Home Office Tips: Setting Up Your Workstation

Properly setting up your workspace and implementing ergonomic solutions makes you more comfortable, promotes your overall health, reduces musculoskeletal disorders, and optimizes your productivity and work flow. Keep in mind, one size does not fit all—set up your workspace so it is comfortable for you and suitable for your work situation. This one pager provides tips and considerations for setting up your workspace at home. For additional information, review the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Computer Workstations e-Tool, evaluation checklist, and purchasing guide checklist.

DESIGNATE A WORKSPACE

Everyone's situation is different—evaluate the spaces available in your home and choose a workspace suitable for you. You may already have a designated home office, or have space available in your kitchen, bedroom, living room, small closet, basement, or even an outdoor area you can use. The options are endless! Look for an area offering privacy so you can focus on work and hold uninterrupted conversations. Make sure you have access to internet connectivity and power for your computer and other devices. Dedicate your space to establish boundaries between work and your home life.

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DESK

Choose a desk large enough to accommodate your work activities. Adjustable desks are preferable since you can select an ideal working position for you. Many people use height-adjustable standing desks to avoid static work postures. If your desk is non-adjustable, consider the following:

- Purchase an add-on like a desktop standing desk converter, which elevates the work surface on top of your stationary desk.

- Place sturdy boards or blocks under the legs to give you necessary clearance if your desk is low; just make sure the desk is stable.

- Raise your chair and consider the use of a footrest, small stool, or a stack of sturdy books for your feet if your desk is too high.

In any case, make sure your desk leaves enough clearance for your knees, thighs, and feet when in a proper sitting position. Using a foam mat if you stand while working on hard surfaced floors can help reduce fatigue.

CHAIR

Your chair should be comfortable and equipped with five (5) casters for stability, armrests, a supportive seat cushion, and lumbar support. The ideal chair has swivel and roll functions, along with a height-adjustable backrest and height-adjustable seat. Adjust your chair so your knees are level with your hips and your feet are flat on the floor when seated.

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MONITOR

Check the height and placement of your monitor. Ensure the top of the monitor is slightly below your eye level to reduce neck strain and to avoid glare. Place your monitor about an arm's length away to lessen eye strain. When you use dual monitors, which is suggested for optimal workflow, check the placement and viewing of both screens. You may need to readjust your monitor(s) when using an adjustable standing desk to achieve the proper monitor height in each working position. When using a laptop, consider connecting your laptop to an external monitor and adjusting the monitor accordingly.

LIGHTING

Assess the lighting sources in and around your workspace. Your lights are too bright if your screen appears washed out and is difficult to read or see. If so, consider turning off or removing any fluorescent bulbs directly above your work area. Consider the use of glare guards and the installation of window treatments to reduce glare on your monitor, too. If all else fails, consider moving your computer or your workspace to a location with better lighting.

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The addition of task lighting and/or bias lighting can also improve your workspace. Task lighting illuminates a specific work area. Use an adjustable task light, placed to the side of your monitor, to adjust the light you need and want. Consider using bias lighting on the back of your monitor to reduce eye strain, especially in darker areas or rooms. Bias lighting sits behind a computer screen and lights up the wall and surrounding work area, providing contrast to your screen.

KEYBOARD

Set your keyboard directly in front of your monitor, centered with your body, so the "B" button is in line with your belly button. The keyboard is typically set next to the mouse to avoid strains or uncomfortable stretches. Consider purchasing an ergonomic-style keyboard, or using a Bluetooth-enabled keyboard to ensure proper placement. You can also use an adjustable or articulated keyboard tray to alleviate wrist strains.

MOUSE

Your mouse is best situated directly to the side to your keyboard. Consider purchasing an ergonomic-style mouse to promote a neutral wrist and arm position. Think about using a separate wireless mouse to avoid strains to your fingers if you use a laptop rather than using the trackball or touchpad. Adjust the sensitivity of your mouse so you can use a light touch to operate it, if possible.

TELEPHONE

Place your phone in a location comfortable for you to reach. Put calls on speaker phone or use a headset to avoid head and neck strains.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: https://www.smscx.org/.

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