Ergonomics Self-Evaluation: Computer Workstation

Use this checklist to create your own "custom fit" computer workstation.

Step 1: Adjust the Chair ✔

a. **Seat height –** Adjust height with both feet on the floor and thighs parallel to the floor (hips at the same level or slightly higher than knees). If the seat cannot be lowered (for example, it would make the keyboard or monitor too high), use a footrest to provide stable support and prevent feet from dangling.

b. **Arm rests –** If used, adjust arm rests so elbows are at 90 degrees, shoulders are relaxed, wrists held straight when typing and forearms parallel to the floor.

c. **Backrest –** Support your lower back. Use a rolled towel or cushion placed in the small of your back if your chair does not have adequate backrest support.

Step 2: Adjust the Keyboard & Mouse

a. **Keyboard –** Adjust tilt to keep wrists straight and forearms parallel to the floor. *Be careful of wrist rests, they may increase pressure on the carpal tunnel. The pad should contact the heel or palm of your hand, not your wrist.*

b. **Mouse –** Place on the same level & close to the keyboard. The worst arrangement is to have the mouse far off to the side or at a different height to the keyboard. To reduce wrist motion, increase mouse speed/acceleration. *For Windows systems: Control Panel > Mouse > Pointer Options > pointer speed.*

Step 3: Adjust the Monitor

a. **Position –** Place monitor directly in front of the body and ~ an arm's length away.

b. **Monitor height –** Adjust height so the top line of the screen is at or just below eye level. *If needed, use a ream of paper, phone book or stand to raise your monitor height.*

c. **Source Documents –** If you are typing from a source document, use a document holder that is placed at the same distance as the screen.

Step 4: Check your Posture

a. **Posture** – Sit up straight or recline slightly, but do not lean forward. Do not cross your legs and avoid straining your neck forward. See pg. 2 of this handout.

Step 5: Stretch & Refocus

a. **Stretch** – Take a 1-3 minute stretch break every 30 minutes to 1 hour. *Refer to the UT LivingWell "Stretch at Your Desk" YouTube video at* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msLXJH0GToQ

b. **Refocus** – Close your eyes briefly, cupping with your hands, to minimize eye strain. Practice deep breathing to relax your muscles and refocus your mind.

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Ergonomic Self-Evaluation: Correcting Posture Problems

Standing, sitting, and moving incorrectly all increase your risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)—injuries often associated with repetitive strain or damage to muscles, tendons, nerves and joints.

Poor posture strains muscles and tendons and stresses joints. With a little adjustment, however, you can correct most posture problems. The key is to stay in or near what is called *"neutral position" and keep work materials within easy reach.*
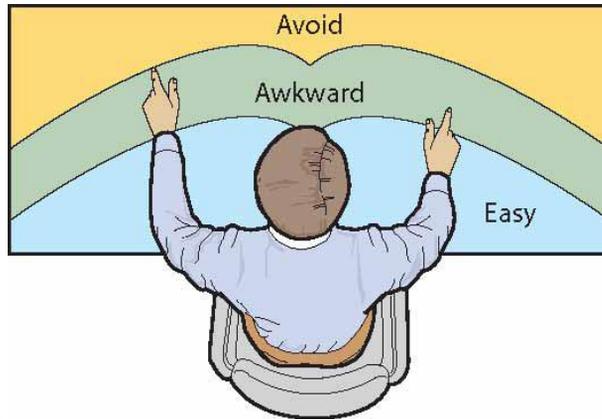
Work Within Reach
Get closer to your work. You use less force when doing tasks within easy reach. Keep your work within 14 to 18 inches of your body, depending on your size. Reaching too far can be awkward. It also reduces your leverage, so you need to use more force. Avoid locking a joint—extending it until it can go no further— when lifting items. Also, avoid reaching overhead or behind your back, if you can. If you must reach out, return to neutral as soon as possible.

Neutral Position
Whether you are standing or sitting, neutral posture places the least amount of stress on your body. To find neutral, line up your ears, shoulders and hips in a straight line. Keep your head upright and relax while you do this. Don't hold your breath, hunch your shoulders or lean forward. Your shoulders should be level, with your arms near your sides. You can rest your body by returning to the neutral position often.
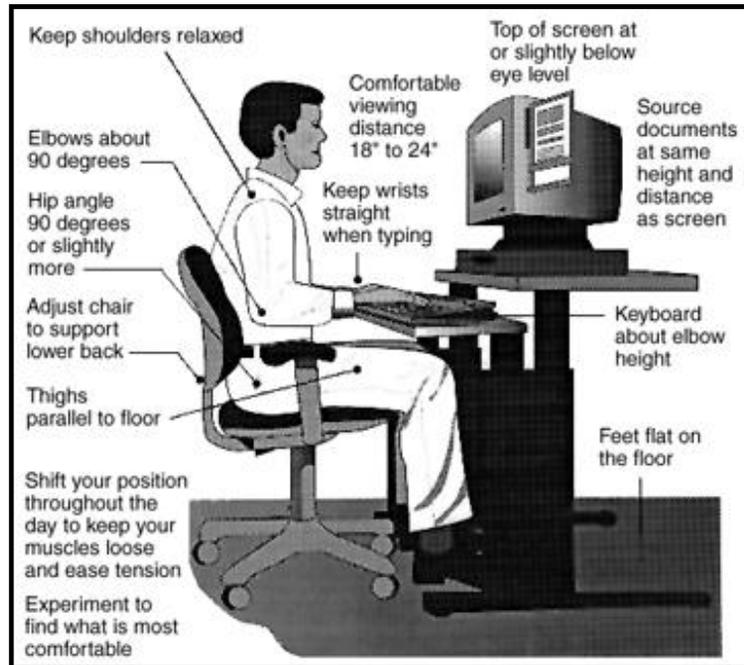

upright sitting   declined sitting   reclined sitting

Sitting straight is not your only option; a slightly reclined posture can be a good option too. The photos above are all examples of acceptable working postures.--Source: OSHA Ergonomics

Ergonomic Computer Workstation Set-up

Stretch, Relax & Refocus

Regardless of how good your working posture is, working in the same posture or sitting still for prolonged periods is not healthy.
Perform stretches* every 30 – 60 minutes or get up and move!

Watch the UT LivingWell "Stretch at Your Desk" YouTube Video
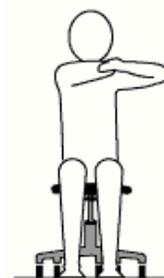**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msLXJH0GToQ**

Neck Relaxer

Sit with a straight back; inhale. As you exhale, drop your head slowly to the left trying to touch your ear to your shoulder. Repeat on the right.

Shoulder Roll

While inhaling, slowly raise your shoulders and roll them backwards in a circular motion; repeat 5x. Repeat, rolling shoulders forward.

Upper Back & Arm Stretch

Hold right arm using your left hand above the elbow. Gently push your elbow toward your left shoulder; hold 5 seconds. Repeat with your left arm.

*****Stretch to feel a gentle pull NOT pain.** *Check with your healthcare provider first if you have a health condition.*