

Employees' guide to

# Setting up your Workstation and Using Portable Devices

**Issue 1**

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# Introduction

The health and safety of employees who work with Display Screen Equipment (DSE) is not just the responsibility of the employer. Each and every employee has a duty to take care of their own health and safety by:

- complying with Council procedures;
- reporting problems with their health;
- reporting problems about their workplace;
- reporting problems with their DSE.



There are many misconceptions about the effects working with DSE have on the health and wellbeing of the user, such as: damaging eyesight; inducing epileptic seizures and causing facial dermatitis. In fact, none of this has been proven.

Concentrating on a screen for long periods can cause eye fatigue and make the user more aware of existing eye conditions, and if eye defects are uncorrected, working with DSE can make work more tiring or stressful. Also, workplace environmental factors like low humidity and static electricity can contribute to conditions such as dry eyes and skin irritations.

Setting up your workstation correctly is an important first step to reducing the risk of injury and the occurrence of upper-limb disorders that are associated with poor posture and incorrect work habits, whilst working with DSE. These associated disorders, which can cause upper limb pain and discomfort, include: carpal tunnel syndrome; tendonitis; and tenosynovitis.

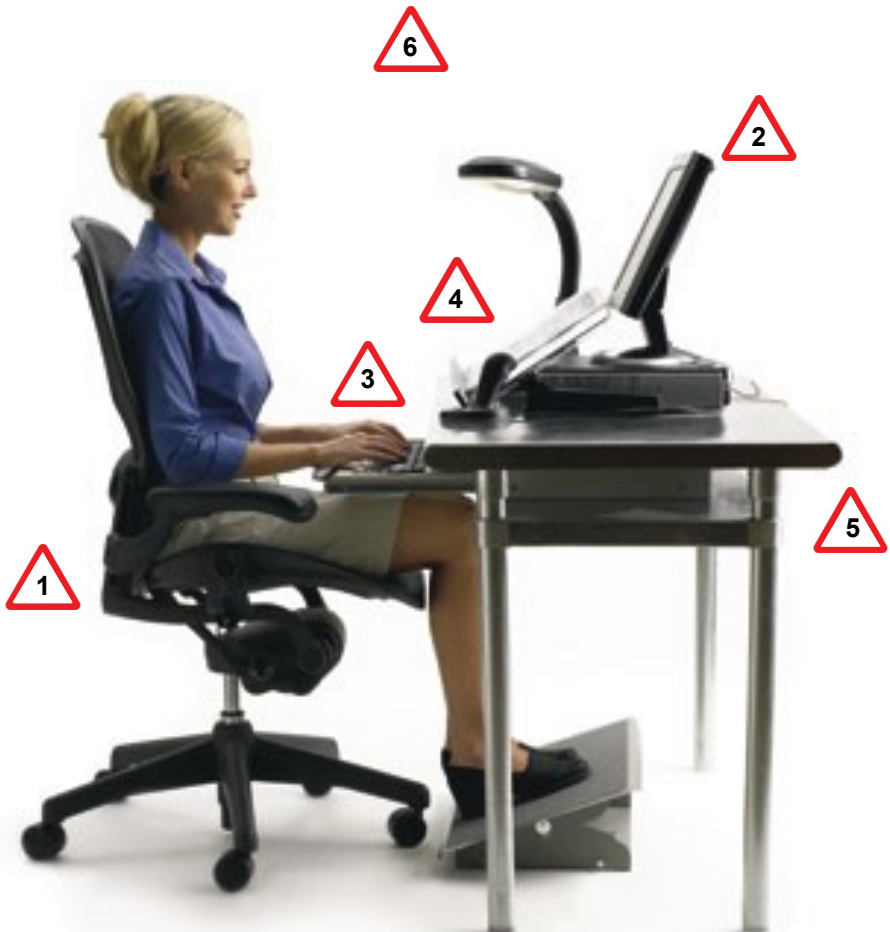
The next important step is to make sure you take regular breaks away from using the DSE, by incorporating other activities into your workload. These activities may include filing, answering the telephone, photocopying etc.

The aim of this document is to provide you with a step-by-step guide to achieving a workstation that, not only meets the statutory requirements of The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, but, is comfortable as well as functional, and also promotes good posture while working at your DSE.

# Your Workstation

Your workstation is made up of:

1. your work chair
2. your display screen
3. your keyboard
4. your mouse/pointer/trackball
5. your work surface/desk and the area around your workstation, which includes lighting, temperature, air quality and noise.



# Your Work Chair

**In order for your work chair to meet statutory requirements it should:**

- be suitable for the work undertaken;
- be stable;
- have a five-point base;
- be fitted with castors or glides to allow easy movement;
- have a seat that is height adjustable; and
- have a seat back that is adjustable in height and tilt, and that is separate from the seat.

**The following steps are intended to assist you to set up your work chair in such a way that it helps you to achieve an ergonomically correct posture:**

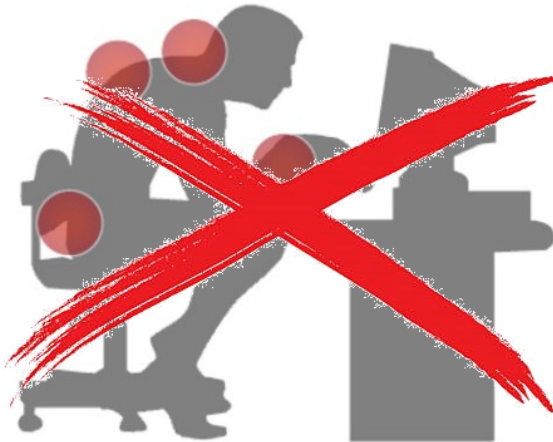
1. Adjust the height of the seat so your feet rest flat on the floor. Your forearms should be roughly horizontal when resting them on your desk, creating an angle at your elbow joint somewhere between 90°-120° degrees. If the angle at the elbow is less than this, raise your seat until you get this angle. Once the chair seat is in the correct position, it may be necessary to use a footrest to maintain good posture.



2. To avoid pressure on the backs of your knees, you should make sure there is a space equivalent to the width of 3 or 4 fingers between the front edge of the seat and the back of your knees.

## Your Work Chair (continued)

3. Adjust the tilt of the seat, if necessary, to suit the work being carried out.
4. Adjust the backrest tilt to an angle between 90° and 120° degrees, ensuring the selected angle adequately supports your back.
5. Adjust the height of the backrest to assure firm support of your lower back.
6. If your chair has arms, adjust them so that the armrests fully support your arms and relieve pressure from your neck and shoulders.



7. You may need to ask a colleague to make minute adjustments if you are experiencing any discomfort.
8. If you have been away from your workstation for any length of time take a few minutes to work through the above steps to check that your chair is still adjusted to meet your particular needs.



# Display Screen

The correct set-up of your display screen is important in order to maintain good posture and thereby minimise the risk of muscular skeletal disorders associated with DSE use.



**The following steps should help you achieve this:**

1. Your screen should be a little more than arm's length away from you.
2. Your screen should be positioned directly in front of you, not to the right or left.
3. Your screen should be positioned at a height so that the top of the screen is at the same level or slightly below the level of your eyes when you are sitting correctly in your chair.
4. Your screen should be vertical, to minimise reflection from overhead lighting.
5. Ideally, to minimise reflection and glare from sunlight, your screen should not face a window, and adjustable window coverings should be provided.
6. The characters on your screen should be easy to read (adjust the font size, background colour etc., if necessary for personal preference).
7. The screen should be free from flicker and jitter.
8. Your screen should be kept clean.

## Work Surface/Desk

1. Your work surface should be large enough to accommodate all the equipment, papers etc. that are necessary for your work.



2. Your work surface should have a matt finish to prevent glare and reflection.
3. Keep your work surface free of unnecessary clutter such as little-used files and other objects etc.
4. Arrange your equipment, papers etc., so that items in frequent use are within easy reach.
5. If you use a document holder, make sure it is positioned to minimise uncomfortable head and eye movements.

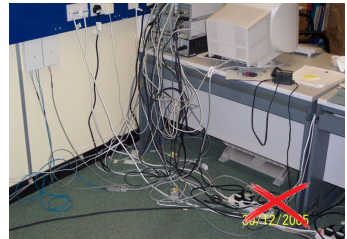


# Environment



**You are responsible for informing your manager of any problems with your work environment, that you are unable to resolve yourself.**

1. There should be no obstructions under or around your workstation.
2. There should be enough space around your workstation to allow you to change position and vary movement. It is important you have enough room to move, stretch and fidget.
3. Cables should be tidy and not a trip or snag hazard.
4. Lighting should be suitable, not too bright or too dim, for you to work comfortably. If necessary, use a desk lamp and/or adjust window blinds etc.
5. The air should be comfortable. DSE and other equipment may dry the air so circulate fresh air if possible. Also, having plants in the room may help.



# Keyboard

**The following steps will help promote good posture when using a keyboard:**

1. Your keyboard should be separate from the screen.
2. It should tilt for comfortable use.
3. The characters on your keyboard should be easy to read.
4. Your keyboard should have a matt finish to reduce glare and/or reflection.
5. Your keyboard should be kept clean.



**When using your keyboard:**

- a. it should be positioned comfortably close to the front edge of your desk;
- b. do not stretch forward to key in;
- c. sit with your back supported by the backrest of your chair;
- d. keep your shoulders relaxed;
- e. your arms should be close to your body;
- f. try not to bend your wrists up, but keep your hands in line with your forearms to prevent strains;
- g. use a wrist rest, if necessary, to rest your hands when not keying;
- h. try not to hit the keys too hard; and
- i. don't overstretch your fingers.

## Mouse/Pointer/Trackball

The following steps will help promote good posture when using a mouse, pointer or trackball:

1. Make sure the device is suitable for the task in hand and comfortable to use.
2. The best position for using a mouse/pointer/trackball is right beside the keyboard. This prevents arm overreaching, and allows you to maintain good posture.
3. Ensure the device works smoothly at a speed that suits you and the work you are doing.
4. Check the work surface is suitable. You might need a mouse mat.



5. Clean the device periodically to ensure smooth operation.
6. Keep your arm relaxed and your wrist straight when using your device, and don't leave your hand on it when it is not being used.
7. When using your mouse/pointer/trackball, support your wrist and forearm, using the desk surface, chair arm or, if necessary, a separate supporting device.

## Portable Devices - Laptops, Tablets and Mobiles

Laptops, tablets and mobiles are great portable devices for use over short periods of time, and ideal for employees who routinely have to work at several different locations.

However, they are not intended for extended periods of typing or inputting information, and a correctly set up workstation is considered to be the best option.

Therefore, employees who habitually use portable devices should ensure that, when using their device for extended periods of typing, it is positioned suitably and the step-by-step instructions of this guidance document are followed.

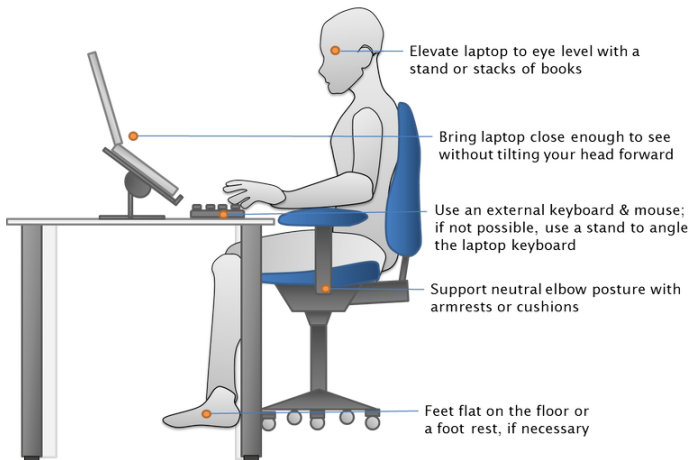
Docking stations are a way to avoid many of the ergonomic disadvantages of portable devices by allowing the use of a full-sized screen and/or other hardware including a keyboard or mouse.



In setting up any kind of docking station the aim is for the user to achieve a comfortable working position allowing some variation in posture and having sufficient space for documents and anything else needed for their work tasks.

# Laptops

- Find a posture in which you can keep your wrists straight (neutral, in line with your forearms), your shoulders relaxed and your back supported, and in which you feel comfortable;
- Align the laptop centrally with your body – don't twist to use it;
- Take frequent breaks from working on the laptop;
- Make sure the laptop is supported and stable and will not change position as you work;
- Adjust the laptop screen angle (and height if possible) to reduce stretching your neck and to minimise glare on the screen;



- Do not support the laptop on your lap, use a docking station;
- If possible, when using the laptop for long periods, attach an external full-size keyboard and an external mouse;
- Think before you use the laptop – try to cut down intensive usage because the more you use it, the more likely you are to develop problems.

## Tablets and Mobiles

Tablets and mobiles are modern conveniences that make our lives more mobile and allow us to work on the move.

Although as these devices can be used almost anywhere, we often find ourselves in ergonomically unfavourable conditions.

This is a quote from the Professor of Ergonomics and Safety at Harvard University:



A study undertaken within the University determined that tablet and mobile phones users, at work, experience much more profound head and neck angles than traditional desktop users.

The worst way to use your tablet at work is to place it on your lap. Tablets and mobiles are to assist us to be more mobile and remove the strain associated with traditional desktop computers but in order for that to work you must be aware of what consists of good and bad posture.



## Portable Devices - Tablets and Mobiles (continued)

- Avoid glare on the screen - you can do this by investing in an anti-glare protector or adjusting the display settings;
- Adjust the tablet settings to suit your vision. If you find yourself leaning forward to view the screen you can enlarge a webpage or text so it is easier to read;
- If you need to use the keypad for prolonged periods consider using a blue-tooth 'external keyboard', which provides a bigger keyboard to type on;
- When reading from (as opposed to interacting with) a portable device, use a stand or tilt the tablet so that the need to bend your head forward is minimised;



- Because the keypad and screen are in the same place when a portable device is used the user tends to angle their head down or raise their arms. In either case, holding the posture that has to be adopted for any extended period of time runs the risk of developing neck and upper limb conditions;
- When interacting regularly with the screen have the tablet flat or only slightly angled to ensure that your wrists are not in awkward positions; and
- Remember that movement is important. If you find yourself using the device for more than 10-20 minutes take a short break to stretch your hands, shoulders and neck. Relax your eyes by looking into the distance.

## Further Information

In the first instance if you have any issues, talk to your Line Manager to discuss if they can be resolved in-house. Further information can be found via:

### The Health and Safety Team

**Address:** Tŷ Elai, Williamstown, CF40 1NY

**Telephone:** (01443) 425531

**Email:** [healthandsafetyteam@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafetyteam@rctcbc.gov.uk)



### The RCT Source

The Source is the Council's web-based learning and development environment that contains Health and Safety information for Employees and Managers:  
[rct.learningpool.com](http://rct.learningpool.com) (log-in required)



### The Health and Safety Executive

**Working safely with display screen equipment (Link) -**  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/index.htm>

**Working with display screen equipment (PDF) -**  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf>

**Working with display screen equipment - Guidance on Regulations - Appendix 3 - Work with portable DSE -**  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l26.pdf>



### NHS Choices

**Guidance in relation to DSE related injuries (Link) -**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>





