



A guide to setting up your workstation

The following checklist is a step-by-step approach designed to be used when employees are located at a new workstation or whenever their tasks change.

When setting up the position of this furniture and equipment it is important to try new positions to find the most comfortable arrangement for yourself. Give yourself a chance to get used to any changes, as it may take several hours or even days to determine the best position. Remember, it may take a few tries to get the best arrangement, but it is worth the effort – and if a change doesn't work, you can always reset it.

Chair

When adjusting your chair please refer to any instructions that are provided with the chair or have someone show you how to adjust it and use the controls. If there is no one available to assist you, work through this checklist with another person and observe each other's postures and body positions.

Also, remember to try and avoid sitting for long periods of time. Some form of break from sitting every 20 – 30 minutes is helpful. Even getting up for 20 to 30 seconds to go to a printer or standing while talking on the telephone will provide some relief.

Seat

Height – adjust chair height so that shoulders are relaxed and arms are in a comfortable position when using the keyboard. A common comfortable position is elbows at approximately 90-100 degrees, with fingers relaxed on the keyboard. Your feet should be supported on a surface with hips and knees at approximately 90-100 degrees. If your feet cannot reach the ground comfortably in this position, an adjustable footrest would be required. A steady footrest which can be adjusted in height and angle (for various heel types) are usually most appropriate.

Tilt the seat pan (if available) – set to horizontal or slightly forward to suit your comfort.



A1 – Seat height

Back support

Height adjust the backrest so that the backrest supports the curve of your lower back and is not placed too low or too high. Repeat this adjustment and try each new position until the most comfortable fit is found.

Angle – adjust the position of the backrest until a comfortable pressure is exerted on the lower back area while seated in the usual working posture at the desk (see Figure A2).



A2 - Backrest set up

The backrest position should not feel as though it pushes you out of the seat or that you have to lean back too far to reach it. Trial a number of different positions until the best fit is achieved. A slight backward tilt is a preferred position as the force on the lower back is reduced. However, some people prefer to sit upright. You can vary this angle to provide changes in posture from time to time.

Armrests

Armrests are usually not recommended for computer interaction, because they may hinder the user from getting close to their workstation or reduce freedom of movement around the workstation, unless they are designed to accommodate for this (eg. short or are adjustable). However, if your chair has armrests make sure that they do not prevent you from getting as close to the desk as you require (see Figure A3) or that they impinge on your elbows while you are working. If this is the case, either organise for them to be removed by unscrewing them, or replace them with a smaller or adjustable option (see Figure A4).

Size of chair

There should be a two-finger clearance between the front of the chair and the back of the knee.



A3 - Unacceptable arm rests

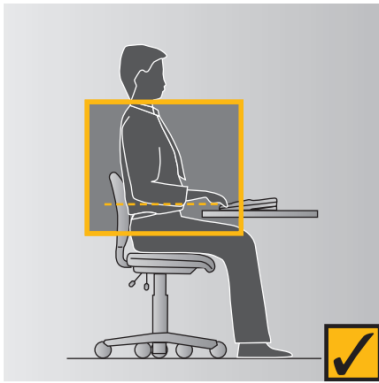


A4 – Acceptable arm rests

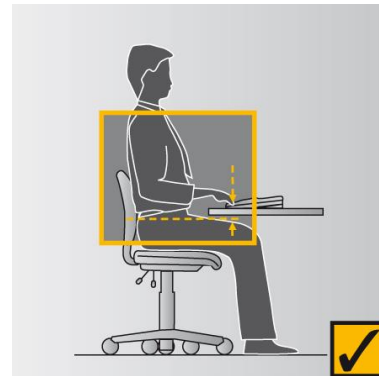
Desk

If you have a height-adjustable desk

Having first adjusted your chair to suit your body size, adjust the desk so the top surface is just below elbow height (see Figure A5). To determine your elbow height, relax your shoulders and bend your elbows to about 90 degrees and check the elbow height against the desk height (See Figure A6).



A5 – Keyboard height



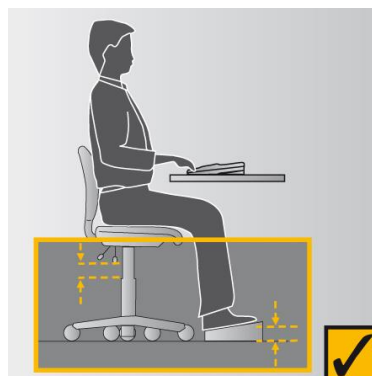
A6 – Desk height

If you don't have a height-adjustable desk

If the chair has been adjusted and the desk is higher or lower than the elbow, other forms of adjustment will be required. Start by measuring the height difference between the desk and your elbow.

If the desk is too high

Raise the chair by the measured difference and use a footrest. Set the footrest platform so that it is the same as the measured difference (see Figure A7).



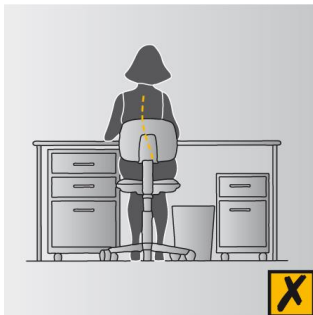
A7 – Chair height with footrest

If the desk is too low

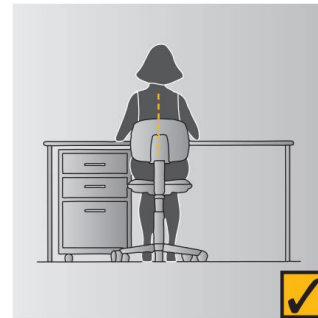
Raise the height of the desk by extending the leg length or sitting it on wooden blocks or something similar. Remember to ensure that any such changes are secure and stable.

Clearance under the desk

General items, like computer hard disk drives, boxes of documents or files, rubbish bins and mobile drawers should not be stored under desks where they will decrease or interfere with the space required for the legs. This may force you to adopt a twisted or awkward posture of the spine (see Figures A8 and A9).



A8 – Inadequate leg clearance



A9 - Adequate leg clearance

Drawers

Most commonly used items should be placed in the top desk drawer to improve access and reduce reaching and bending movements. Where drawers are fitted to the desk, equipment such as the keyboard and computer screen should be arranged on the desk so that you can sit comfortably in the leg-well space.

Keyboards

Angle

Tilt the keyboard using the feet at the back to suit your level of comfort. The common and preferred setting is where the feet are lowered so the keyboard sits flat on the desk. This assists in preventing awkward postures of the wrists.

Position on the desk

Place the keyboard as close to the front edge of the desk as is comfortable (see Figure A7). Do not place documents between the keyboard and the front edge of the desk while using the keyboard as this increases the reach distance to the keyboard and may result in excessive bending of the neck to look at the documents. Ensure that there is room to put the keyboard to one side when it is not in use.

Mouse

Place the mouse mat directly beside the end of the keyboard on your preferred side. Use the mouse in this position and always aim to keep the mouse on the mat during use.

If you frequently use the mouse in your work you may wish to:

- learn to use it with both hands so that you can swap between the right and left sides for improved comfort;
- set the tracking speed of the mouse to a setting that suits you;
- maintain your mouse to keep it in good working order (for example, keeping it clean inside); and
- where possible, try and avoid holding on to the mouse when not in use.

Computer screen

The screen should be positioned once the chair and desk heights have been established.

Height

The screen should be positioned so that the top of the screen is level with, or slightly lower than, your eyes when you are sitting upright (see Figure A10). If the screen does not have a raising device such as a monitor stand, you may be able to use telephone books to raise the screen height on a temporary basis.

Distance from the eye

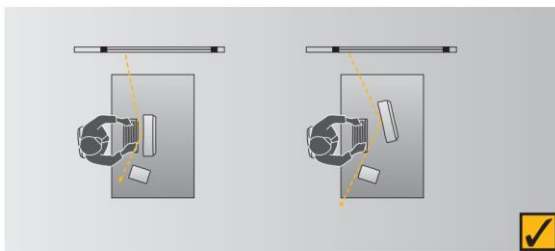
Place the screen so that it is comfortable to view your screen from your seated position (this is usually approximately an arm's length away from your usual seated position) (see Figure A10). Trial this position and if necessary move it further away or closer as required. Larger screens usually require a greater viewing distance.



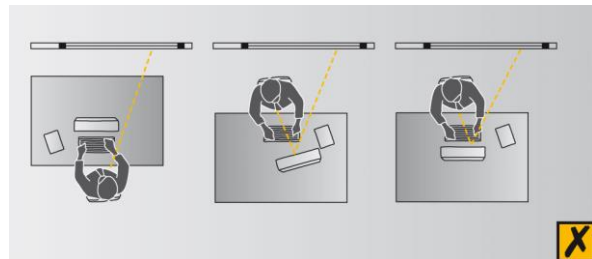
A10 – Screen distance

Positioning the screen

The screen should be placed so that it does not face windows, catching reflections from the windows, or have a window directly behind it causing glare from the window (see Figure A11 and A12).



A11 Placement of screen to reduce reflections

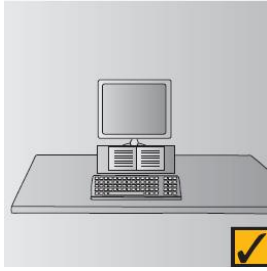


A12 Screen position with undesirable reflections

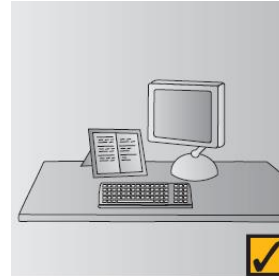
Document holder

The position of the document holder depends on your need to view and reach the documents and the type of document holder that is used. For continuous or frequent data entry where the source document is observed more than, or the same amount as, the screen:

- place the screen slightly to one side so that the document holder is directly in front of the user (see Figure A13);
- place the document holder in a similar position to the screen where it is slightly to one side and you look evenly between the two (see Figure A14)



A13 Acceptable document holder position for in-line document holder



A14 – Document holder position for equal screen and document viewing

An A-frame style book rest that sits on top of the desk is the most practical and can be set at different angles (see Figure A15). It is usually best placed so that it supports documents on an inclined angle between the keyboard and the screen (see Figure A13).

A lever or swivel arm document holder suspends the document above the desk at eye level. Anchor it to the desk on either the left or right or the screen, according to your preference, and place it directly beside the screen.

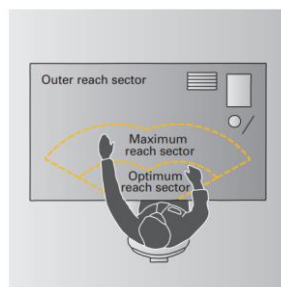


A15 – Document holder position for mainly screen based work

Other items on the desk

Other items such as a telephone should be placed either within easy reach depending on the amount of use (see Figure A16).

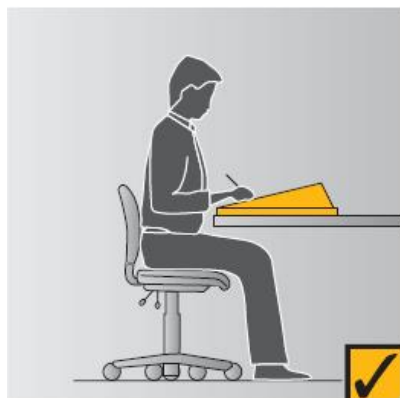
When making a lot of calls, it may be best to use a headset.



A16 – Zones of optimal reach

Angled reading and writing surface

An angled board can improve neck comfort where a job involves a lot of reading and handwriting. It should be placed immediately in front of the user on top of the desk (see Figures A17)



A17 – Angled reading and writing surface

This publication is based on 'A handbook for workplaces – Officewise – A guide to health and safety in the office' Comcare, Commonwealth of Australia.

Images in this publication have been sourced from [Officewise – A guide to Health& Safety](#) – WorkSafe Victoria

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