

Setting up Your Laptop in Your Home Office

Source: Keenan & Associates

As we move into the world of working remotely or telecommuting, ergonomics becomes an important risk management tool to ensure staff is safe when working from home or other remote locations. Many times, that requires the use of a laptop which can place users in awkward postures. There are several aspects to look at when setting up your workstation to accommodate a laptop. It is the responsibility of the employee and employer to maintain a safe and productive work environment, so we have provided information on how to make you safe and comfortable on the job.

EQUIPMENT

Chair

- Use a chair with back support and adjust the chair to fit you so that your back is supported.
- Don't sit on a stool, couch, or exercise ball.

Monitor

- Set the laptop so the monitor is at, or slightly below, eye level.
- Keep your neck straight instead of leaning forward or turning your head.
- Place your laptop so the monitor is about an arm's reach away.
- Use a docking station, if possible.
- Look 20 feet away, every 20 minutes, for 20 seconds, to reduce eye strain.

Keyboard and Mouse

- Use an external keyboard and mouse, if available, and place them close to your body to reduce reaching.
- Make sure your arms are close to your body with elbows near your sides at a 90-degree angle.
- Keep your wrists straight (in a neutral position) and do not rest your wrists on the keyboard or hard surface.
- Use a soft gel wrist rest.

Work Surface

- Place the laptop on a hard, flat surface such as a table or desk.
- Do not use the laptop on your lap.
- Organize your worksurface by removing clutter on top of and underneath the desk and ensuring you have access to supplies.
- Ensure you have good lighting and minimize glare on your monitor screen.
- Adjust your workstation if you feel discomfort by raising your chair/seat or lowering your work surface.
- Keep your thighs parallel to the floor and feet flat on the floor.

TIPS FOR ADJUSTING YOUR WORKSTATION

- If you are looking down at your laptop screen, you can raise your laptop monitor with a laptop/monitor stand or even a stack of books or reams of paper will do.
- If you feel you are straining to view the monitor, increase the zoom settings on the display.
- If you need to raise your chair and it is not adjustable, add a chair cushion on the seat for height and more comfort, if needed.
- You can use a box or step tool as a footrest to support your feet and legs when they are not flat on the floor.
- Use a speakerphone or a headset instead of holding the phone or putting it between your shoulder and ear.
- Use the “talk to text” when sending a text message by phone. Be sure you review before sending so “auto-correct” doesn’t change your message.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN TELECOMMUTING

Movement

- Limit the length of time you sit to no more than 2 hours at a time.
- Stand when you can and get up for breaks, phone calls, or other non-computer tasks.
- Changing positions, doing mild stretches, and walking will rejuvenate and provide more comfort.

Productivity

- Keeping your routine is very important and this includes getting up at the same time and getting dressed for work.
- Ensure that you take your breaks and schedule time for a lunch.
- Use Zoom or WebEx to keep in contact and engaged with co-workers and feel more connected.

Environment

- Use overhead lighting and reduce glare by positioning the laptop screen away from other light sources.
- Improve air flow by increasing ventilation with a fan or by keeping doors and windows open.
- If you are experiencing a lot of house noise, try another location, or manage it by playing some music in the background.