

Guidance for Setting Up Workstations

As we move to more flexible working where the workplace could be in a number of different location whether that be working from a variety of different Council or other premises, working from home or working at a fixed location it is essential that we ensure that workstations are correctly set up to avoid injuries that can arise from poor posture. It is important that employees understand what good posture and practices are and the measures that they need to take to adjust their workstation set up to ensure their wellbeing.

Employees have a personal responsibility for their own health safety and wellbeing and the council expects employees to ensure they are working safely wherever they are working by following the principles outlined in the guidance below, whenever staff set up a DSE workstation.

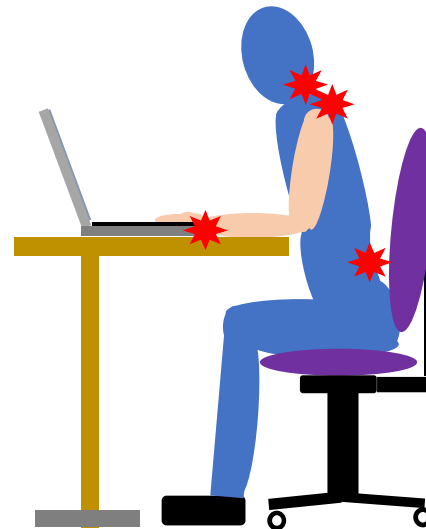
All fixed workers are still required to carry out the online DSE assessment [DSE Online Assessment](#) staff who may undertake some work at home will need to carry out the [working from home](#) assessment. Staff working from a variety of Council buildings or offices will not need to undertake an assessment each time they use a new workstation but will be expected to follow the guidance in this document each time they set up.

Many of us are now using laptops and other technology rather than traditional computers. They are very useful due to being portable but are only intended to be used for short duration (an hour or less such as for checking emails) or low inputting work (presentations or Teams chats) without additional equipment.

The posture adopted when using a laptop on a typical desk results in leaning forward that places strain on the back and neck



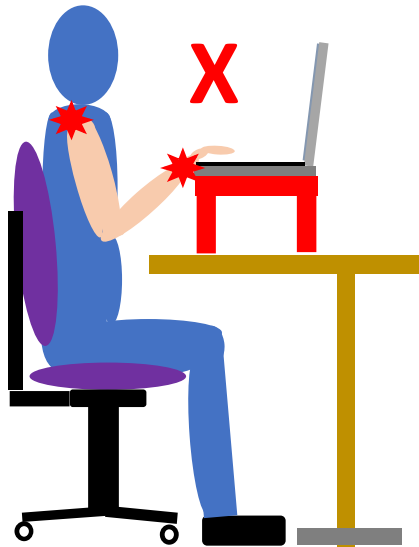
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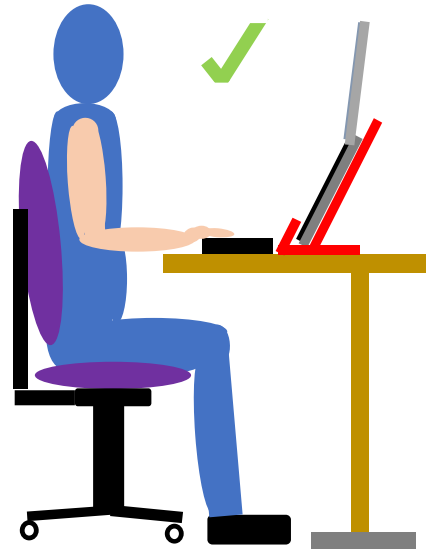
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As fatigue (including visual fatigue) sets in, we often lean forward placing strain on our shoulders, neck and back.

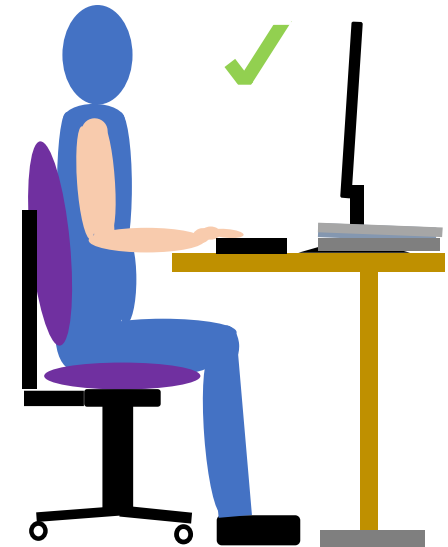
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Screens can be raised to the correct height for viewing but unless used with a separate keyboard this leads to poor arm postures, as shown above, causing strain on the shoulders, neck and wrists.

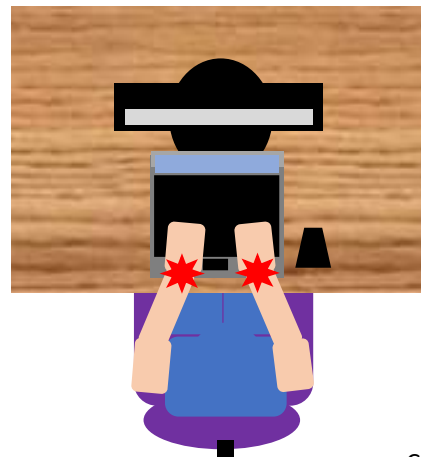


Separate keyboards are therefore required. A laptop stand may be of use as it doesn't take up much desk space and is easily portable if you work in different locations and take your kit with you.



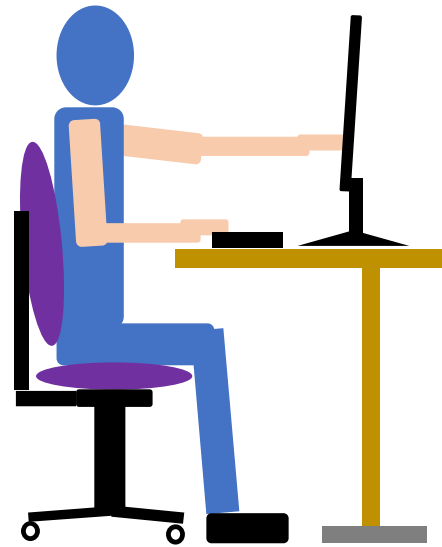
As laptop screens are normally quite small, it is better to work with a separate screen and keyboard (as well as mouse) if you are using the equipment for a prolonged period or working on detailed programmes/ spreadsheets.

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Whilst laptops can be used as a keyboard if plugged into a screen, this is to be discouraged except for short periods of time as these keyboards are small and cause users to adopt poor postures such as in turned wrists.

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For the average person.

Feet should be flat on the floor with thighs level or slightly sloping downwards (If this is not possible use a footrest)

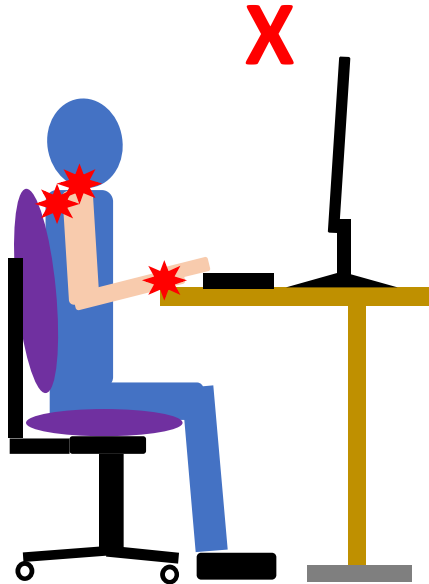
Forearms are horizontal and hands sit level on the keyboard. Wrists should be in a neutral position and not bent to the left or right. Wrists must also not be bent upwards

The screen should be approximately at arm's length at the start of the day and brought forwards after 3-4 hours of use as the eyes fatigue which causes the user to lean forwards to compensate. (This may vary depending upon the user's eyesight requirements)

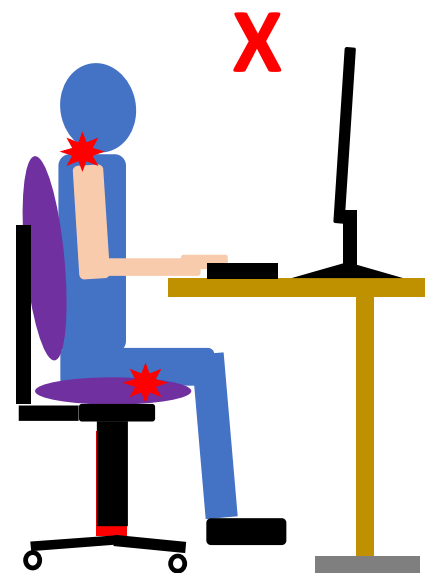
The height of the screen should be set so that the user is looking at the top third of it. This will help keep the neck in a neutral position.

Not many people are average in all proportions and therefore adjustments are needed to compensate.

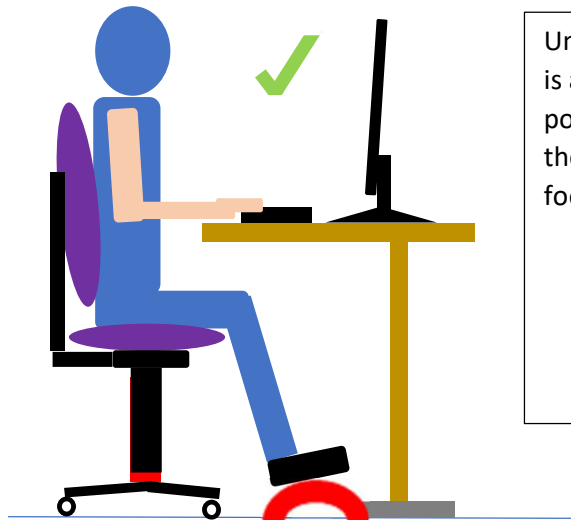
For persons with smaller upper and or lower body sizes



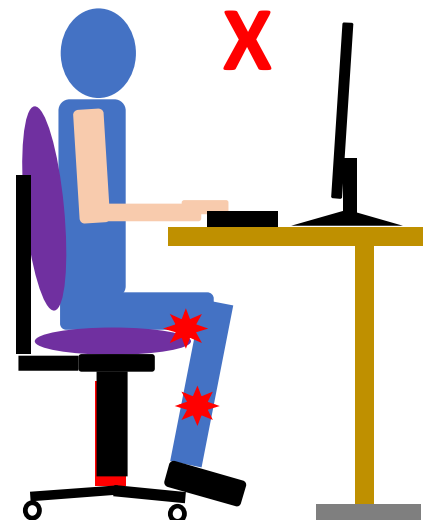
The chair may be able to be lowered making it possible to sit with your feet flat on the floor, but their hands and forearms are leaning upwards and shoulders will naturally shrug. The monitor may also be too high.



If the forearms are level by raising the chair, feet will end up dangling, placing a lot of pressure at the back of the leg restricting blood flow. The screen is still too low.



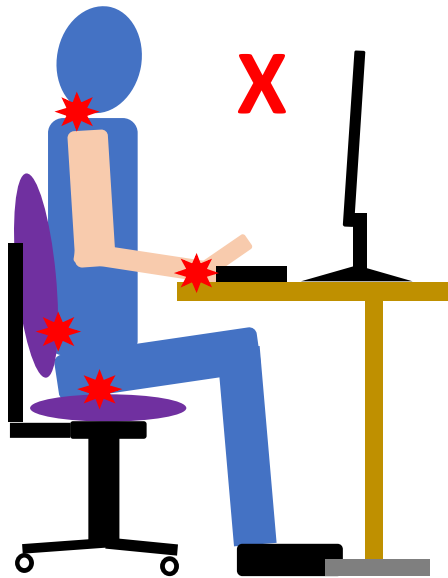
Unless a smaller desk is available, the ideal posture is to lower the screen and have a footrest.



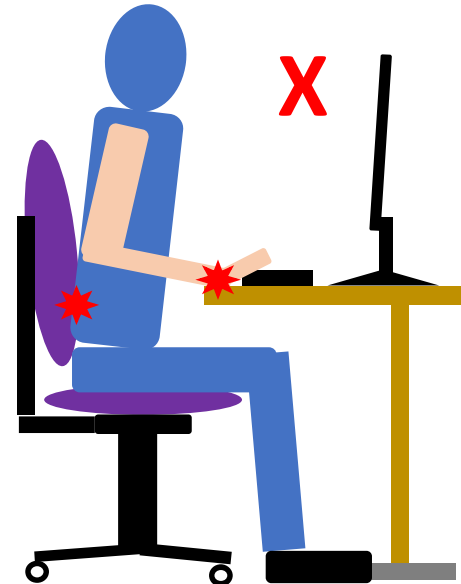
Do not be tempted to work with your legs tucked under – it is bad for blood circulation.

Shorter persons also need to ensure the front of the seat does not dig into the back of the leg. Some office seat pads (the bit you sit on) can be slid backwards. You should be able to get two fingers widths between the back of your knee and front of the seat.

For persons with bigger upper and or lower body sizes



For somebody with bigger dimensions, the standard chair is too low without adjustment. This results in the knees being higher than the thigh placing pressure on the buttocks affecting blood flow and causing lower back problems. The seat pad (part you sit on) isn't fully supporting the body. The desktop is too low causing the wrists to angle upwards which can lead to pain and damage. The screen may also be slightly too low.

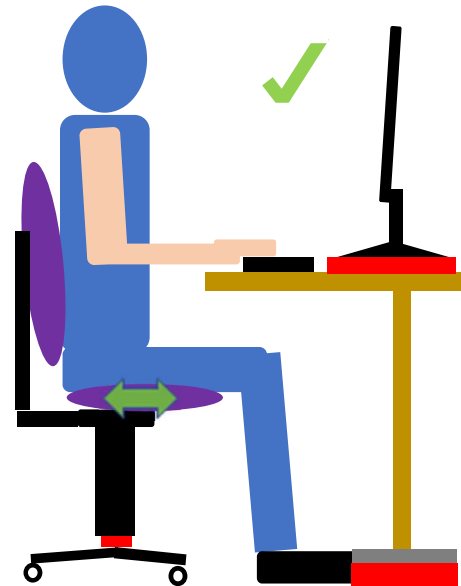


A chair designed for somebody with bigger dimensions is sometimes a better option although raising a standard chair may be perfectly adequate if it has enough adjustment range

The screen height being low is likely to cause the individual to lean forward supporting themselves on the desktop causing neck and shoulder problems.



This is the ideal position. A height adjustable desk or taller desk (including one raised on block or books etc at home (so long as it is stable)) achieves a much better position. The screen may only need to be raised a little.

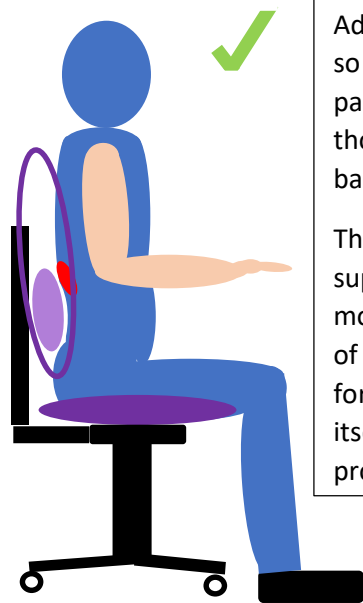


The seat can be slid forwards (on chairs that have this function) to provide more leg support – but remember you should be able to get 2 fingers widths between the seat pad and the back of your knee to aid blood circulation.

Back Rests

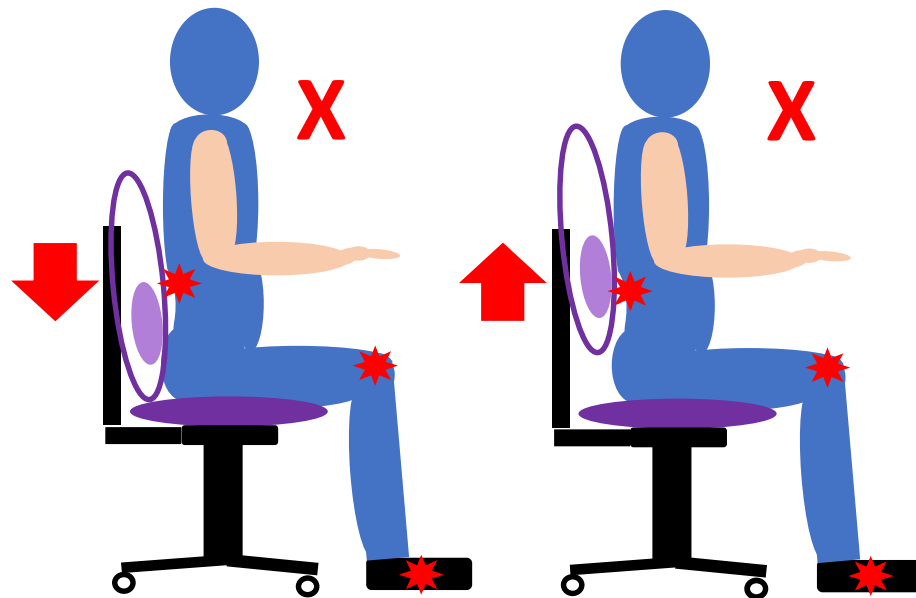
Backrests can vary in size and shape and if they have adjustments, they tend to be on the height that they are at from the base of the chair and the angle (rake). Some also have adjustable lumbar support too. The aim of a back rest is to allow the support to stop you slouching as your back tires and enable you to keep your back in a good supported posture and need to be fitted into the small of the back (lumbar). When seated in the chair with a gap of at least two fingers between the front of the seat pan and the back of the knee, the back rest should be against the back whilst sitting upright.

Unless the back of the seat is quite small, the backrests tend to have a bulge/ curve that fits the lower part of the back. This part only is demonstrated below. Chairs without lumbar support or that have a small backrest that can push into that area can be adapted with lumbar cushions.



Adjust the backrest height so it supports the upper part of the lumbar/ lower thoracic region (red) of the back to prevent slouching.

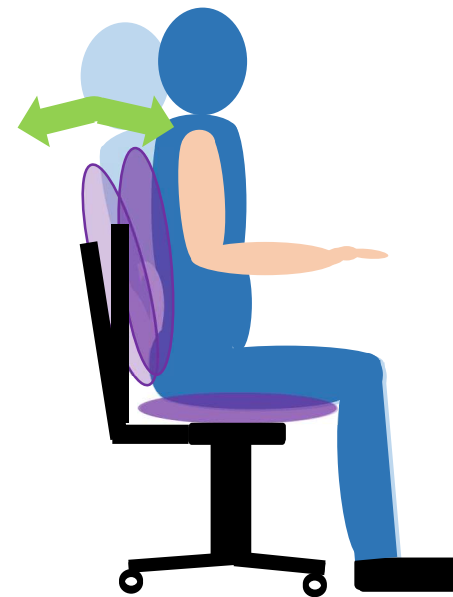
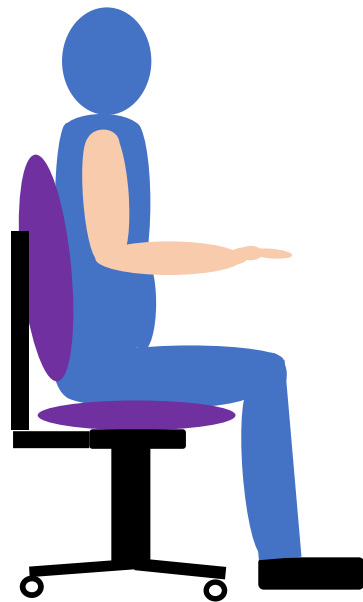
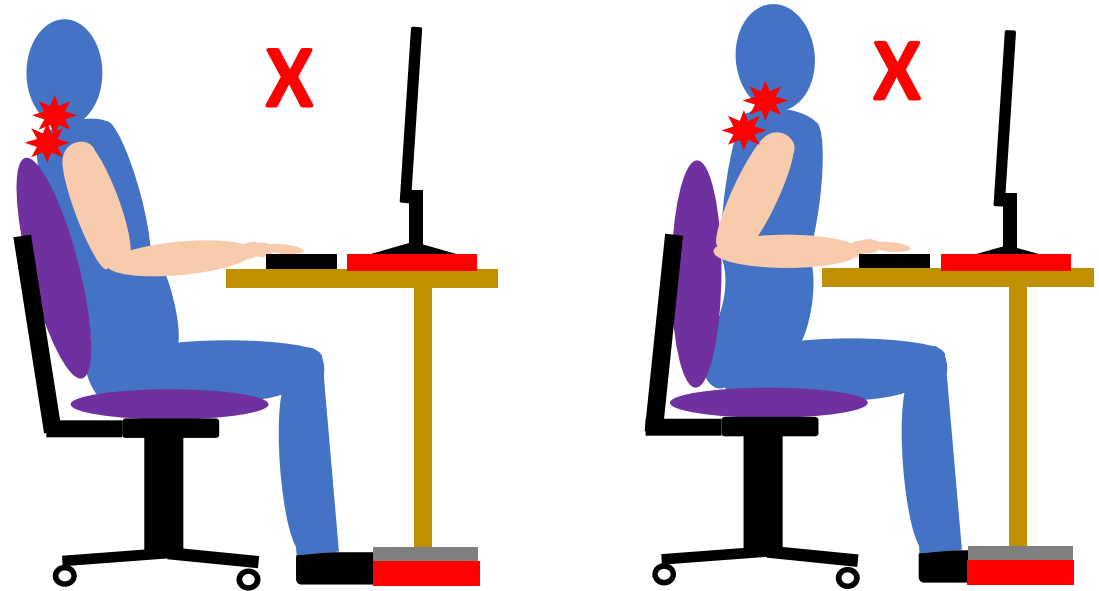
Then adjust the lumbar support (if adjustable) to fit more closely to the contour of your body. It should not force you forwards as this itself can cause back problems.



The rake of the backrest either are

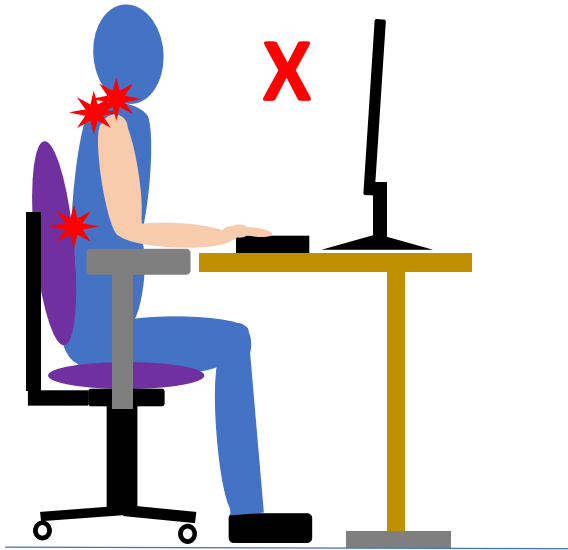
- non-adjustable;
- adjustable via a wheel;
- adjustable by a lever which locks in fixed positions or positions of your choosing; or
- free-floating maintaining constant contact with the back.

Free floating ones often can be locked in position also but to have on free float, the chair needs adjusting so the resistance is right for your weight – too tight and it won't move; too loose and there will be no support and if you lean on it you could fall off backwards.

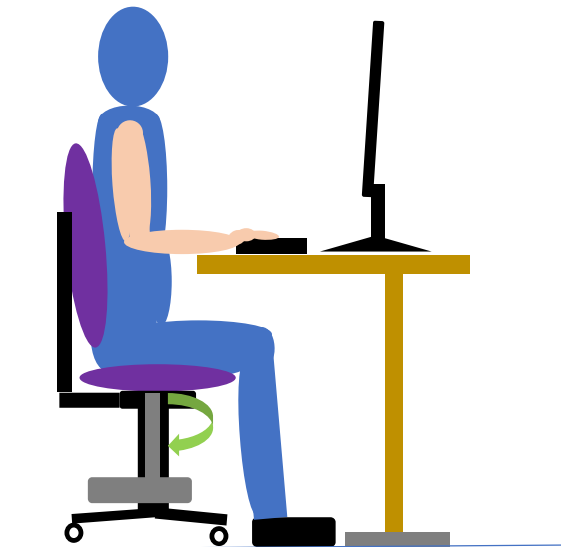
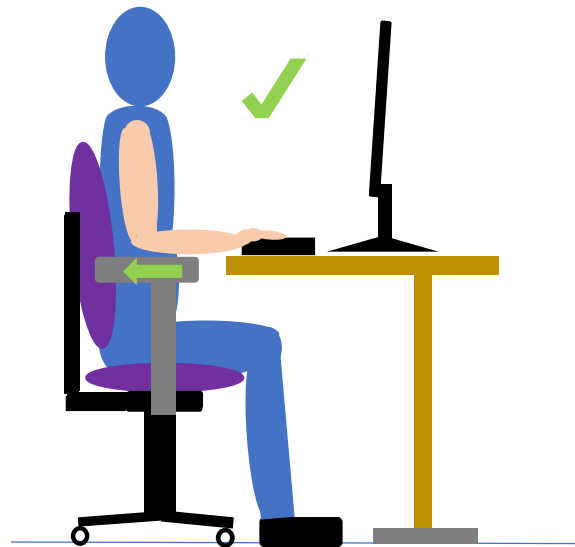
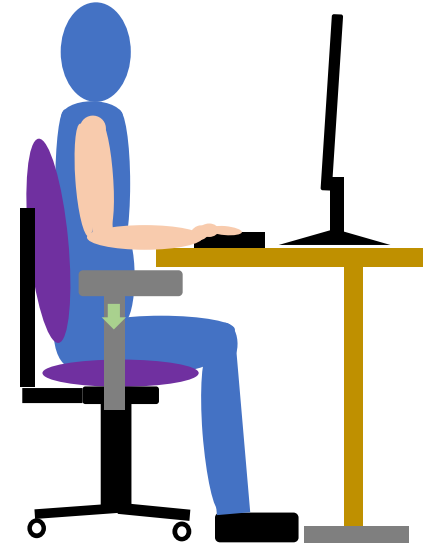


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Armrests



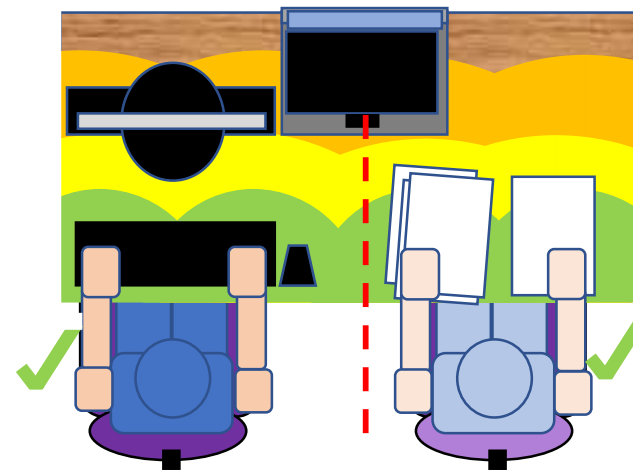
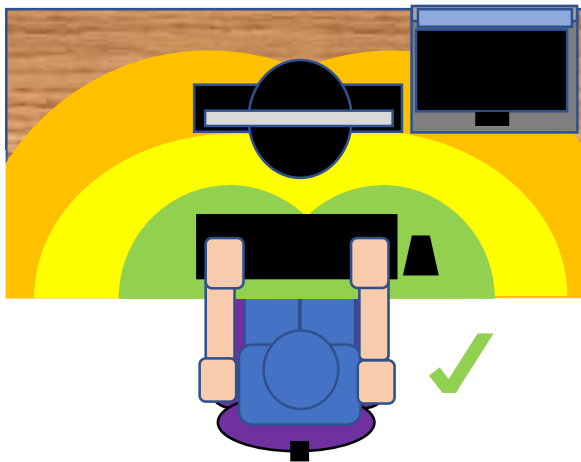
Armrests can vary in design some of which the arm rest part can slide back and forth as well as be raised and lowered. They can assist supporting the body weight and take the strain off the back but shouldn't be used whilst typing. Ensure they don't stop you from getting close to your desk as this causes over-reaching to occur. Adjust them to minimise impact; some rotate 180 down so they are not in the way or perhaps see if they can be removed. Arm rests are great when doing work such as reading or if in a meeting.



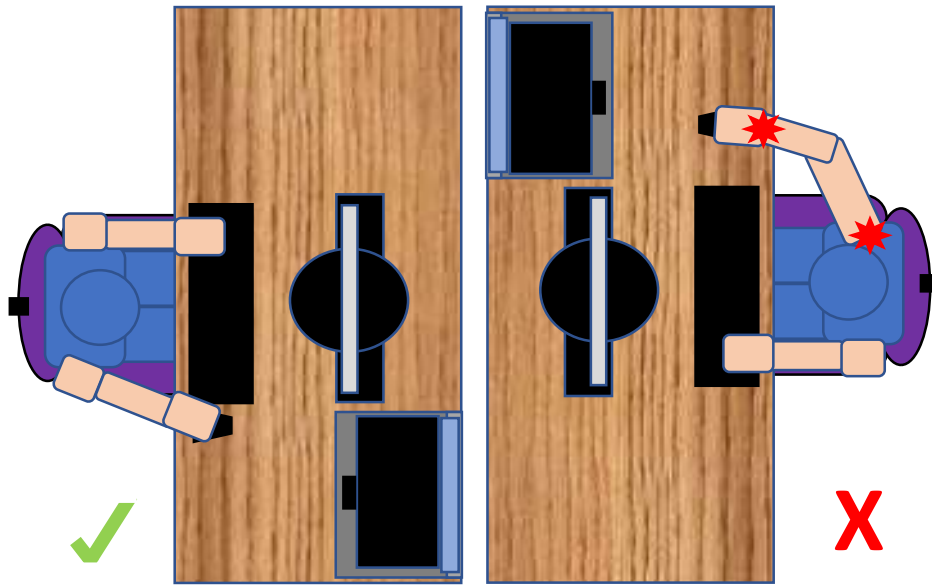
Desktop layouts

Desktops should be set out so that things most frequently needed are closest to avoid stretching, bending, and twisting.

Zone	Where approximately it covers	Typical items within it
1	Reachable when elbows are alongside the body	keyboard, mouse and notepad
2	Reachable without moving your back off the backrest but further than zone 1	telephone and basic stationery
3	Reachable whilst sat fully in seat but further than zone 2	In trays. Some files, pen pots etc.
4	Reachable by getting out of the seat but further than zone 3	Files and items perhaps accessed ad hoc or once per day



If the job has two defined roles such as computer work and paperwork, the keyboard and mouse can be moved out of the way or left side of your desk can be one activity and the right for the other.



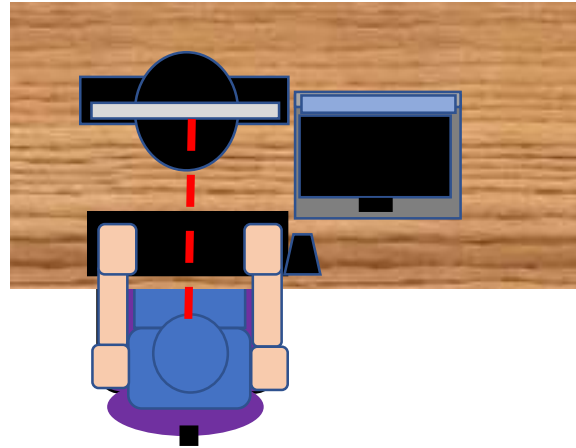
Screens should be directly in front of you at approximately arm's length. (This distance depends upon your optical requirements). If there is a document holder where information is being copied and eyes are equally focussed on both should there be a different set up. This can follow principles in multi-screen equal use.

The keyboard should be directly in front of you with around 10cm at the front to rest your wrists when not typing keying.

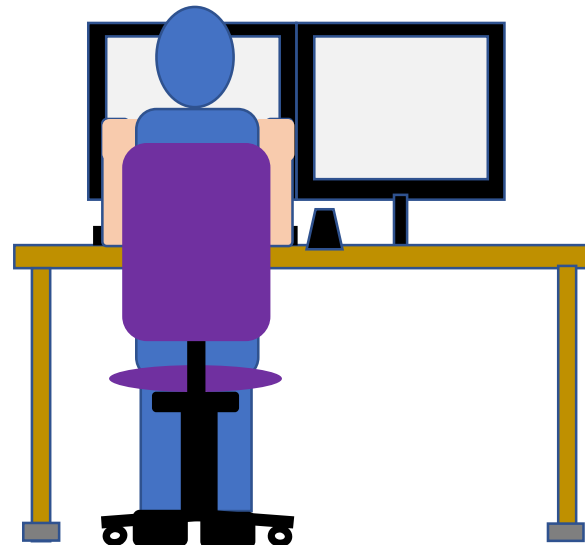
The mouse should be close to the side. It should be moved by a full arm movement and not by the wrist alone. If held wide or further forwards causing over-reaching, this can lead to pain and discomfort in the wrist, shoulder and neck.

Multi-screens with a primary screen

The primary screen should be directly in front of you. If the secondary screen is used less frequently but perhaps for comparing two documents, they should be approximately the same height. If the second screen isn't used for comparison or cross-referencing such as occasional checking emails, then this can be positioned elsewhere. Where items on the second screen require more attention, these should be transferred to the primary screen.



Independent information on each screen

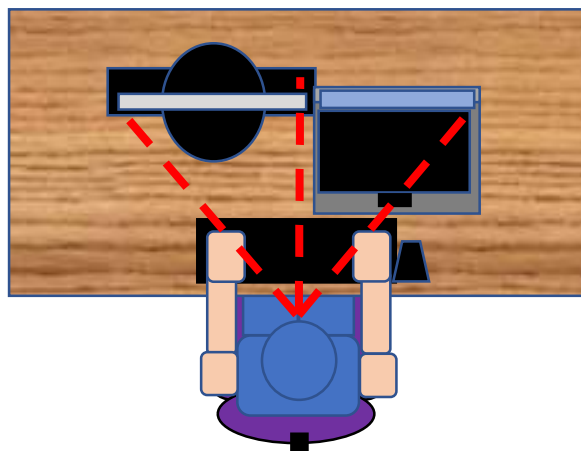
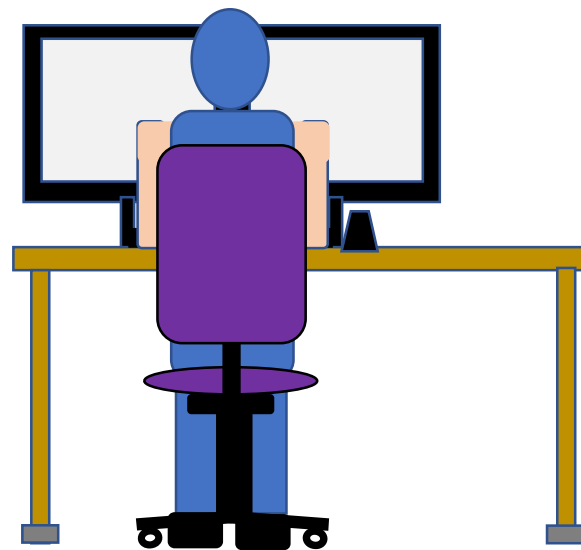


Occasional cross-referencing/
comparison work

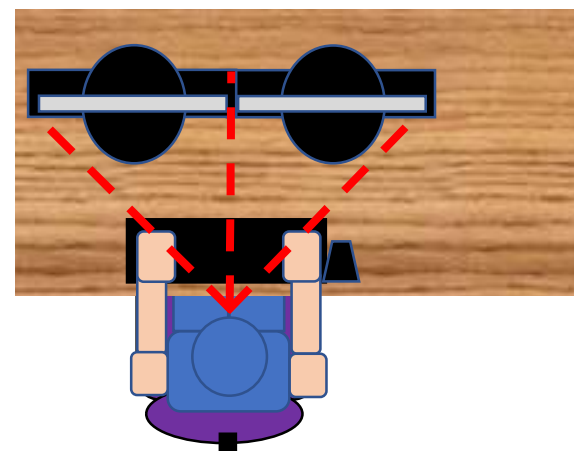


Multi-screens with simultaneous use

Where multi-screens are used at the same time, or a screen with document holder, the head should turn around the same angle from the centre to read each. They need to be at the same height and be as close together as possible. This can be achieved by positioning the screens or by moving in your seat where this is occasional but there must be the room under the desk to enable this without you sitting in a twisted position



User moves to the middle (midpoint of the two screens which may not be directly in-between if one screen is bigger)



User remains in a similar position but moves the screens

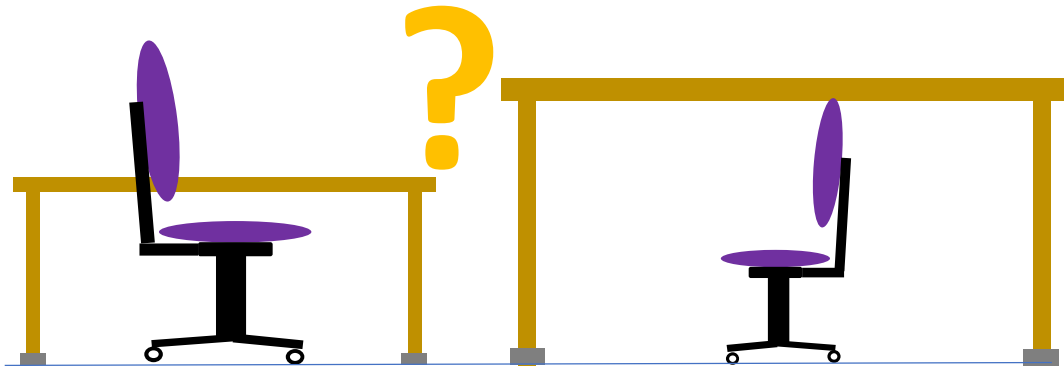
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Setting up your workstation

With the information that you have received, you will have a reasonable understanding of what your posture should be like and where harm can occur. Follow these quick steps and you'll be able to set up your workstation without any problem at all.

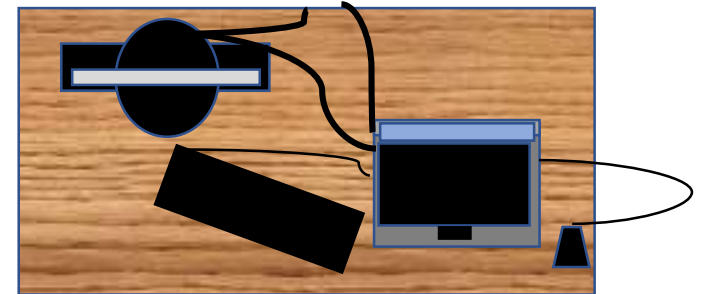
1.

Find a suitable sized chair and desk for you.



2.

If using a laptop, connect it to a separate screen, mouse and keyboard.



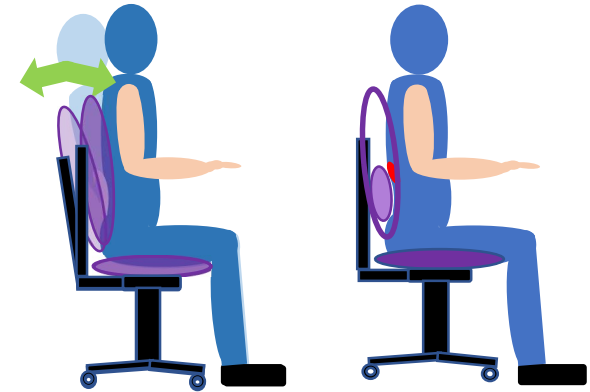
3.

Adjust the seat height where necessary and use a footrest if needed.



4.

Sit in the seat with your back against the back rest and adjust the back height so that the lumbar supports your back and the angle is comfortable. If the seat pad (part that you sit on) is adjustable, slide it, if necessary, to give you adequate support without pressing on the back of the knees. Where possible, use free float mechanism if available to give yourself a bit more movement and adjust the tension so it is right for you.



5.

Tuck yourself under the desk.

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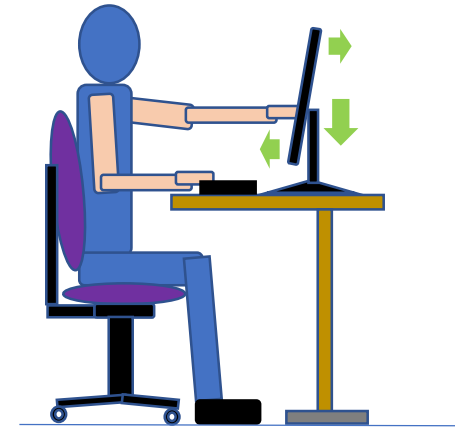
6.

Ensure the screen is at arm's length away whilst your back is still resting on the backrest. Ensure you bring this forward as the day progresses to stop visual fatigue and poor posture from creeping in. Move the screen back to arm's length position at the end of the day



7.

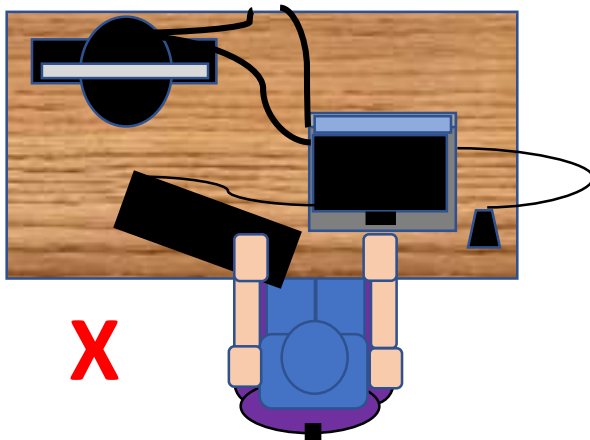
Adjust the screen height so the top is just below eye level and block out any glare by shutting blinds or adjusting the screen angle slightly.



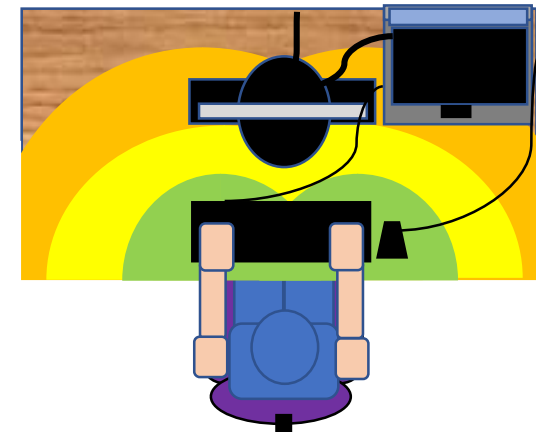
8.

Arrange the desktop so that:

- a. the screen and keyboard are directly in front of you;
- b. the mouse is alongside the keyboard
- c. the screen is at arm's length from you
- d. there is space to rest your wrists in front of the keyboard and mouse when not in use.
- e. Items most frequently used are closest to you.



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9.

Adjust the screen brightness so that it is a similar level to the background.

10.

**AND.... Remember to
move around and have a
break in task.**