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POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

Table of Contents

# Working safely at a computer based workstation

Work periods and breaks

The human body is designed to move regularly throughout the day. Sitting for prolonged periods can affect your health. When possible, rotate your work activities so you can alternate between sitting, standing and moving.

For sedentary tasks that may require prolonged periods of sitting or maintaining a similar posture, take a break to stretch or change position for five minutes every hour.

Other things you can do:

- Use your height adjustable desk so you can work either sitting or standing

- Vary your work tasks throughout the day so you can change posture, e.g. do some filing after a period of typing

- Stand during phone calls
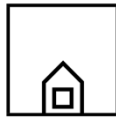
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- Walk to your colleagues' desk rather than emailing a question

- Take your meal breaks away from your desk

Ways you can stretch and reduce strain

Eyes
- Remove eyes from the computer screen and look straight ahead. Without moving your head, roll your eyes clockwise in a circle as though looking around the numbers of a clock. Repeat the process anticlockwise.

- Close your eyes every now and then for a few seconds.

Shoulders
- Circles - roll your shoulders backwards repeatedly and then forward.

- Shrugs - raise your shoulders towards your ears and hold for a few seconds to stretch and repeat as necessary.

- Pinches - squeeze your shoulder blades together and hold for a few seconds and repeat as necessary.

Neck
- Turn head to the right and hold for a few seconds before turning to the left, holding, and repeating as necessary.

- Tilt head to the right and left and hold and repeat as above.

Hands and wrists
- Clench and release your fists slowly, stretching out your fingers and hold for a few seconds.

- Stretch your arms out in front of you, palms facing down, and extend your wrists slowly upwards to stretch them out.

Ergonomic standards

Chair and seating

While there is not one correct way to sit at a workstation, seating should support postures that can be changed frequently within a comfortable range throughout the day. It should accommodate the:

- work being done

- visual demands

- workers' individual differences

This will reduce fatigue and strain on the neck, shoulders, back and legs. All users should trial different positions to work out the best set up for themselves.
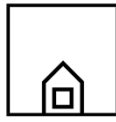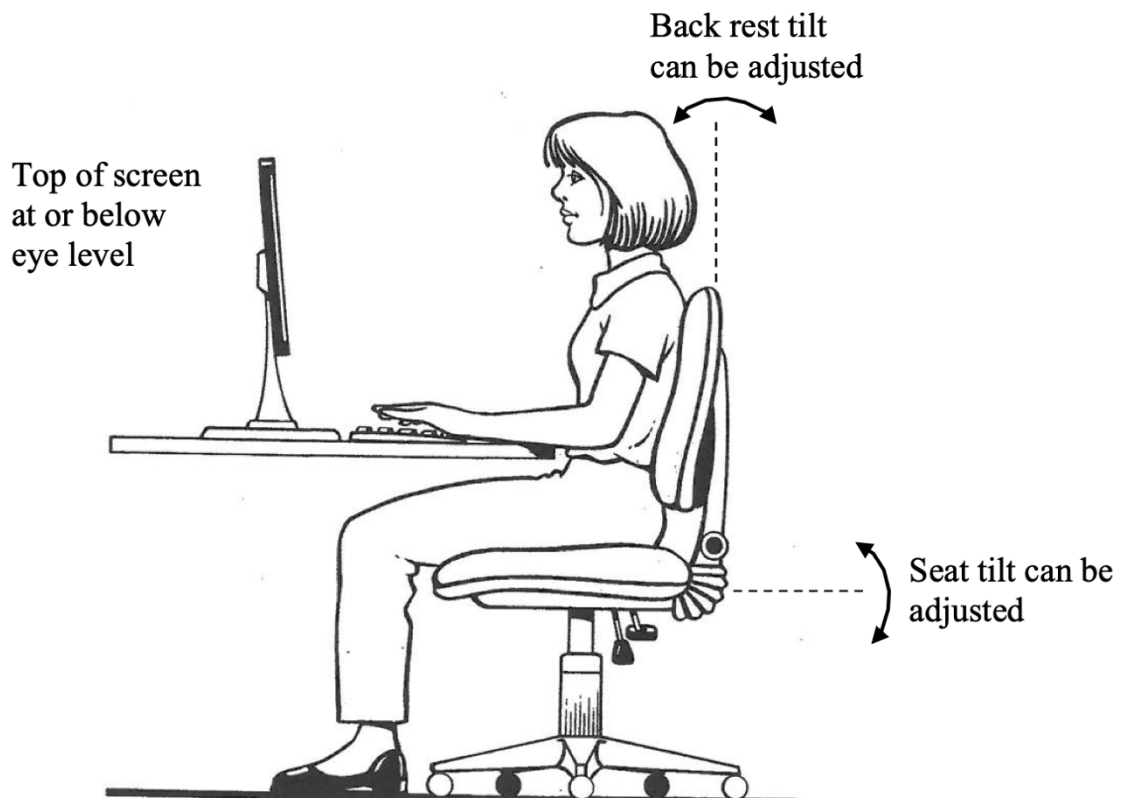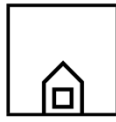
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A general guide to setting up your chair

Adjust your chair to ensure:

- you are sitting with your body close to the desk

- your head and neck are in a forward facing and midline position (i.e. no backward arching of the neck or forward extension of the chin)

- your shoulders are relaxed and symmetrical and elbows slightly closer to the side of the body

- your back is supported by the chair backrest. The curved lower part of the backrest should fit into your lower back or the lumbar curve

- you have an open angle of 100-120 degrees (slightly more than a right angle) at the hip. This can be achieved by adjusting the seat pan tilt and the backrest

- your knees are at a height lower or level with your hips

- you have a gap of 2-3 finger widths between the front of the chair and the back of your knees

- your feet are flat on the floor or footrest

Top of screen at or below eye level

Back rest tilt can be adjusted

Seat tilt can be adjusted

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> **A general guide to setting up your monitor:**
>
> - Screen height - the top of the screen should be set at eye level or lower this may reduce visual fatigue.
>
> - Viewing distance - position the screen about one arm length away or slightly further. This may reduce visual fatigue.
>
> - Trial various positions to determine the ideal viewing distance and height.
>
> - Display - adjust the font size or display so that the content can be read easily.

Computer workstation

There are many different configurations for computer workstations, though all should be designed to allow adequate height, depth and work surface to suit the user, the type of work they do and the equipment they use.

The workstation should have the following features:

- a flat smooth surface for the keyboard and mouse

- space to position all the equipment so that posture or vision is not compromised

- a suitable height (e.g. 680-720 mm when measured from the top of the workstation to the floor)

- adequate clearance for legs under the desktop

- sufficient space under the desk to comfortably stretch legs

Height adjustable workstations can be used in either sitting or standing positions. When raised, your standing workstation height should be at a level that allows your head, neck, shoulders and elbows to maintain supported positioning.

Organising your desktop

Organise work materials and accessories into primary and secondary work zones to improve efficiency, create more working space and reduce the distance and frequency of reaches.

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A general guide to setting up your desktop:

- Place items used frequently or for long periods in a semicircle in the primary work zone (usual work area), no further away than the distance between your elbow and knuckles when your upper arm is close to your body.

- Place items used occasionally or for short periods in the secondary work zone, up to one arm length away when in a seated position.

- Place materials and equipment used very seldom in the area beyond the secondary zone.

- Position the keyboard straight in front of you to avoid twisting your neck or body.

- Adjust the angle and height of the keyboard by folding or unfolding the small legs underneath.

- Keep your mouse or trackpad at the same height and as close to the keyboard as possible

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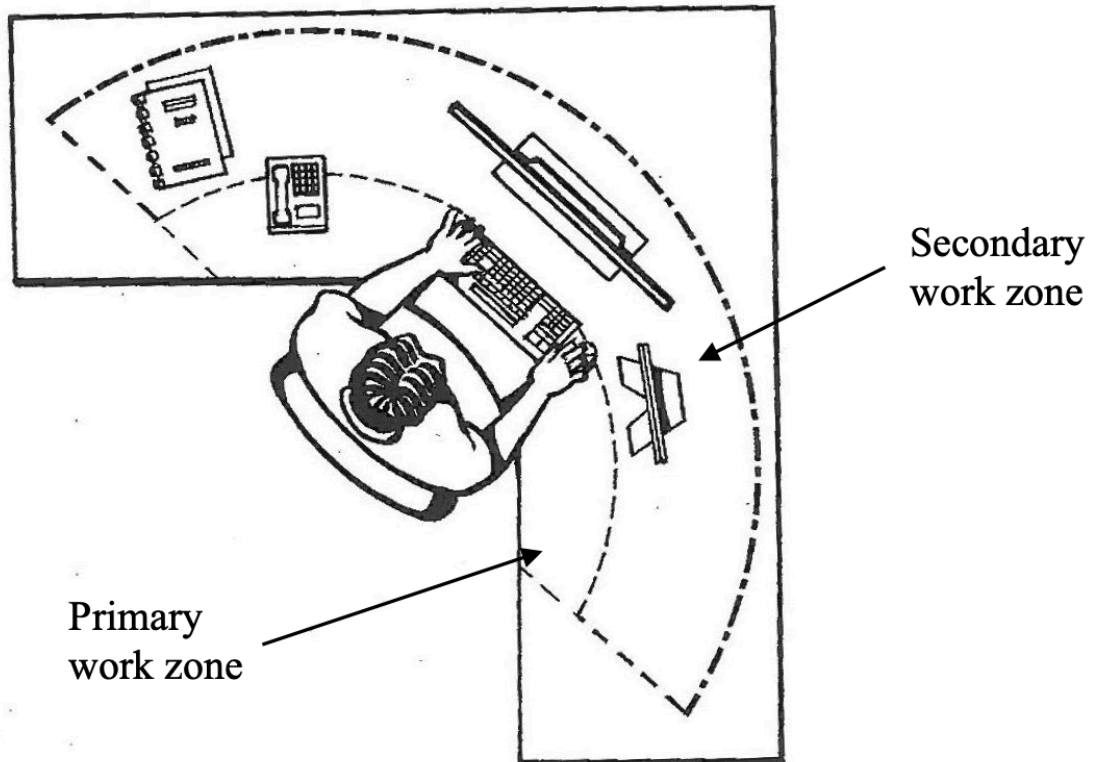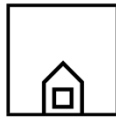
Sustainable practices

Energy and resources conservation

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

There are numerous ways in which we can conserve resources and reduce wastage in the office:

- Use duplex printing (printing on both sides)

- Print draft copies in low-resolution mode to use less ink or toner

- Avoid printing unnecessarily. Preview and proofread your work on-screen where possible

- Rather than sending letters or print material use email and send electronic copies where appropriate

- Keep a tray near the printer for paper that has been printed on one side only and can be used for notepaper

- Keep a recycling bin near the printer to recycle paper

- Avoid using thick borders and graphics

- Recycle empty ink and toner cartridges

- Turn the office lights and air conditioning off at the end of the day or set timers

- Activate the energy-saving options on equipment such as computers, photocopiers and printers so that the equipment will go into a "sleep" mode during a prolonged period of inactivity

- Shut down your computer and monitor at the end of the day

- Use the energy-saving option on your computer. The power options can be managed using the Power Options Properties from the Control Panel

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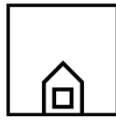
# Risk and hazard reduction

Equipment pre-startup check

Prestart checks must be made to ensure equipment is not damaged on startup and also to prevent possible injury to personnel during startup; the operational status of safety systems must be checked.

- Check that equipment is plugged incorrectly. For example, you should never use double adapters to plug in multiple devices. If more than one device needs to be connected to power, you would always use a power board.

- Ensure that the electrical cords are in good condition and not frayed or broken

- Ensure that equipment is adequately ventilated. Most machines can get very hot and need to have a proper airflow around them to avoid damage.

- Start equipment in accordance with the organisation's or manufacture's guidelines.

- Use safety guards or safety clothing (if applicable). Some equipment can have areas that can cause injuries such as cutting blades and overheated spaces. They will generally have safety guards or may require safety clothing (such as eye or ear protection) to be worn. You should also;

- Log on and off equipment (where applicable) in accordance with the organisation's producers. This is to ensure security of the information contained in computers or other equipment that contains confidential information.

- Never try to repair a computer or clear paper jams in a photocopier while the machine is still turned on. This could result in injuries such as electrocution if the machinery is faulty.

- Turn off all equipment when it is not in use. This prevents machines from overheating and perhaps causing damage and saves on cost.

- Using business equipment is an unsafe manner is a hazard, not only to your own health and safety, but also to those around you, and possibly even the premises.

Safe equipment use

- Follow all company policies and procedures when using equipment

- Use the equipment for its intended purpose

- Operate the equipment in a safe manner

- Follow equipment instructions from the manufacturer

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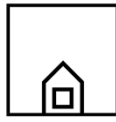
Manual handling

Before lifting:

- Assess the load

- Do you need someone else to assist?

- Can it be divided into smaller loads?

- Make sure the pathway is clear of obstacles

Safe manual handling technique:

- Keep spine in a neutral position

- Keep a wide base of support

- Ensure you are balanced

- Bend at your knees and hips

- Brace your abdominal muscles

- Keep the object close to you

- Push up with your legs

- Avoid twisting

Maximum weight to be lifted by one person is 10 kg without seeking help from others
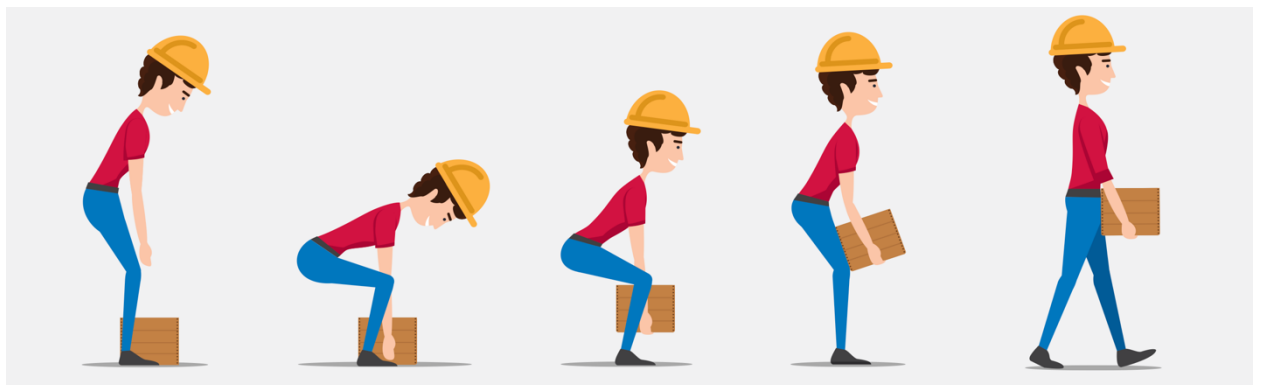
Injuries from persons not following correct manual handling processes can include:

- Acute trauma, such as cuts or fractures

- Lower back pain

- Muscle pain

- Headaches

- Neck and upper and lower limb disorders