DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT (DSE) GUIDANCE NOTES

SETTING UP YOUR WORKSTATION

INTRODUCTION

A workstation that is set up correctly will allow you to be comfortable while you're working. If you “Hot desk” make sure you make yourself comfortable each time you begin work.

ZONE OF CONVENIENT REACH

The key is that items that you use frequently should be placed within easy reach to prevent awkward stretching and twisting which could lead to back pain and injury.

Reach each arm out to the side of your body and then move them together until they meet in front of you. This is the zone where everything you use frequently should be positioned, the zone of convenient reach.

TELEPHONE

Misuse of phones can lead to shoulder and neck aches and pains.

Positioning your phone is important. If you use your phone a great deal then you should position it within your normal reach zone.

When holding the phone to your ear, make sure your head is straight and your shoulders are relaxed, not hunched.

You should not have your shoulders and head bent slightly to one side cradling the phone for any prolonged period as this can cause muscle aches in your upper back and neck.

If you use the phone a great deal then consider using a head set.

KEYBOARD

When you’re using your keyboard it should be directly in front of you, and directly in front of the monitor. This will mean that your back will not be twisted.

Adjust your keyboard to get a good keying position. A space in front of the keyboard is sometimes helpful for resting the hands and wrists when not keying.

Try to keep your wrists straight when keying; a soft touch on the keys and don’t overstretch your fingers.

MONITOR

Your monitor should be position roughly at arms length when you are sitting back in your chair. This will mean that it is just outside your zone of convenient reach. Sitting either too far away or too close to your monitor may cause eyestrain.

Adjust the brightness and contrast controls on the screen to suit lighting conditions in the room.

Make sure the screen surface is clean.

In setting up software, choose options giving text that is large enough to read easily on your screen, when you are sitting in a comfortable position. Select colours that are easy on the eye.
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(avoid red text on a blue background, or vice-versa).

Individual characters on the screen should be sharply focused and should not flicker or move.

Your eyes should be approximately at the same height as the top of the screen.

**MOUSE OR POINTING DEVICE**

If you place your mouse or pointing device too far away from you it can cause your shoulder muscles to tire from constantly supporting your out stretched arm. This in turn may well lead to neck and shoulder pains.

Position you mouse close to your keyboard. If you don’t use you keyboard much then move the keyboard and have the mouse in front of you.

Position the mouse within easy reach, so it can be used with the wrist straight. Sit upright and close to the desk, so you don’t have to work with your mouse arm stretched.

Support your forearm on the desk, and don’t grip the mouse too tightly.

Rest your fingers lightly on the buttons and do not press them hard.

**PAPERS, DOCUMENTS ETC.**

Following the same principle, if there are documents, reference materials etc. that you use frequently they should be close at hand. Items you don’t use often can be stored in your pedestal drawer or elsewhere.

**SPACE**

You need to have space on your desk to enable you to work comfortably and productively. Make sure you arrange your desk, don’t allow it just to evolve!

Make sure there is space under your desk to move your legs feely. Move any obstacles.

**POSTURE AND BREAKS**

Don’t sit in the same position for long periods. Make sure you change your posture as often as practicable. Some movement is desirable, but avoid repeated stretching to reach things you need (if this happens a lot, rearrange your workstation).

Most jobs provide opportunities to take a break from the screen, e.g. to do filing or photocopying. Make use of them. Frequent short breaks are better than fewer long ones.

**YOUR CHAIR**

It is debatable that the chair is the single most important component of a healthy working environment. We all spend most of our day sitting down. The chair needs to give us good support to stop aches and pains developing.

**ADJUSTING YOUR CHAIR**

When setting up your chair, you should be trying to make yourself as comfortable as possible i.e. create the best sitting posture. You should move around and use different postures through out the day to improve circulation and reduce muscle fatigue.

**Step 1**

Adjust the seat height, so that when your elbow joints are at right angles, your forearms are approximately horizontal above the work surface.

If you cannot place your feet flat on the floor, once you’ve adjusted your chair, you may need a footrest.
### Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Guidance Notes

<table>
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<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Adjust the angle of the backrest so it is upright. Approximately 90º or just slightly back 100º.</th>
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| Step 3 | Adjust the height of the backrest so that the lower part of your back is supported by the lumber support of the chair.  
Adjusting your chair takes a while to get right. We spend so much time sitting down; we need to make sure our chair is adjusted correctly.  
Once you’ve adjusted your chair make sure you sit properly in it. Let the chair support you. |
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### ‘DOES MY COMPUTER AFFECT MY HEALTH?’

**HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE ANSWERS TO SOME COMMON QUESTIONS**

<table>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<td><strong>Am I at risk?</strong></td>
<td>Personal computers have been blamed - often wrongly - for a wide range of health problems. In fact, only a small proportion of personal computer users actually suffer ill health as a result of their work. Where problems do occur, they are generally caused by the way in which personal computers are being used, rather than the personal computers themselves.</td>
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<td><strong>Are aches &amp; pains caused by using a computer?</strong></td>
<td>Some users may get aches and pains in their hands, wrists, arms, neck, shoulders or back, especially after long periods of uninterrupted personal computer work. ‘Repetitive strain injury’ (RSI) has become a popular term for these aches and pains, but can be misleading. A better medical name for this group of conditions is ‘upper limb disorders’.</td>
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<td><strong>How can I avoid these aches and pains?</strong></td>
<td>Problems of this kind may have a physical cause, but may also be more likely if a personal computer user feels stressed by the work. If you get aches or pains you should alert your supervisor or line manager. Problems can often be avoided by good workplace design, so that you can work comfortably, and by good working practices. Prevention is easiest if action is taken early, before the problem has become serious.</td>
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<td><strong>Can work with computers affect eyesight?</strong></td>
<td>Extensive research has found no evidence that personal computers can cause disease or permanent damage to eyes. But long spells of personal computer work can lead to tired eyes and discomfort. Also, by giving your eyes more demanding tasks, it might make you aware of an eyesight problem you had not noticed before. Ask for an eye test if you still think there is a problem. Human Resources will advise on the correct procedure to follow.</td>
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| **Can computer work cause headaches?** | Headaches may result from several things that occur with personal computer work, such as:  
- Poor image quality;  
- A need for different spectacles;  
- Reading the screen for long periods without a break;  
- Poor posture; or  
- A combination of these.  
Many of these things can easily be put right once the cause of the problem has been found. |
| **How long should I work with a computer?** | There is no legal limit, but you need to break up long spells of personal computer work. How long you should work without a break depends on the type of work you are doing. |