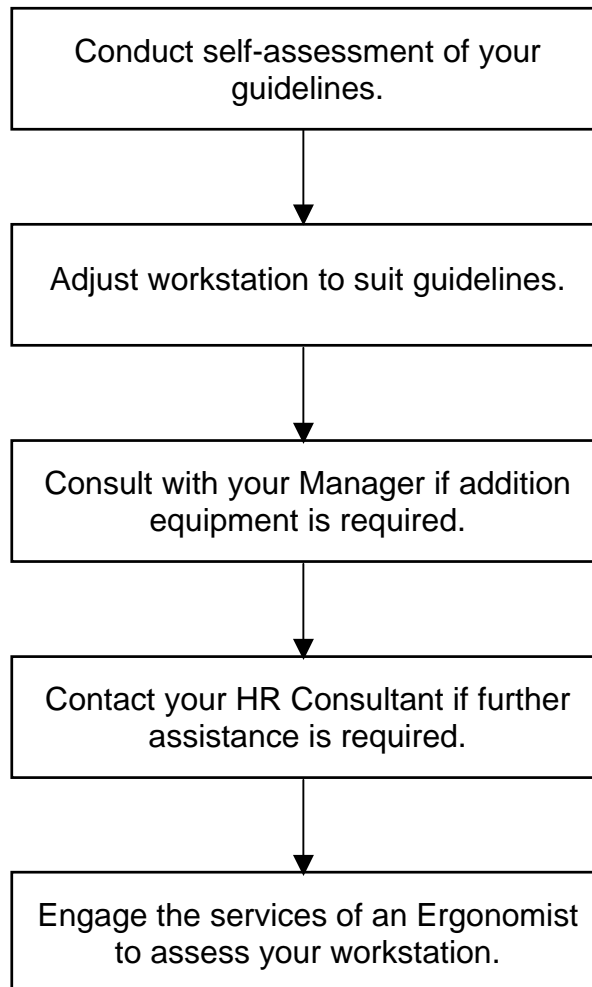


DOES YOUR COMPUTER WORKSTATION SUIT YOU?

The following guide provides general advice for users of screen-based equipment. The information is designed to assist the majority of users without pre-existing back, neck or shoulder problems.

Swinburne's approach to establishing an ergonomic workstation starts with a self-assessment through to an ergonomic workplace assessment.



YOUR WORKSTATION ~ THE CHAIR

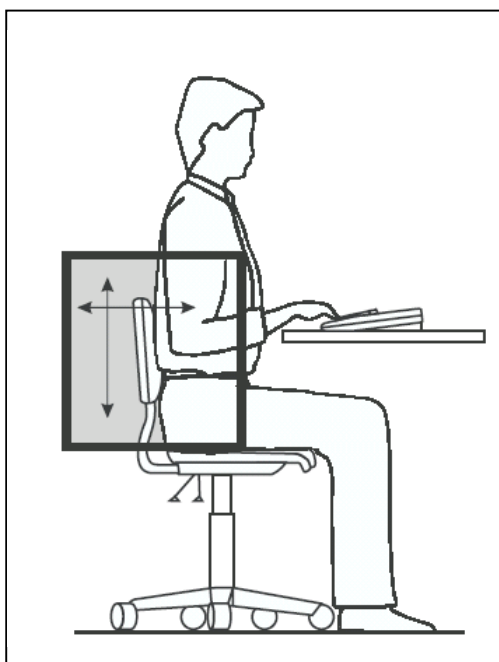
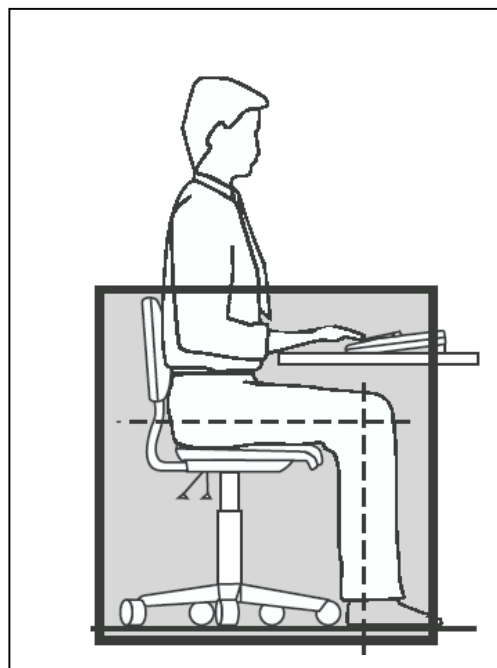
SEAT

Height

Adjust chair height so the feet are comfortably flat on the floor, the thighs are approximately horizontal and the lower legs approximately vertical.

Tilt (if available)

Set to horizontal initially, although you may wish to adjust the tilt slightly forward to suit your comfort.



BACK SUPPORT:

Height

Start by raising the backrest to its maximum height. Then sit in the chair and check the fit of the backrest to the curve of the lower back. If not comfortable, lower the height by several centimeters and try this position

Repeat this adjustment and try each new position until the most comfortable fit is found. Ensure that the backrest supports the lower back and is not placed too low.

Forward / backward position

Adjust the position of the backrest until a comfortable pressure is exerted on the low back area while seated in the usual working posture at the desk.

The backrest position should not feel as though it pushes you out of the seat or that you have to lean back too far to reach it.

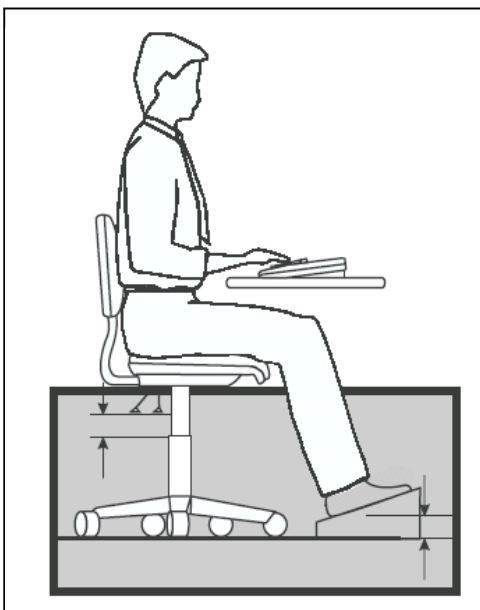
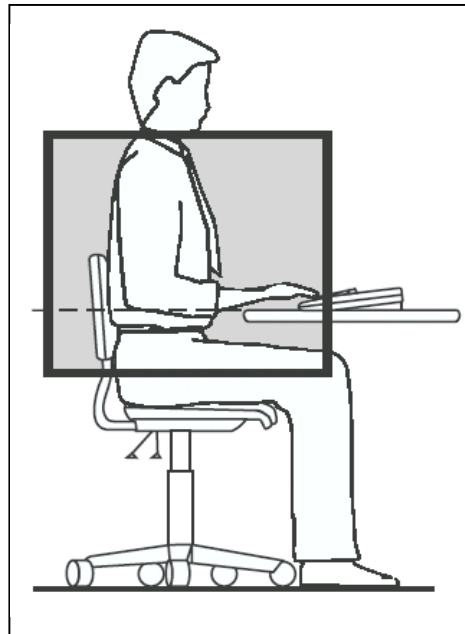
ARM RESTS:

Armrests are usually not recommended unless they are well out of the way of the desk. However, if your chair has arm rests make sure that they do not prevent you from getting as close to the desk as you require or that they impinge on your elbows while you are working

YOUR WORKSTATION ~ THE DESK

ADJUSTABLE DESK HEIGHT

Having first adjusted your chair to suit your body size, adjust the desk so the top surface is just below elbow height. To determine your elbow height, relax your shoulders and bend your elbows to about 90 degrees and check the elbow height against the desk height.



FIX DESK HEIGHT – DESK TOO HIGH.

Raise the chair until your arms are at the correct position, as shown above. Use a foot rest to ensure your thighs are positioned horizontally, as shown.

OR

Lower the desk by cutting the legs down by the measured difference.

FIX DESK HEIGHT – DESK TOO LOW

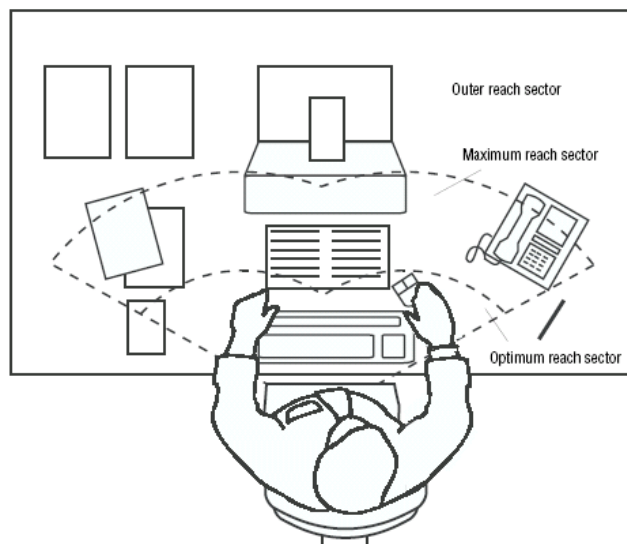
Raise the height of the desk by extending the leg length or sitting it on wooden blocks or something similar.

Remember to ensure that any such changes are secure and stable.

Position on the desk

Place the keyboard as close to the front edge of the desk as is comfortable. Do not place documents between the keyboard and the front edge of the desk, as this increases the reach distance to the keyboard and may result in excessive bending of the neck to look at the documents.

Where possible, layout should be reorganised to bring frequently used objects closer to the user.



YOUR WORKSTATION ~ THE COMPUTER SCREEN

The computer screen

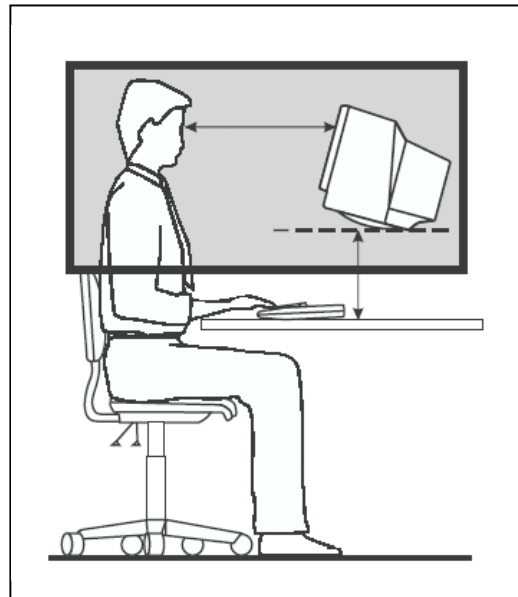
The screen should be positioned once the chair and desk heights have been established.

Height

The screen should be positioned so that the top of the screen is level with, or slightly lower than, your eyes when you are sitting upright. Either raise or lower the screen to achieve the desired height.

Distance from the eye

First place the screen so that it is approximately an arm's length away from the usual seated position of the user. Trial this position and if necessary, move it further away or closer as required.



NOTEBOOK COMPUTERS

Laptop computers are increasingly being used in place of a desktop computer. Laptops were designed for short term or mobile use. This can result in the work height being unsuitable plus as a general rule the keyboards are not designed for long-term use.

If you are regularly using a laptop computer the screen should be raised to the correct height, as detailed above, and a standard keyboard utilized in place of the laptop keyboard.

CLUTTER

Power leads, boxes and files rubbish bins and general clutter stored underneath your desk decrease or interferes with space required for your legs. This may force you to adopt a twisted or an awkward posture of the spine.

REST AND EXERCISE FOR THE FIT & UNFIT

Our bodies are not designed to sit in one position for extended periods, even with a correctly designed workstation. If we were, we would've been born with casters on our feet and cushions permanently attached to the appropriate part of our body.

Rest and Exercise Breaks

- If appropriate, rest pauses should be taken prior to the onset of fatigue (every 20-30 minutes if a change of activity is not imminent).
- Exercise breaks may be necessary where task variety is not available and restricted postures are prolonged. The aim is to provide dynamic movement when static postures are maintained.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The information detailed above is an abridged version of a booklet produced by WorkSafe Victoria. The booklet is called ["Officewise – A guide to health and safety in the office"](#) Appendix C of this booklet provides a comprehensive list of exercises for office workers.