



GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING COMPUTER WORKSTATION FURNITURE

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The proper computer workstation furniture and accessories are important to enable employees to work comfortably and productively at their computer workstations. The focus is on adjusting the furniture to provide the most neutral, least physically stressful position to minimize physical strain, fatigue and injury. The following items are intended to provide guidance in equipment selection that can minimize the risk of musculoskeletal injuries from working at the computer.

1. *Chair* – Not all chairs advertised as “ergonomic” have all the necessary features. Chairs should provide for lumbar (lower back) support and have adjustments for height, backrest height and backrest angle. Better still are chairs that have armrest and seat depth adjustments. All adjustment controls should be easy to reach and use while seated. Paddle-style adjustment levers are easier to use than knobs that must be twisted or turned. The base should have five legs, with casters appropriate for the type of flooring the chair will roll on.
2. *Desktop* – The desktop should be sturdy, with a non-reflective surface. The keyboard tray should be mounted on the underside. Careful consideration must be given to corner workstations to avoid problems that restrict full use of keyboard and mouse tray features. A corner diagonal sleeve can be helpful in this case.
3. *Keyboard tray* – The keyboard tray should be adjustable for both positive and negative (front edge of keyboard is higher than back edge) tilt, have minimal hardware on the underside that can restrict leg movement and snag clothing, and be engineered to minimize the need for twisting of levers or handles to make adjustments. A wrist rest should be a standard feature. The tray should not bounce or wobble while typing.
4. *Mouse tray* – The mouse tray should be adjustable for use on the left or right side of the keyboard tray and should be able to be positioned close to the keyboard or over the number key pad.
5. *Footrest* – A footrest is needed if the employee’s feet do not rest comfortably on the floor when the employee is sitting correctly and comfortably in front of the monitor and keyboard. At standing workstations, a footrest is useful to relieve back stress.
6. *Document holder* – Some document holders attach to either side of the monitor to display documents. Inline copy holders sit between the monitor and keyboard and display copy just below the monitor. They are effective in displaying documents at a comfortable angle for the user.

7. *Monitor arm* – Monitor arms may be used instead of the original stands on flat panel or CRT monitors. They are useful where frequent adjustment of monitor height, distance and tilt is necessary, such as at a workstation shared by several people, or where usable work space under the monitor is critical.
8. *Telephone headset* – A telephone headset is a useful option where employees answer calls frequently or spend time in long discussions or interviews on the telephone.
9. *Task light* – A task light is used to illuminate work documents where ambient light is too low to comfortably see the text.

Additional information on computer workstation furniture is available at the following references:

CUErgo, Cornell University Ergonomics Web, <http://ergo.human.cornell.edu/default.htm>

Easy Ergonomics for Desktop Computer Users, Cal/OSHA Consultation Service, <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/PubOrder.asp>

Working Safely with Computers, a publication of The Joint Labor Management Committee on Office Ergonomics of the County of Los Angeles and SEIU Local 660