

COMPUTER WORKSTATION SELF-AUDIT CHECKLIST

1. Chair Adjustment

Yes **No**

- Is your chair height adjustable? _____
- Is your chair back adjustable up and down? _____
- Is your chair back contoured to support the lower back? _____
- Is there room (1" - 4") between the front edge of the seat pan and the back of your knees? _____
- Do your chair arms interfere with you getting close to your work? _____
- Do your chair arms allow you to sit with your shoulders relaxed and not elevated? _____
- Do your feet rest flat on the floor or are they supported by a foot rest? _____
- Are your knees bent forming approximately a 90 degree or greater angle? _____

To be seated properly in your chair your feet must rest flat on the floor. Use a foot rest if your chair does not adjust low enough or if your work surface is too high. The key is to not only have your feet flat on the floor (or supported by a foot rest) but also to have your thighs parallel with the seat pan so your legs form approximately a 90 degree (or greater) angle at the knees.

If your chair back adjusts up and down and has a lower contour (the lumbar support), adjust the back of your chair so the lumbar support fits in the small of your back. If the chair back is adjustable forward and backward, adjust the angle to what is comfortable for you. The angle you prefer is rather subjective; you should adjust the back angle of your chair so your trunk and upper legs form an angle somewhere between 94 -115 degrees.

If your chair has arms they should not interfere with you getting close to your work. In addition, when you assume the typing position with your arms resting comfortably at your side, the chair arms should be at a height where they just barely contact your elbows. The chair arms should not noticeably elevate your shoulders or force you to wing your arms out to use them.

2. Work surface/Keyboard/Pointing Device Adjustment

Yes **No**

- With your chair adjusted properly is your work surface at approximately elbow level? _____
- Are your shoulders relaxed and not elevated when you work at your work surface? _____
- When you address your work surface to type or write is there approximately a 90 degree angle between your forearms and upper arms and are your elbows close to your body? _____
- When you address your work surface to type are your wrists in line with your forearms and not bent upwards, downwards, or side-to-side? _____

For the proper work surface/keyboard height do the following: if your work surface is adjustable, first adjust your chair as mentioned in the chair adjustment section above, then with your arms resting comfortably at your side, raise your forearms to form a 90 degree angle with your upper arms. Adjust your work surface so the home row of your keyboard (the row which has the letters a, s, and d) is at approximately elbow level. If your work surface is too high and not adjustable, adjust your chair to bring your elbows to the home row level of the keyboard. If you raise your chair make sure your feet are properly supported.

3. Monitor Adjustment

Yes **No**

- Is the viewing distance to your computer monitor somewhere between 18" - 30"? _____
- Is the top of your computer screen at or just below eye level? _____
- If you wear bifocals or trifocals, can you see the computer monitor without having to tilt your head back to read the screen or other items in your work area? _____
- Is your computer monitor free of glare or reflections? _____

Once you have your chair and work surface height adjusted, adjust your computer monitor so the top of the screen is at or just below eye level.

Bifocal and trifocal wearers have to pay particular attention to the placement of their monitor. Wearers of bifocals and trifocals often unknowingly tilt their heads backwards so they can read the screen through the lower portion of their glasses. This can sometimes lead to neck, shoulder, and back discomfort. Potential solutions include either lowering your computer monitor or purchasing glasses designed specifically for working at the computer. If glare is a problem either reorient your monitor or purchase a glare screen.

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4. Workstation Accessory Arrangements

Yes No

- Is your input device (mouse, trackball, touch pad) at the same level as your keyboard? _____
- Do you have enough room on your work surface for all your computer accessories? _____
- Are your most frequently accessed items (e.g. phone, manuals, etc.) easy to reach? _____
- Do you have an adjustable document holder to hold paper for prolonged computer inputting? _____
- Do you have a wrist rest to support your wrists in a straight and neutral position? _____
- Do your arms rest on, or contact any sharp or square edges on your work surfaces? _____
- If a large percentage of your time involves using a phone do you use a phone headset? _____

If you use an input device (mouse, trackball, touch pad, etc.) make sure it is at the same level and at approximately the same distance as your keyboard. Try to keep your pointing device as close to the centerline of your body as possible. Reaching for your input device or having it at a higher level than your keyboard can cause problems. Keyboard drawers or other types of keyboard support devices can increase the amount of desk space but can cause other problems. One problem with keyboard drawers and other types of keyboard supports is that they force you further away from your primary work surface, put your mouse at a higher level, and force you to reach to use your mouse and other accessories. Another problem with these type of devices is that they often interfere with the thigh clearance under your work surface.

Keep your most frequently accessed items close to you to minimize the amount of reaching you have to do. If you type and reference material from paper you should consider using a document holder or slant board. Place the document holder at the same distance and height as your computer monitor. The document holder will help in keeping your head over your spine and can prevent or relieve neck, shoulder, and back discomfort.

A padded wrist rest made out of firm foam will take some of the load off your neck, shoulder, and back muscles; keep your wrist in a straight and neutral position while typing; and keep your arms off the sharp edges of the work surface. Ideally the wrist rest should be made of firm foam and constructed so the pad height matches the front (toe) height of your keyboard.

Talking on the phone with your neck bent to hold the receiver can cause neck, shoulder, and back discomfort. If you're on the phone a fair amount of time, a phone headset can prevent you from bending your neck and prevent or relieve neck, shoulder, and back discomfort.

5. WORK HABITS

Yes No

- Do you take short and frequent breaks every at least every hour? _____
- Do you frequently change body positions while working? _____
- Do you provide your eyes with vision breaks every half hour? _____
- Is overtime work uncommon? _____
- Are you free from deadline situations or experiencing deadline stress? _____
- Are you free from experiencing any pain or discomfort while working? _____

It's important to take a break from working at your computer. Repetitious static work (working at a computer) is very fatiguing on your upper extremities as well as your eyes. Your body needs periodic breaks to rest and recover. Taking a break does not mean you have to stop working, you could make a trip to the copier, talk to a colleague, make some phone calls, etc. Intensive repetitive tasks often require more frequent breaks (every 20 – 40 minutes).

It is also very important to change positions periodically. Sitting in one position or leaning on your arms for an extended period of time can interfere with circulation. Moving around can help with circulation and prevent you from putting pressure on one location for an extended period of time.

Overtime and deadline situations often force people to ignore and work through pain and discomfort. It is very important to be attentive to pain or discomfort. Pain that goes away over night is usually a sign of fatigue. Pain that is continuous and does not go away over night is more serious and should be attended to immediately. Inform your supervisor when you detect any pain or discomfort while working. It is much easier for you to recover from a pain episode the earlier you are treated. Ignoring pain can lead to serious injury.

Be careful with what you do outside of work. Repetitive stressful activities outside of work (e.g. home improvement projects, hobbies that require repetitive motion, etc.) can lead to repetitive motion injuries as well. Gradually build up your strength and endurance when you begin a new task.