

Computer Ergonomics

If you work in front of a computer for long periods of time, you are at risk for painful musculoskeletal disorders or injuries from overuse of muscles, repetitive motions, and/or awkward postures. Following ergonomic guidelines¹ can reduce your risk.

Maintain a neutral body position.



Upright seating

The user's torso and neck are approximately vertical and in-line, the thighs are approximately horizontal, and the lower legs are vertical.



Standing

The user's legs, torso, neck, and head are approximately in-line and vertical.



Declined Seating

The user's thighs are inclined with the buttocks higher than the knee, and the angle between the thighs and the torso is greater than 90 degrees. The torso is vertical or slightly reclined and the legs are vertical.



Reclined Seating

The user's torso and neck are straight and recline between 105 and 120 degrees from the thighs.

Adjust the position of the computer monitor and other accessories if needed.

- ▶ The monitor should be directly in front of you, 20-40 inches away, with the top of the monitor's screen at or below eye level.
- ▶ The keyboard should be directly in front of you but not too close or far away. Your shoulders should be relaxed, elbows close to the body, and wrists straight and in-line with your forearms.
- ▶ Wrist/palm support may be used to facilitate neutral wrist angles and reduce contact stress from the table's edge.
- ▶ The mouse or pointer should be close to the keyboard, and on the same level.
- ▶ Document holders should be the same level and distance as the monitor.

Please contact your shop technician or Katherine Perkins (perkinsk@newschool.edu), Environmental Health & Safety Office of Facilities Management, if you have any questions about the information on this sheet.

For more information on any health issue, contact Wellness and Health Promotion, Student Health Services, wellness@newschool.edu or 212.229.1671, option 4.

Safety Tips were made possible by The New School Occupational Safety Work Group.

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- ▶ The desk should allow for a neutral body position, placement of the monitor directly in front of you, and should be free of clutter underneath to allow for adequate leg room. A foot rest or height-adjustable chair is recommended if your feet cannot rest flat on the floor.
- ▶ The chair should offer good lower back support and help maintain the natural S-curve of the spine. The seat should be the right size with adequate cushioning and no sharp edges.

Avoid cradling the telephone between your head and shoulders.

If working for extended periods, take a break to stretch your fingers, hands, arms, and torso. Stand up and walk around for a few minutes.

Evaluate the work environment for factors that can affect your comfort.

- ▶ Bright lighting from overhead lights, desk lamps, or windows can cause glare and contrast problems. To avoid eye fatigue and headaches, reduce bright light sources behind the monitor (e.g., a window) by using curtains or blinds, orienting the monitor at right angles (90 degrees) from the light source, or using a glare screen on your monitor.
- ▶ Improper ventilation can lead to discomfort from stagnant air or room temperature that is too hot or too cold.

¹Occupational Safety & Health Administration, www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/index.html

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