

Introduction

Computers like other work equipment can expose you to risks. This is often due to the way the computer workstation is set up and used. The most common risks from using computers are eye fatigue, musculoskeletal discomfort or pain and stress.

The information contained in this leaflet gives you advice on how to set up and use your computer safely and comfortably and is particularly relevant to members of staff and students who regularly use computers in extended sessions or for more than two hours a day.

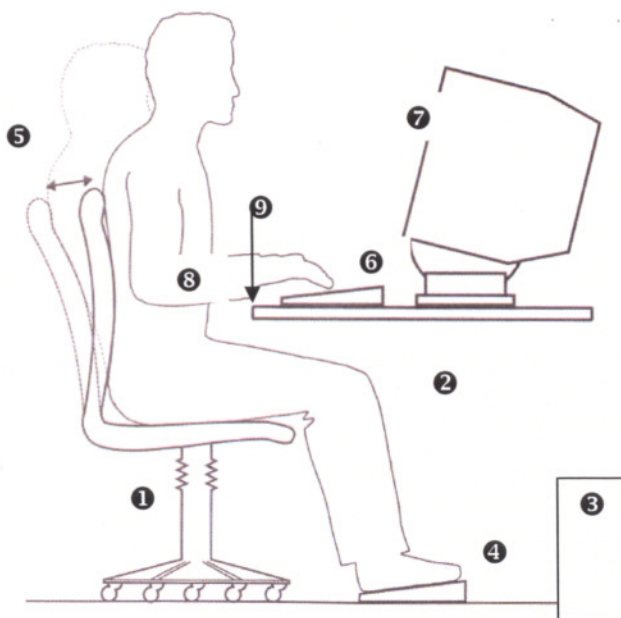
The University has a legal obligation to provide you with safe work equipment and a safe working environment. However you also have a responsibility to work safely and this leaflet is just part of the guidance provided by the University to help you do this.

Are You Sitting Comfortably?

There are a few quite simple rules to follow to ensure that a comfortable posture is adopted. These simple adjustments will help to prevent back, neck and wrist strain and increase comfort. When making an adjustment remember that the aim is for you to be comfortable while working and to adjust the workstation to fit you and not vice versa.

1. Adjust the chair height so that your forearms are horizontal when using the keyboard.
2. Ensure there is room between the tops of your legs and the work-surface.
3. Move any obstacles such as boxes or equipment if this is restricting movement of legs under the work-surface.
4. If feet are dangling off the floor when the chair has been adjusted to the correct height then use a footrest to take the pressure off the backs of the legs.
5. Adjust chair back to ensure an upright posture is maintained. Good lumbar support is essential.

6. Avoid flexing wrists too much when using keyboard or mouse. Use a wrist rest if this helps.
7. The top of the display screen should be roughly in line with your eyes, without excessive tilting of the monitor. Raise the monitor if necessary. If you are not a 'touch typist' you may benefit from positioning the display screen below eye level to avoid repeated shifting of focus and bending of the neck.
8. Keep the mouse and keyboard within easy reach. Avoid using with arms outstretched.
9. Keep a clear area of 2 to 4 inches (5 – 10 cm) in front of the keyboard to rest the wrists when not typing.



Aide Memoir for Safe Working with Display Screen Equipment

Remember to:-

- Prioritise the layout of items on your desk. Position those things you use most often closest to you. Organise your work so that you are not continually reaching and bending to find papers or items you regularly need.
- Use a document holder to minimise eye and head movement if inputting large amounts of data from paper.
- Reduce glare and reflections on the screen by adjusting blinds or curtains.
- Adjust the contrast and brightness of your screen to suit the lighting conditions in the room.
- Clean your display screen regularly with the appropriate cleaning materials.
- Use keyboard short cuts to keep keystrokes and mouse clicks to a minimum particularly if your work is of a repetitive nature.
- Do use a light touch when holding and depressing the mouse button(s).
- Keep your elbows close to your body at all times when keying or using the mouse - don't extend your arms.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor or footrest - don't sit with you legs crossed or with your feet hooked around the chair base for long periods as this will reduce your circulation.
- Take short breaks if sitting at the computer for long periods.
- Do gentle exercises (as shown overleaf) to relieve aches and pains caused by tension in shoulders, arms, wrists and hands
- Read the HSE leaflet 'Working with VDUs' INDG 36 (Rev3) which can be accessed from the link to Technical Index at www.qub.ac.uk/so

The exercises shown are designed to help you avoid or minimise the effects of using the computer and sitting in the same position for long periods of time. The emphasis is on relaxation. Try these exercises at the start of your working day and occasionally during the day, particularly after periods of intensive computer use. Perform each stretch exercise *SMOOTHLY* and *SLOWLY*, avoid jerky and bouncy movements. You do not need to perform all of them or keep to the same order.

Incorporate exercises naturally into your normal working day. For example, go for a walk at lunch time and use the stairs rather than the lift and try to break up your work with movement away from your workstation.

However before you begin exercising check with your doctor if you feel that this or any other exercise programme may not be suitable for you and stop if you experience any discomfort or pain.

Posture Stretch



Sit upright and ensure that you have a curve in your lower back, breathe in. Bring both arms up above your head while breathing out and reach as high as you can, making sure your head is kept straight. Hold this position for about three seconds. Gently relax your arms to your sides, breathe in and relax your neck. Repeat two or three times.

(Note: This exercise can also be done while standing.)

Back Stretch

Stand up (or sit) with good posture. Place your hands in your lower back. Push you hips forward and shoulders backwards to arch your body. Gently come back to the upright position and relax. Repeat this 2 or 3 times.



Shoulder Roll



Sit or stand with your arms hanging loosely at your side. Raise your shoulders and rotate 2 or 3 times in a forward circular motion and repeat in a backwards direction

Put you arms in front of your chest and link your fingers together. Lift your hands and arms above your head with your palms facing upward and stretch towards the ceiling. Hold for a few seconds. Gently relax

Arm & Shoulder Stretch



Head & Neck



Slowly turn head left, hold 3 seconds. Turn right, hold three seconds. Drop chin gently to chest, then tilt head back as far as you can. Repeat the sequence 2 or 3 times

With arms extended in front of you raise and lower hands several times. Rotate hands 10 times. Then make a fist and hold tight for 1 second. With palm down spread fingers as wide apart as possible. Hold for a few seconds then relax your fingers.

Wrists, Hands & Fingers



Remember if you are experiencing any aches and pains which persist and you believe may be attributed to computer use then as a precautionary measure seek specialist help by contacting:
University Occupational Health Service,
5 Lennoxvale, ☎ 9097 5520

University Safety Service (Revised Sept 2007)
☎ 9097 4613/4681 web: www.qub.ac.uk/so



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