- Hold device at eye level to reduce neck strain, or use a stand
- Place the device on a table or surface when typing
- Vary the fingers you use to input data
- Use an external keyboard – or switch to a PC or laptop - when inputting large amounts of data or typing for a lengthy period of time
- Regularly change position and stretch

**DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT – USING A MOUSE**

Intensive use of a mouse, trackball or similar pointing device may give rise to aches and pains in the fingers, hands, wrists, arms or shoulders. This can also happen with a keyboard. Most mouse work concentrates on activity on just one hand and arm (and just one or two fingers) and this intensity may make problems more likely to occur.

Risks can be reduced by adopting a good posture and techniques, i.e.

- Place the mouse close to you, so that it can be used with a relaxed arm and straight wrist without over-stretching, and adjust the position of your keyboard to ensure you have support during pauses between keying.
- Support your arm on the desk or armrests of the chair. Do not over-reach.
- Don't leave your hand on the device when it is not being used.
- Take frequent breaks and short pauses.
- Use good keyboard techniques: wrists straight, a soft touch on the keys and do not overstretch your fingers.

If you have tremors in your hand or finger problems, a **stationary mouse** is the best option. However, if you are still finding the mouse awkward, there are alternative shapes and sizes, or even an alternative device such as a **trackball mouse**.



A **roller mouse** is good for neck and shoulder issues.

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**vertical mouse** is more effective generally than a mouse mat and keyboard rest (as users tend to swivel their wrists). If possible, trial one before purchasing.



The **Microsoft Arc** and cordless **Trackman optical** are types of mouse that allow the hand and wrist to work in a more natural position:



A **mouse bean** provides good wrist support, and is very useful if the user has carpal tunnel syndrome:



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**DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT – WORKING WITH LAPTOPS**



Increases in home or mobile working has resulted in more people working on laptops in various locations than ever before. However, as the keyboard and screen are not separate, as with a traditional computer and monitor, it is difficult to find a good working posture.

In order to prevent neck strain, you need to ensure that the top of your screen is roughly at eye level, so if you are going to be working at a laptop for prolonged periods of time, the screen needs to be raised in order to achieve a good head position. Generally, therefore, it is not advisable to use your laptop for long periods of time without suitable adaptations, such as using a laptop riser, separate keyboard and mouse.

**What you can do**

- To prevent eye strain, ensure your laptop screen is positioned roughly one arms' length away from you.
- To prevent neck strain, ensure that the top of your laptop screen is positioned roughly at eye level.
- Ideally, use a laptop riser, separate keyboard and mouse – liaise with your line manager / IT department for provision.



Use a laptop riser if necessary

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