



Working with your computer

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Working with a computer is like working with many other types of special equipment. You and your body have to get used to working in a way that is initially quite different from the way you worked previously. Working with a computer requires:

- concentration
- close visual working with the screen
- frequent eye movements between screen and work papers
- sitting still for long periods
- typing for long periods and stress of hands, wrists and fingers

This leaflet is to help you alleviate all of these possible causes of discomfort and stress. Follow the instructions contained in this leaflet and you'll always be working comfortably.

Positioning yourself and the computer

Always make sure you're comfortable when you work at the computer. It's important that your seating position is correct in relation to the computer screen and keyboard.

Sitting properly

If possible, use an adjustable chair that gives support to the lower back. You should adjust the chair so that you are sitting with a straight back, with your upper legs horizontal and with your feet flat on the floor.

Adjust the backrest height so that your buttocks fit into the space between the backrest and the seat. The backrest should support you in the hollow of the back; adjust its tilt to give firm support in this area.

Your shoulder and upper arm should make a right-angle with your forearm and your hands.

If you find that you need to raise your chair to get the correct posture you can use a footrest to make up the gap between your feet and the floor. You may also be able to lower the desk height.

Give yourself room

Give yourself enough room to use the computer, keyboard and mouse comfortably. Place your work items where you can view them easily but not where they interfere with the keyboard or mouse. You might want to use a document stand to hold your papers.

Arranging the computer monitor

Your monitor should be positioned so that the top of the screen is at eye level when you are sitting at the keyboard. Don't allow your head to hunch forward; keep your neck relaxed. You should view the screen from

a distance of about 50 to 70 centimetres.

Reduce reflections

Arrange the monitor position; the monitor 'tilts' and 'swivels' on its base, so that any glare and reflection from lights and windows can be minimised. You might want to move the light sources about the room until you find the positions that give least glare. You may also find that partially closing the window curtains helps.

Cleaning your screen regularly also helps reduce reflections.

You might also find that adjusting the Brightness and Contrast controls on the monitor help; read the documentation that comes with your monitor for more information.

Eyestrain

When you use a computer, your eyes are continually focused on the monitor for a long time. This makes the eye muscles work hard so it is important to have frequent short breaks to look at distant objects from time to time to give your eye muscles a change and a rest.

If you wear contact lenses, they may feel dry; this is because you tend to blink less often when staring at the screen. Counteract this by blinking often.

If you suffer from eyestrain you may want to have an eyesight test; some people who don't normally wear glasses may need them for computer work.

Arranging the keyboard and mouse

If you are not a touch typist you may find it easier if you position your keyboard in from the edge of the desk so that you can rest your forearms on the desktop. You might also try a keyboard wrist mat; this allows you to rest your wrists at the same level as the keyboard while you type.

Always try to use a light touch when typing; the keyboard keys respond to a very light pressure. A light touch will also help you keep your hands and wrists relaxed which will in turn reduce tension and fatigue.

Put the mouse where you can easily reach it; normally just to the side of the keyboard. Give the mouse plenty of space so

that you can make unimpeded mouse movements easily. Make sure that you use it on a surface on which it rolls easily; if your desk is very smooth you may find that using a mouse mat alleviates the problem of the mouse slipping.

Take a break

After you've been working for a period it's important that you take a break. This gives your body the chance to relieve any muscular tensions that may have built up. Stand up and move about or have a short walk. Frequent short breaks help reduce tiredness and stress.

If you have any problems

If you develop any discomfort or pain in your hands, wrists, arms or back, you should always consult your doctor.

