



ERGONOMICS

Home Computer Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist

A guide to set up your workstation at home for optimal comfort and performance



Ergonomics: Home Computer Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist

The goal of this self-assessment is to help you set up your workstation at home for optimal comfort and performance. Before you begin the checklist, visualizing what the “Neutral Posture” should look like and understanding the basics about computer workstation ergonomics will help. Below are images of a worker sitting in a “Neutral Posture.” This posture is what we all should work toward when working at any computer workstation, whether at home or in the office. The reality is, we do not work in a perfect world, so the closest we can get to this “Neutral Posture” the better.

The real key to ergonomics is you, the worker. Over the years, many workers develop poor posture and bad muscle memory relating to the way they sit in front of a computer. Overcoming poor ergonomic posture that has been in place for years can be a difficult challenge. Studies show that it can take upwards of three weeks to break a bad habit. For example, if you have always typed on a keyboard and rested your wrists/palms on the desk or worse, the desk’s edge, it

will be a hard struggle (three weeks) to break that muscle memory and teach yourself to type correctly. The correct way of typing is with your palms and wrists up in the air and not being supported by a physical object like a desk. You would need to tell yourself multiple times throughout the day to lift your wrists and stay in the “Neutral Wrist Posture” and adjust accordingly. However, the retraining

Figure 1

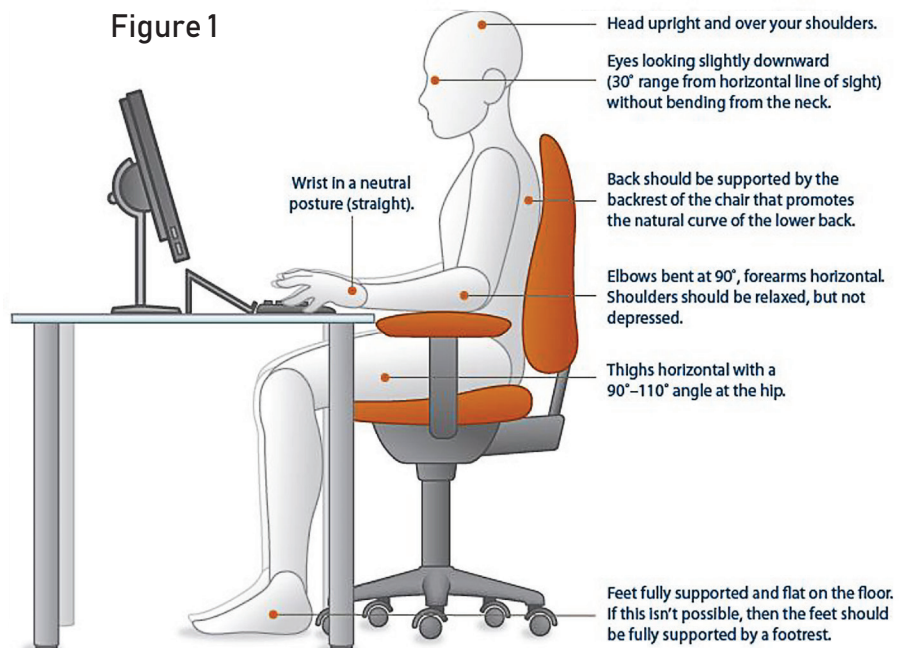


Figure 2



of your muscle memory and your brain doesn't stop there. It will take an additional three weeks of telling yourself to type correctly to create that new muscle memory for good ergonomic typing.

What does this mean?

Equipment and set-up is important, yes, but this only accounts for about 25% of the challenge. The other 75% and the hardest to maintain/overcome is for you to make these changes mentally and stick with them. Every time you recognize yourself deviating outside the “Neutral Posture” you need to tell yourself to make a correction.

As you go through the checklist, keep these proper sitting positions in mind:

- Hands, wrists and forearms are straight, in line and roughly parallel to the floor.
- Head is level or bent slightly forward, and balanced.
- Shoulders are relaxed and upper arms hang normally at the side of the body.
- Elbows stay in close to the body and are bent around 90-100 degrees.
- Feet are fully supported by the floor or a footrest.
- Back and lumbar area of back is fully supported while sitting.
- Thighs and hips are supported and parallel to the floor.
- Knees are about the same height as the hips with feet slightly forward.

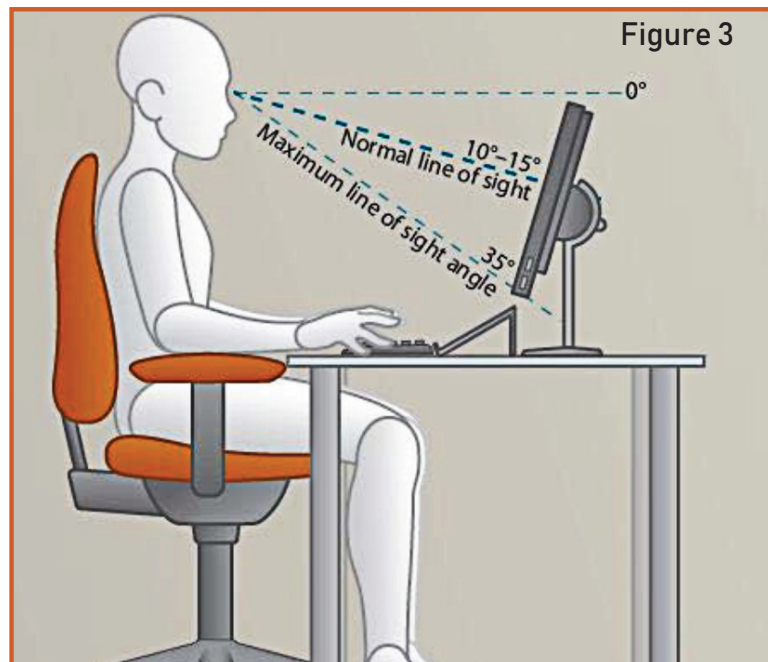
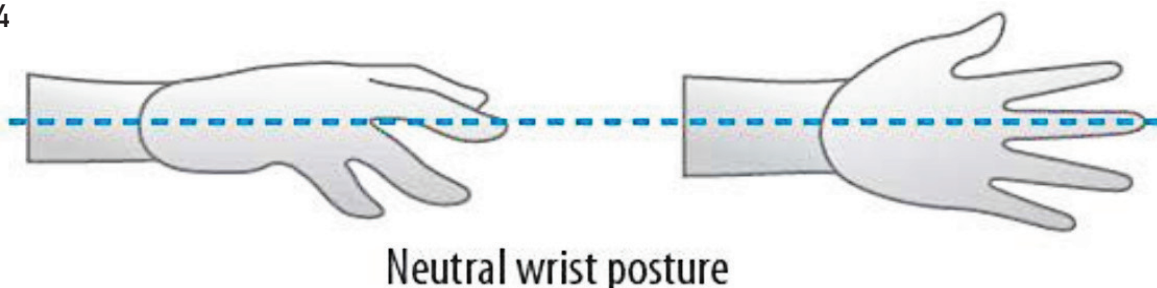


Figure 4



The Office Chair

| The Office Chair | Yes | No | Suggested Actions |
|--|-----|----|---|
| Can the height, seat and back of the chair be adjusted to achieve the "Neutral Posture"? (See Figure 1) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust the chair If the chair does not go high enough, sitting on a pillow could help boost your body up |
| Are your feet fully supported by the floor when you are seated? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having your feet on the floor or footrest will support your lower back against the chair's backrest Sitting with your feet under your chair will cause you to pull your lower back away from the lumbar support of the chair and create unnecessary strain Your knees should never be above the height of your hips as this also creates lower back strain | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower the chair Use a footrest to bring the floor up to your feet. It is better to maintain a good "Neutral Posture" with your wrists and arms and use a footrest. Footrests could be anything from an old phone book to boxes |
| Does your chair provide support for your lower back? | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust chair back if possible Use a pillow between the lumbar region of your back and the chair's backrest |
| When your back is supported, are you able to sit without feeling pressure from the chair seat on the back of your knees? (There should be a few inches or 2-3 finger widths between the back of your knees and the edge of the chair.) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust seat pan Add a back support |
| Do your armrests allow you to get close to your workstation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Armrests should not be used when typing. They should be used when resting your arms while reading your monitor or talking on the phone Using armrests while typing can create neck and shoulder strain if they are adjusted too high or too low | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust armrests Remove armrests |

Keyboard and Mouse

| Keyboard and Mouse | Yes | No | Suggested Actions |
|--|-----|----|---|
| Are your keyboard, mouse and work surface at your elbow height? (See Figure 1) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise or lower workstation Raise or lower keyboard Raise or lower chair |
| Is the keyboard and mouse in the "Usual Work" area of your desktop? (See Figure 2) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rearrange workstation |
| Is the keyboard close to the front edge of the desk? (This will help teach you to type without resting your wrist on the desk.) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move keyboard to correct position |
| When using your keyboard and mouse, are your wrists straight and your upper arms relaxed? (The keyboard should be flat and not propped up on keyboard legs as an angled keyboard may place the wrist in an awkward posture when keying.) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-check chair, raise or lower as needed Check posture Check keyboard and mouse height |
| Is your mouse at the same level, as close as possible to your keyboard and able to move without restrictions or seams on the desktop? | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move mouse closer to keyboard Use a mouse pad or something similar |
| Is the mouse comfortable to use? (See Figure 4 for proper wrist posture) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rest your dominant hand by using the mouse with your non-dominant hand for brief periods (ask IT for assistance with these changes) |

Work Surface

| Work Surface | Yes | No | Suggested Actions |
|---|-----|----|---|
| Is your monitor positioned directly in front of you? | | | • Reposition monitor |
| Is your monitor position within the Non-working Area? (See Figure 2) (The monitor's location is dependent on the size of the monitor, the font, screen resolution and the individual user, e.g., vision/use of bifocal spectacles, etc.) | | | • Reposition monitor |
| Is your monitor screen height slightly below eye level? (See Figure 3) | | | • Adjust monitor height by adding or removing monitor stand (a monitor stand could be books, wood, etc.) |
| Is your monitor and work surface free from glare? | | | • Adjust overhead lighting • Rearrange desk lighting • Cover windows • Use different bulb wattage/ color according to manufacturer |
| Do you have appropriate light for reading or writing documents? | | | • Adjust overhead lighting • Rearrange desk lighting • Cover windows • Use different bulb wattage/ color according to manufacturer |
| Are frequently used items located within the usual work area and items which are only used occasionally in the occasional work area? (See Figure 2) | | | • Rearrange workstation |

Breaks

| Breaks | Yes | No | Suggested Actions |
|--|-----|----|---|
| Do you take postural breaks every 30 minutes, e.g., standing, walking to printer/ fax, etc.? | | | • Set reminders to take breaks |
| Do you take regular eye breaks from looking at your monitor? | | | • Refocus on picture on wall every 30 minutes |

Accessories

| Accessories | Yes | No | Suggested Actions |
|---|-----|----|---|
| Is there a document holder either beside the screen or between the screen and keyboard if required? | | | • Obtain document holder (document holder could be items such as an IPAD in stand up case, recipe holder, etc.) |
| Are you using a headset or speakerphone if you are writing or keying while talking on the phone? | | | • Switch to a headset (Bluetooth) or computer microphone and speakers when needed |



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