

Title:

Sort Your Computer Furniture, Stay Fitter

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617

Summary:

Incorrect setup of computer furniture can cause strain and injury. This article outlines specific and general methods for correct arrangement of a PC workstation.

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Article Body:

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Computer furniture - what you have at your computer workstation -can if correctly selected and set up, help you avoid painful musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), and stay healthier and fitter at your PC.

It's not hard to do especially when you consider that a bad computer furniture arrangement will, even in the short term:

- create and maintain a distorted or unhealthy posture while using the computer
- give you inadequate lower back support, creating aches and pains later.
- force you into staying in one position too long - another recipe for strain and muscular tension.
- make you stretch bend and twist unnecessarily.

So what features should your screen, desk, keyboard, mouse and chair have to keep you feeling good?

Your monitor should:

- swivel, tilt and elevate
- fit an extra adjustable stand to adjust the height if need be. Or replace it.

- be positioned so the top line of the monitor is not higher than your eyes or not lower than 20° below the horizon of your eyes or field of vision
- be at the same level and near the document holder (if you use one).
- be between 20 to 25 inches (50-56 cm) away from your face

Your keyboard should :

- be detachable and adjustable (with legs to adjust the angle).
- allow your forearms to be parallel to the floor without having to raise your elbows.
- allow your wrists to be in line with your forearms so your wrists don't have to be flexed up or down.
- include enough space to rest your wrists or should include a padded detachable wrist rest (or you can use a separate gel wrist rest which should be at least 2 inches (50 mm) deep.
- be placed directly in front of the monitor and at the same height as the mouse, track ball, touch pad, or any other pointing device.

The mouse or pointer device should :

- be close to the keyboard.
- allow you, (if possible), to use both left and right hands while handling the pointer/mouse.

Your computer chair should :

- support your back, and have a vertically adjustable independent back rest that returns to its original position, plus tilt adjustment to support your lower back.
- allow you to adjust its height while seated. - be adjusted so the back crease of the knee is slightly higher than the pan of the chair (use a suitable footrest, if required).
- be supported by a five prong caster base.

- have removable and adjustable armrests, if possible.
- have a contoured seat with breathable fabric and rounded edges to distribute the weight, and be adjustable to allow the seat pan to tilt forward or back

The table/desk should :

- provide ample leg room and be height adjustable (preferably).
- have enough room to support the computer equipment plus space for documents.
- be at least 36 inches (90 cm) deep.
- have rounded blunt and undamaged corners and edges

This covers the basics of good computer furniture setup, but you can improve your protection by taking further standard precautions:

- Ensure each user maintains their own set up.
- Taking regular breaks from working at your computer for a few minutes, at least once an hour.
- Alternating work tasks by mixing computer tasks with non computer tasks to avoid strain.
- Learning and carrying out keyboard shortcuts to reduce mouse usage.
- Carrying out regular gentle stretching to relax your body. - Using health support equipment such as footrests, wrist/palm rests, and document holders if required
- Adopting a NEUTRAL BODY POSTURE, with hands, wrists, and forearms inline, straight, and almost parallel to the floor, body facing forward, shoulders relaxed, elbows close to body and bent approximately at right angles.

If you organise and maintain a good PC furniture set up, you'll be well on track for fit and healthy computing through 2006 and beyond!