



## Ergonomic Tips for Employees - Setting up a Home Workspace



Employees who telework will benefit from taking some time to adjust their home workstation. Please note that purchases made to set up a home telework area are not reimbursed by most departments.

The recommended sequence for adjusting your home workstation is:

1. Adjust your chair so your feet are fully resting on the floor.
2. Sit in a relaxed manner with your hands in your lap and your elbows at your side.
3. Adjust the height of the keyboard so your elbows and shoulders will remain in this relaxed position when you are typing. A keyboard tray may be needed.
4. Position the keyboard and monitor so you are looking straight ahead.

### Desk

- ☐ Use a desk or table surface and do not work from a couch or bed.
- ☐ Choose a desk that has a height low enough so you can sit with both feet fully on the floor at all times.

### Chair

- ☐ Use a padded chair that is adjusted in height, so your entire foot surface touches the floor.
- ☐ These tips will help if you are not able to sit in a chair before buying:
  - Standard chairs usually adjust 18" to 22" high and have a seat cushion 18-19" deep.
  - Shorter persons may prefer a seat height 15"-17" so their feet can touch the ground.
  - Taller persons may prefer a seat more than 22" high, with a cushion 23" deep so that their entire thigh is supported.
- ☐ A padded "office chair" is better than a padded kitchen chair because the kitchen chair often has a wood frame that can compress blood flow in the thighs.
- ☐ Locate the chair so your legs are under the desk surface. Your knees should be under the keyboard or laptop.
- ☐ Sit up straight so your shoulders are above your hips – avoid leaning over such that your shoulders are above your knees. Slightly leaning back is better than leaning forward.
- ☐ Shorter persons often find that the desk surface is too high when they sit in a chair with their feet fully on the floor. A footrest is your last choice. First see if a lower desk can be obtained, or if a keyboard tray can be installed under the desk.

## Keyboard and Mouse

- ☐ Sit in a relaxed manner with your hands in your lap and elbows next to your torso. Put the keyboard at a height where your elbows remain relaxed at your torso, and your hands are still close to your abdomen. This keeps your shoulders relaxed. Shorter persons may be more comfortable with a keyboard tray.
- ☐ Use an external mouse instead of the built-in mousepad on your laptop. This gives you a larger range of motion.
- ☐ Keep the mouse on the same level as the keyboard. This prevents one shoulder from being held up higher than the other. Keep shoulders relaxed.
- ☐ Avoid resting your wrist or forearm on the edge of a table.

## Monitor

- ☐ Use the laptop's monitor screen if you are comfortable. If the height is too low and you feel hunched over, then place the laptop on a higher surface and connect an external keyboard so you are still typing with your elbows close to your torso and forearms parallel to the floor.
- ☐ Sit directly in front of the monitor so that you are looking straight ahead. Avoid turning your head to the side.

**Reimbursement:** Purchases made to set up a home telework area are not reimbursed by most employers. Contact your supervisor to see if borrowing a surplus chair from the office is an option.

## Desk Examples

A standard desk height is between 28.5 to 30 inches. Kitchen tables are typically 31 inches high. Shorter persons may be more comfortable with a desk or keyboard tray 25-27 inches high.



Height adjusts from 22 to 32 inches



Height from floor 29.5 inches



Height 28 inches

## Resources

DLS bulletin "Office Ergonomics: Tips for Employees" [mass.gov/doc/office-ergonomics-tips-for-employees](https://mass.gov/doc/office-ergonomics-tips-for-employees)

Watch this video for tips on adjusting their home workspace: [Ergonomics Expert Explains How to Set Up Your Desk | WSJ - YouTube youtube.com/watch?v=F8\\_ME4VwTiw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8_ME4VwTiw)

Use the OSHA e-tool [osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/positions.html](https://osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/positions.html)

For additional resources or to contact DLS, visit: [mass.gov/info-details/safetyworks-resources](https://mass.gov/info-details/safetyworks-resources)