

Ergonomics

Although many institutions insist the first step in any job is planning, there is one step that should be taken seriously even prior to that - get comfortable. Ergonomics is a way of figuring out a more comfortable way to do your job, whether you're a desk jockey, a grocery store clerk, a truck driver, or a mechanic. Although many scoff at the importance of comfort, without it your job can be cumbersome, tiring, and even unhealthy. Every day employees worldwide complain of aches and pains that prevent them from being efficient and/or comfortable in the workplace because of poor, or complete lack of, regard to ergonomics. Below are some important notes concerning ergonomics that, if applied daily, can help to make your computing experience more comfortable and reduce the risk of long term effects of your health.

The neutral posture: "Neutral posture" refers to the resting position of each joint, i.e., the position in which there is the least amount of tension or pressure on nerves, tendons, muscles, and bones. It's also the position in which muscles are at their resting length, neither contracted nor stretched. Some examples of your body in the neutral posture:

- Your fingers are gently curved, in their natural resting position. They're not spread apart, and they're neither fully straightened out nor tightly curled.
- Your wrist is in line with your forearm. It's neither bent up nor bent down, and it's definitely not bent towards the thumb or towards the little finger.
- The shoulders are in a resting position when they are neither pulled forward, back, or down, nor elevated.
- Your head is balanced on your spinal column. It's not tilted forward, back or to either side, and it's not rotated to the left or right.

Comfort while at your computer:

- **Adjust your chair:** You want to make sure your thighs are parallel to the floor with your knees bent at about 90 degrees or so. Your feet should be supported by the floor or a footrest. Since your body weight rests on your spine, your backrest should be positioned to support your lower back while you're keying and mousing.
- **Adjust your workstation:** Your work surface should be approximately one inch below your extended fingers when your elbows are at right angles to your; your keyboard and pointing device are within reach when your elbows are at right angles to your sides; and materials and/or devices that you use frequently are within easy reach.
- **Adjust your monitor and lighting:** The top third of the viewable screen should be in line with your eyes when your neck, shoulders, and back are in neutral position, or a bit lower if you wear graduated lenses. You should also be able to read text and graphics easily at a distance of 16-28 inches.

Comfort away from your computer:

- **Get up:** Take a walk outside, through the halls, or even in circles around your office or cubicle; just get up and move once in a while. Every couple of hours, think of your computer screen as Medusa: looking at it will turn you to stone if you don't take a break and look away.
- **Stretch:** When you're exercising, you know how important it is to stretch before and after your workout. When you're at your desk, it's just as important, and you should stretch often, not just at 8 and at 5. Stretch your neck, your hand, wrist, and fingers; your arms, shoulders, and upper back.

About Desktop Resources, Inc.

Desktop Resources, Inc. was founded in 1995 by Tony Schafer, and is a leader in helping organizations couple their business initiatives with the technology to address those needs. DRI's "InformIT" managed services offerings proactively manage client infrastructure and strive to prevent problems before they occur. For more details, contact DRI at (317) 596-3650 or <http://www.DesktopResources.com>