Health and Safety Services

Guidance: A Step by Step Guide to Setting up Your Workstation

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) / Workstation Set Up

Setting up your workstation correctly will reduce most of the causes of pain and discomfort from sitting at a computer. The correct setup might not feel right straight away, however adopting correct posture, layout of equipment etc will minimise the risks to your health later.

1) First, adjust your chair height so that when you put your fingers on the middle row of the keyboard your forearms and hands are horizontal, with your elbows vertically under your shoulders and no angle at the wrist.

Adjust your chair to this height now.

2) With your chair correctly adjusted are your feet flat on the floor? Most desks are a standard height of 710 mm or so, therefore some people will benefit from a footrest. The footrest doesn't need to be angled unless you wear heels or have it a long way away.

3) Adjust the height of the monitor so that you are looking horizontally, not down at it. Generally this means having the top of the visible area at eye height, when you are sitting upright.

Many people have their monitor too low.

You can raise the monitor on anything suitable that you have to hand, it doesn't need to be an adjustable monitor arm.

4) Adjust the angle of the backrest, and/or the length of the base cushion, so that your back is supported in your work position.

If you can't sit fully back and upright without the back of your knees hooking the front of the seat, you need a different chair with a shorter base cushion.

5) Adjust the backrest height so that it supports the lower back (at belt level)

Many people set the back support too low.

Sit very upright. If the **shape of the backrest** does not fit fully into the small of your back, you would probably benefit from adding a back support.

6) Move your chair so that when typing your elbows are vertically under your shoulders. If you cannot get close to the desk because the chair armrests hit the edge of the desk, either change the chair or remove them. If necessary ask for help from your school safety advisor or DSE assessor.

7) Fixed-height armrests are generally too low, encouraging you to slump down to them. Adjustable-height armrests are usually shorter and will let you get close enough to your

desk while offering valuable support taking some of the weight of your arms off your shoulder and neck muscles.

8) Check the distance of the monitor. For most people to view the screen comfortably it should be about 22-26" (55 - 65 cm) away, so that the muscles that focus your eyes do not have to work too hard.

If you are sitting much closer than this, consider if there is a problem with your eyesight, the screen quality or settings, or the desk depth. CRT monitor users can often increase the usable desk depth by pulling the desk away from the wall and allowing the monitor to overhang at the back.

9) Check the position of the monitor - it should be directly in front of you.

Don't put the monitor in the corner - either it will be hard to get close enough to the keyboard, or you will be twisted and you may develop back and neck problems

10) Sit close to the desk and don't put things between you and the keyboard except a wrist rest (if required) - your elbows need to be vertically under your shoulders. Don't automatically use the keyboard's rear feet - you only need them if your elbows are below desk height. If you rest your wrists on the table when you type you should use a wrist rest.

11) Position and use the mouse as close to you as you can. Aim to have your elbow vertically under your shoulder, and right by your side or on the armrest.

If you develop any sensation in your mouse-side shoulder, a narrow (84-key) keyboard may be useful so that you can have your mouse closer.

12) If you often refer to documents whilst typing use a document holder. This should be positioned at the same height and distance as your monitor. If you look at the documents more than the screen put the document holder directly in front of you and the monitor to the side.

13) Eliminate any glare or reflections on your monitor. Try closing blinds and changing the position of the workstation so that the monitor is at right-angles to the window.

Turn off overhead lights unless you really need them. You can reduce reflections from overhead lights by raising your monitor then tilting it down to make the screen vertical.

14) Position any additional equipment e.g. phones, paper trays, reference material in accessible places. Try to avoid reaching and twisting. Investigate storage facilities and desk accessories to help you organize your workstation better.

15) The temperature and humidity should be adjusted so that they are comfortable. Eliminate any uncomfortable draughts.

If you have any questions contact your local DSE Assessor or School/Area Safety Advisor.

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