

Computer Workstations: Fit the Setup to the Person

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Why this matters

A shared desk or temporary laptop station may fit yesterday's user better than today's. Small reaches, bent wrists and a fixed posture can accumulate through a long workday.

Objective: Adjust the actual workstation and confirm comfortable movement before sustained computer work.

Key hazards or failure points

Extended reaches; awkward neck or wrist position; unsupported feet; glare; prolonged static work.

Practical controls

- Adjust the chair, input devices and display together for the user. Keep frequently used items nearby and provide suitable support.
- For regular laptop work, arrange separate input devices and suitable display positioning. Resolve a setup that forces a choice between viewing and typing comfort.
- Arrange task variation and opportunities to change position. Report discomfort early and obtain individual assistance when ordinary adjustments are insufficient.

Verify It in the Field

Ask the user to demonstrate routine typing, pointing and reading briefly. Observe whether the setup requires reaching, twisting or leaning.

Confirm feet and back are supported, wrists stay comfortably aligned and screen text is readable without strained posture. Check actual glare conditions.

Have the user operate adjustments safely and describe when they can vary the task. Record unresolved fit problems and who will address them.

Stop and reassess

Pause the affected activity for pain, tingling, increasing discomfort or a defective adjustment. Seek appropriate assessment; do not force a posture or continue a painful demonstration.

Ask the crew

1. Which routine action causes a reach?
2. Can you read without leaning?
3. What lets you change position today?

Use this HOP tool — Job-site review: Before a sustained session, review the workstation with its actual user. Name one difference between the intended setup and the task demonstrated. Agree one adjustment, repeat the same brief task comfortably and record whether the change helped or needs further support.

Sources: Computer Workstations: Good Working Positions; Computer Workstations: Evaluation Checklist. HOP concepts adapted from DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to original U.S. Government work; no government endorsement implied.

Free next step: JHA/JSA planning and field-verification worksheet

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/computer-workstation-ergonomics