

# Setting Up Your Computer Workstation

## STEP 1: Your Chair



RIGHT!



RIGHT!



- \* Push your hips as far back as they can go in the chair.
- \* Adjust the seat height so your feet are flat on the floor and your knees equal to, or slightly lower than, your hips.
- \* Adjust the back of the chair to a 100° -110° reclined angle. Make sure your upper and lower back are supported. Use inflatable cushions or small pillows if necessary. If you have an active back mechanism on your chair, use it to make frequent position changes.
- \* Adjust the armrests (if fitted) so that your shoulders are relaxed. If your armrests are in the way, remove them.

## STEP 2: Your Keyboard

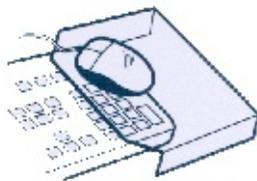
An articulating keyboard tray can provide optimal positioning of input devices. However, it should accommodate the mouse, enable leg clearance, and have an adjustable height and tilt mechanism. The tray should not push you too far away from other work materials, such as your telephone.

- \* Pull up close to your keyboard.
- \* Position the keyboard directly in front of your body.
- \* Determine what section of the keyboard you use most frequently, and readjust the keyboard so that section is centered with your body.
- \* Adjust the keyboard height so that your shoulders are relaxed, your elbows are in a slightly open position ( $100^{\circ}$  to  $110^{\circ}$ ), and your wrists and hands are straight.
- \* The tilt of your keyboard is dependent upon your sitting position. Use the keyboard tray mechanism, or keyboard feet, to adjust the tilt. If you sit in a forward or upright position, try tilting your keyboard away from you at a negative angle. If you are reclined, a slight positive tilt will help maintain a straight wrist position.
- \* Wrist rests can help to maintain neutral postures and pad hard surfaces.

However, the wrist rest should only be used to rest the palms of the hands between keystrokes. Resting on the wrist rest while typing is not recommended. Avoid using excessively wide wrist rests, or wrist rests that are higher than the space bar of your keyboard

- \* Place the pointer as close as possible to the keyboard. Placing it on a slightly inclined surface, or using it on a mousebridge placed over the 10-keypad, can help to bring it closer

If you do not have a fully adjustable keyboard tray, you may need to adjust your workstation height, the height of your chair, or use a seat cushion to get in a comfortable position. Remember to use a footrest if your feet dangle.



### STEP 3: Monitor, Document, and Telephone

Incorrect positioning of the screen and source documents can result in awkward postures. Adjust the monitor and source documents so that your neck is in a neutral, relaxed position.

- \* Center the monitor directly in front of you, above your keyboard.
- \* Position the top of the monitor approximately 2-3½ above seated eye level. (If you wear bifocals, lower the monitor to a comfortable reading level.)
- \* Sit at least an arm's length away from the screen and then adjust the distance for your vision.
- \* Reduce glare by careful positioning of the screen.
  - Place screen at right angles to windows
  - Adjust curtains or blinds as needed
  - Adjust the vertical screen angle and screen controls to minimize glare from overhead lights
  - Other techniques to reduce glare include use of optical glass glare filters, light filters, or secondary task lights
- \* Position source documents directly in front of you, between the monitor and the keyboard, using an in-line copy stand. If there is insufficient space, place source documents on a document holder positioned adjacent to the monitor.
- \* Place your telephone within easy reach. Telephone stands or arms can help.
- \* Use headsets and speaker phone to eliminate cradling the handset.

### STEP 4: Pauses and Breaks

Once you have correctly set up your computer workstation use good work habits. No matter how perfect the environment, prolonged, static postures will inhibit blood circulation and take a toll on your body.

- \* Take short 1-2 minute stretch breaks every 20-30 minutes. After each hour of work, change tasks away from your computer for at least 5-10 minutes. Always try to get away from your computer during lunch breaks.
- \* Avoid eye fatigue by resting and refocusing your eyes periodically. Look away from the monitor and focus on something in the distance.
- \* Rest your eyes by covering them with your palms for 10-15 seconds.
- \* Use correct posture when working. Keep moving as much as possible.

## **Ergonomics Checklist**

### **1. Posture - Activity - Exercise**

\* Maintain proper posture, paying careful attention to positioning of head, neck/spine, arms/wrists, hips/thighs and feet. Basically, ensure the small of your back is supported, your shoulders relaxed (not slumped, not elevated), and that there is no pressure under your thighs.

- \* Alternate between different postures on a regular basis.
- \* When keyboarding, use minimum force while striking the keys.
- \* Keep a neutral position, where the forearms, wrists and hands are in a straight line.
- \* Avoid awkward reaching for work tools such as telephone, mouse and reference materials.
- \* Avoid resting elbows, forearms or wrists on hard surfaces or sharp edges.
- \* Take frequent mini-breaks throughout the day to give muscles and joints a chance to rest and recover.
- \* Alternate between work activities which use different muscle groups to avoid overuse.
- \* Give eyes a break by closing them momentarily, gazing at a distant object and blinking frequently.
- \* Proper exercises are a complement to a complete office ergonomics program. Consult with us to select appropriate exercises.

### **2. Lighting - Air - Noise**

\* Maintain appropriate light levels for specific tasks. More illumination is usually needed to read a document than a computer screen.

- \* Reduce or eliminate glare by using window shades, diffusers on overhead lighting and anti-glare filters for computers.
- \* Adjust the contrast and brightness on your computer screen to a comfortable level.
- \* Get a regular eye exam and if necessary, wear corrective lenses. Tell your eye specialist how often you use the computer.
- \* Clean the computer screen and other surfaces regularly.
- \* Reduce the number of dust collecting items like papers and files on your desk.
- \* If necessary, use a portable air cleaner to reduce airborne particles like dust, pollen and mold.
- \* Maintain a comfortable temperature by using layers of clothing or a portable fan or heater.
- \* Be considerate to others working in the area and conduct meetings and conversations in appropriate areas.
- \* Position fabric partitions to reduce noise from conversations, foot traffic and equipment, like copiers and printers.
- \* Identify distracting noises and try headphones, ear plugs, soft music or a quiet fan to reduce or mask the noise.

### **3. Work Style - Organization - Breaks**

\* Reduce stress by planning ahead and setting realistic expectations for what you can accomplish during the workday.

- \* Organize your workload to help even out busy and slow times, to avoid feeling "swamped".
- \* Vary tasks to make the day more interesting. For example, deliver a message in person instead of phoning.
- \* Avoid long periods of repetitive activity. For example, alternate computer work with other tasks like phone calls, filing, copying and meetings.
- \* Organize equipment, supplies and furniture in the most efficient arrangement for daily tasks.
- \* Enhance privacy by using office partitions and privacy filters for computer screens or documents.
- \* Acknowledge ideas and accomplishments of co-workers on a regular basis.
- \* Develop stress reduction and relaxation techniques which work for you at the office and at home.
- \* Personalize your office with a few favorite items, like artwork, photos and plants.
- \* Take mini-breaks that re-energize, invigorate and refresh.
- \* Follow these same ergonomic guidelines at home, in meetings and while traveling.

The ergonomic checklist above is intended to provide suggestions for improving your personal comfort and productivity. Individuals must determine how best to apply the suggestions to their work environments.