

Physical Setting Up Your Workstation



Physical



Cognitive



Social

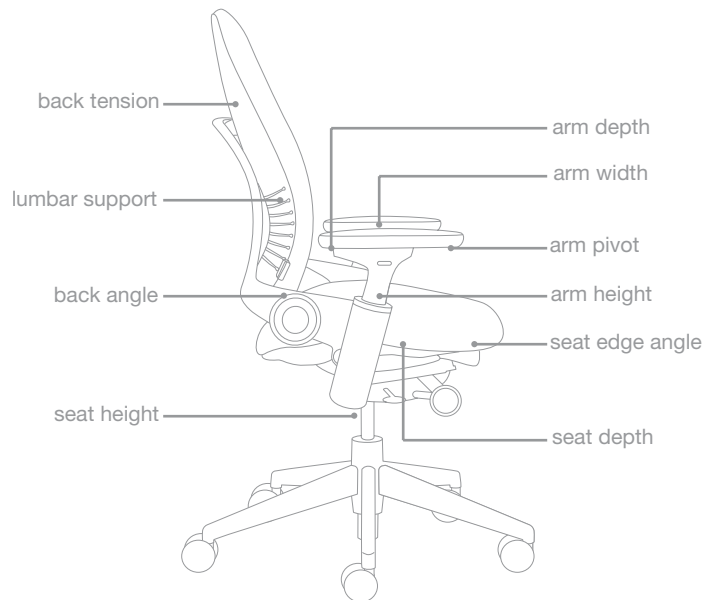
The movement towards wellness in the workplace

Like bad posture, the traditional model of ergonomics has remained static. Today, we're seeing a shift from traditional ergonomics to a more proactive solution that encourages healthy living... one that focuses on the **physical**, **cognitive** and **social** needs of today's workforce and understands how they're related. It's a movement toward wellness in the workplace.

Setting Up Your Workstation

Our bodies are constantly interacting with our workspace. Physical ergonomics should focus on the movement, orientation, and fit of our entire workspace. Use the following tips to help setup your workstation so it supports physical wellness:

Chair



General seating adjustments

Properly adjusting your chair is a big step toward physical wellness. No matter how advanced your chair is, if it's not adjusted to fit you and your workstyle, you won't fully benefit from it.

There are some common features found on work chairs. Knowing how to adjust each to your body will help you stay comfortable longer. Your chair probably includes one or more of these features:

Back Tension (also called Tilt Tension)

Adjustable back tension allows people of different sizes to adjust the force needed to recline in the chair. The back tension is adjusted properly when you can recline without falling back too quickly or without pushing back too hard. The chair should recline at a comfortable speed with only a little pressure from you. When reclined, the back of the chair should support you comfortably in a relaxed position.

Lumbar Support

Many chairs offer an adjustable lumbar support or adjustable back height. The height of the lumbar or backrest is adjusted correctly when the lumbar support fits into the small of your back and meets your personal preference.

Back Angle (also called Variable Back Stop or Upright Back Lock)

This feature allows a selection of the degree to which the back of the chair reclines. A chair with Variable Back Stop allows you to select from several recline angles. A chair with Upright back Lock allows you to choose either full recline or the upright position. Reclining from time to time takes stress off your spine and pelvis. Back angle should be set to meet your personal preference and task.



Arm Depth

The depth of the armrest should be adjusted so that you can pull your chair closer to your desk without the arms getting in the way. Rather than lowering the armrests to get closer to the desk, push the armrests back so you still have arm support.

Arm Width

The width between the armrest should be adjusted close to your body to allow your arms to hang naturally at your side.

Arm Pivot

The pivot, or angle, of the armrest of the chair should be adjusted to follow the angle of your forearms. This allows maximum contact between your forearms and the armrests, which is especially helpful when keyboarding.

Arm Height

Adjusting the armrests will reduce strain on your shoulders and pressure on your spine. Arm height should be adjusted so you can sit with your forearms supported by the armrests without sagging or hunching your shoulders. Your arms should be parallel to the floor and level with the worksurface and keyboard.

Seat Depth (also called seat pan)

Adjustable seat depth accommodates different leg lengths. Adjusting the seat depth properly can reduce pressure behind the knees and provide better lower back support. If seat depth is too long, it does not allow proper contact with the chair's backrest. If it's too short, the legs overhang the seat edge, creating pressure on the back of the thighs. Seat depth is adjusted properly when you sit with the small of your back against the backrest and have 2-3 inches of space between the seat edge and the back of your knees, while your feet rest flat on the floor.

Seat Edge Angle (also called seat pan tilt)

Some chairs have a control that allows you to adjust the angle of the front edge of the seat. Other chairs may have a front seat edge that flexes automatically as you move in the chair, so there is no adjustment to make. Both of these features relieve pressure on the back of the legs.

Seat Height

A properly adjusted seat height maximizes comfort by providing the proper relationship to your work surface and worktools. Seat height is adjusted properly when your feet are flat on the floor or on a foot rest, your thighs are parallel to the floor and your forearms are parallel to your worksurface.

Monitor

Your computer monitor should be slightly below your eye level and free of glare. Generally, the screen should be about 18-28 inches away from your eyes.

A flat screen monitor arm that tilts and pivots allows you to position your monitor in the best location, adjust for light and glare, as well as adjust for sharing your monitor when working with another person.

If your laptop screen is your primary screen, an external keyboard and mouse allow you to position the screen far enough away from your eyes. Monitor blocks raise the laptop off the worksurface so the screen is higher, reducing neck strain that can occur from looking down.

Worksurface

The most comfortable height for your worksurface is approximately at elbow level. The height of non-adjustable worksurfaces is standardized to accommodate most individuals. If your worksurface is fixed, consider adding an adjustable keyboard tray and/or adjustable monitor arm for increased comfort.



Some worksurfaces allow incremental adjustments for seated height. This allows you to fine-tune your worksurface placement. The adjustment is typically made once, when you first move in, but can be changed to accommodate changes to your workstation.

Sit-to-stand adjustable worksurfaces go from seated height to standing height. This allows you to change your posture throughout the day, helping to reduce fatigue and strain. When you bring your worksurface up to standing height, a general guideline is to position the worksurface at about elbow level.

Lighting

Every office should have a planned lighting system and integrate natural light if possible. Individual task lighting augments the overall office lighting and lets you control light levels for specific needs. Those needs vary based on overall light levels, workstation design, and a person's age.

Task lighting is especially helpful when reading documents or writing, since people typically need brighter light for paper and less light for computing. Task lighting should be positioned to cast even light on the document or object it's illuminating. It should always be positioned so that it doesn't create a glare on the computer screen.

Turning off task lights at the end of day will save energy. Occupancy sensors added to personal task lighting will also significantly help with energy savings by turning lights off when the space is empty.

Many computer users turn off their lights in overly lit offices to avoid eyestrain and headaches. Lighting levels do not need to be as bright for computer work as for reading or writing. For greater comfort, lower ambient lighting for computer work and provide directional lighting for documents or deskwork. A flexible task light can add the light where it is most needed.

Keyboard

An adjustable keyboard support helps with proper shoulder, arm and wrist alignment. Workstation design and body characteristics are factors when it comes to keyboard platform selection. A broad shouldered person may prefer a wider keyboard and mouse setup. A smaller person may require a closer mousing surface to reduce reach.

Your keyboard should be positioned so your elbows are close to your sides, your forearms are relaxed and almost parallel with the floor, and your wrists are straight. Ideally, you would have a place to rest the base of your palms (just above your wrists) to reduce wrist strain. This may be integrated into the keyboard itself or provided by a wrist pad on the keyboard support.

A long keyboard platform or a keyboard platform with an extended mousing surface keeps the mouse close so you don't have to reach back and forth between mousing and typing.

If you have a laptop computer, for long periods of work, it's better to use an external keyboard and mouse, rather than the laptop's keyboard and mouse. This allows you to position the screen far enough from your eyes while keeping your arms close to your body while typing - a more comfortable posture long term.

Footrest

Use a footrest for additional support if your feet cannot rest comfortably flat on the floor. The use of a footrest promotes proper alignment and posture, reducing muscle fatigue and stress.

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