

Personal Workstation Checklist

Chair Adjustment

Yes No*

- Is your chair height adjustable?
- Does your chair support your lower back?
- Is there room between the front edge of the seat pan and the back of your knees?
- Can you easily reach your work without interference from the arms of your chair?
- Are your arms and shoulders relaxed without interference from the arms of your chair?
- Do your feet rest flat on the floor or a footrest?
- Are your knees bent at approximately 90° angle?

Sitting with your feet flat on the floor (or supported by a footrest) will help support your spine. Having your thighs parallel to the seat with knees bent at approximately a 90° angle, and having adequate clearance behind your knees, will keep the chair from interfering with the circulation to your legs.

If the back of your chair is adjustable, raise or lower it so that the contour of the chair provides maximum lumbar (lower back) support. If possible, adjust the tilt of the back rest to support your body in an upright position. A slight angle, either forward or back, is also acceptable. Adjust the chair according to what is most comfortable for you.

If your chair has arms, they should allow you to get close to your work without getting in the way. If you're typing, they should be at a height where they just barely contact your elbows when your arms are resting comfortably at your side. Chair arms should not force you to elevate your shoulders or wing your arms to the side.

Work Surface/Keyboard Adjustment

Yes No*

- With your chair adjusted properly, is your keyboard at approximately elbow level?
- Are your arms resting at your sides rather than stretched out in front of you?
- Are your shoulders relaxed and not elevated when you work at your work surface?
- When typing at your work surface, is there approximately a 90° angle between your forearms and upper arms?
- When typing at your work surface, are your wrists in line with your forearms and not bent upwards, downwards, or to one side or another?
- Is there clearance between the bottom of your work surface and the top of your thighs?

Ideally, with your arms resting comfortably at your side, the home row of your keyboard (the row with letters a, s, d . . .) should be at approximately elbow level. If your work surface is adjustable, start by adjusting your chair as indicated above. Once that's at the proper height, then adjust the work surface. If your work surface is too high and cannot be adjusted, adjust the chair to bring your elbows to the home row level of the keyboard and support your feet with a footrest if necessary.

Monitor Adjustment

Yes No*

- Is the viewing distance to your computer monitor somewhere between 16 and 24 inches?
- Is the top of your computer screen at or just below eye level?
- Is your computer monitor protected from excess glare?
- If you wear bifocals or trifocals, are you able to look at the monitor without tilting your head?

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

People who wear bifocals or trifocals often end up tilting their heads back to read through the lower portion of their glasses. This can sometimes lead to neck, shoulder and back discomfort. Lowering the computer monitor or purchasing glasses specifically designed for the viewing distance to your terminal screen can help alleviate this problem.

If you answer "No" to any of the questions above it may indicate a need for ergonomic modifications(s).

Your Name: _____

Your Phone #: _____

- **Are your input devices (mouse, trackball, digitizing tablet) at the same level as your keyboard?**
- **Are your primary work materials/input devices located in front of you?**
- **Do you have enough room on your work surface for all your computer accessories?**
- **Are your most frequently accessed items (phone, manuals, etc.) easy to reach?**
- **Do you have an adjustable document holder to hold reference materials?**
- **Are you able to keep your arms from resting on any hard or square edges on your work surface?**
- **If a large percentage of your time involves using a phone, do you use a telephone headset?**

Rectangular work surfaces often don't allow enough space for computers and related accessories. Keyboard trays or similar devices are one option to increase desk space. However, these devices can sometimes force you too far away from your primary work surface, force you to reach for your mouse or other accessories, or put your mouse at a higher level than the keyboard. All of these problems may cause pain or discomfort to arms and shoulders. They may also interfere with the thigh clearance under your work surface. Corner work surfaces are often preferable because they provide additional depth and, since they wrap around you, place your accessories closer to you.

As you change tasks, remember to move primary materials/input devices in front of you. If you must frequently look at reference materials as you type, you should consider a document holder or slant board. Either will help you keep your head aligned over your spine and can prevent or relieve neck, shoulder and back discomfort. If using a document holder, position it at the same height and distance as your monitor or between your monitor and keyboard.

A padded wrist rest can help support your wrists in a straight and neutral position. This takes some of the load off your neck, shoulder and back muscles, plus helps maintain circulation by keeping your arms off the hard edges of the work surface. Ideally, the wrist rest should be made of a soft padded material and the height of the wrist rest should be the same as the front of your keyboard. Use wrist rests only when resting, not while typing.

Talking on the phone with the receiver cradled between your ear and neck can cause neck, shoulder, and back pain. A headset will allow you to maintain your spine in alignment while talking on the phone.

Work Habits

Yes No*

- **Do you take frequent, short breaks throughout the day to reduce fatigue?**
- **Do you frequently change body positions while working?**
- **Do you provide your eyes with vision breaks every hour?**
- **Do you work fairly regular hours without a lot of overtime?**
- **Are you able to meet deadlines without excessive stress?**
- **Are you comfortable and free of pain while working?**

Periodic breaks help to alleviate fatigue and strain to your eyes and upper body. Taking a break does not mean that you have to stop working. Rather, it allows you to integrate other activities such as making phone calls, making copies or talking with a co-worker. Changing positions periodically helps maintain circulation and prevents putting pressure on any one area of the body for an extended period of time.

Working overtime, or working under stress to meet deadlines, may contribute to pain or discomfort. In addition to taking breaks and changing positions periodically, you should pay attention to how your body responds to pain. Pain that goes away overnight is usually a sign of fatigue. Pain that is continuous and doesn't go away overnight may indicate a more serious problem. If you experience such pain, notify your supervisor and call the campus Occupational Health Clinic at 642-6891 for an appointment. It's much easier to treat a problem in its early stages. Ignoring pain could lead to chronic or serious injury.

Finally, develop good habits outside of work. While you may not be able to adjust all of the work surfaces at home, you may be able to make minor adjustments that are significant to your body. Good posture and good work habits are just as important outside of work, whether you're typing on your home computer, doing chores around the house or involved in special projects or hobbies.

*** If you answer "No" to any of the questions above it may indicate a need for ergonomic modifications(s).**

This information is distributed by Ergonomics@Work, University of California at Berkeley.