



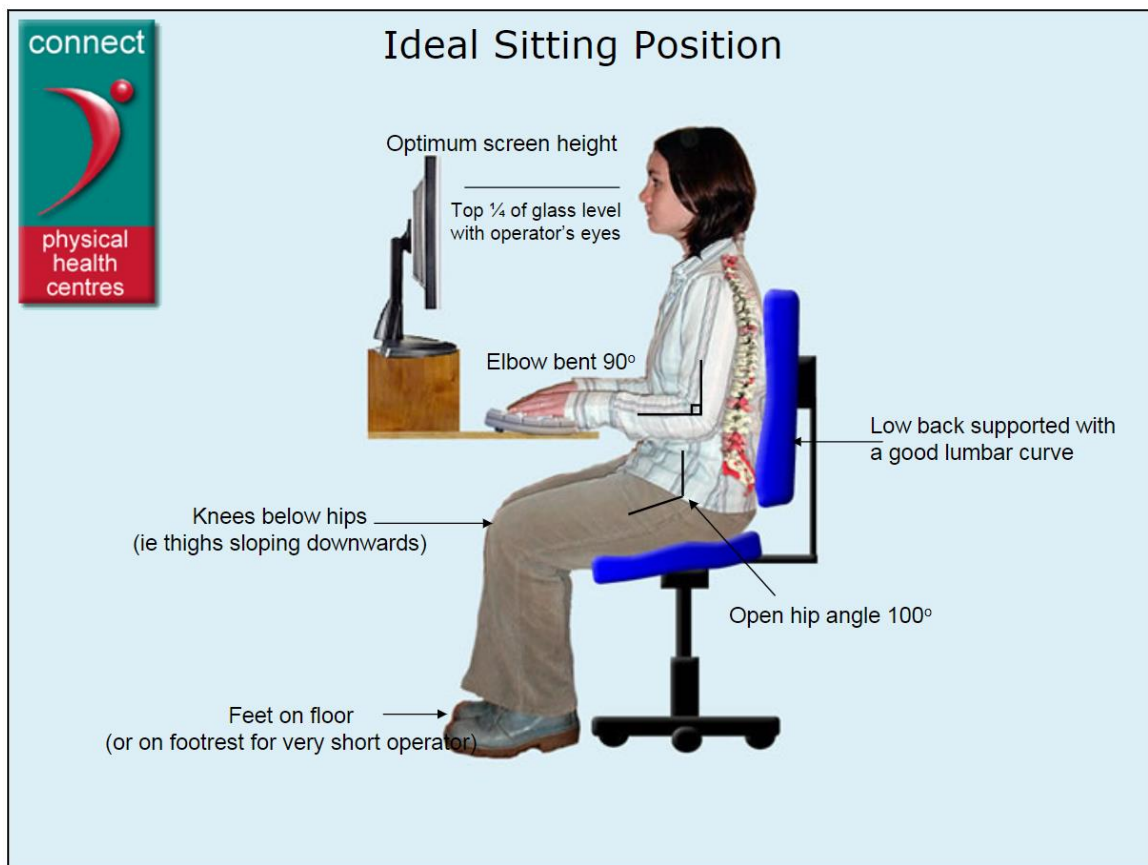
## Setting up a home workstation

### Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic many of us have been asked to work at home. Not all of us have the luxury of a home office to do this in. This document will help you to achieve the best possible workstation set up to reduce the risk musculoskeletal health problems during this time. Please follow the guidance set out below and improvise with everyday house hold items to achieve best practice when the correct equipment is not available in the home setting.

### I will be working from a home office

If you do have a home office with a desk, chair and personal computer please try and follow the [University DSE checklist](#) as far as you possibly can to achieve the ideal sitting position (see image below). If you can't achieve this you could try implementing some of the measures suggested in the rest of this document where relevant.



### I will be working from a kitchen/dining table with a laptop/tablet

If this is the case then you have to try and achieve the best posture you can. Always use a table and chair, do not sit on the sofa or bed as this will cause poor posture and over a prolonged period this can cause significant problems in your neck and shoulders.

Have a look at the ideal sitting position image above. Try and mimic this as far as you can.

### Chair

Try and keep your knees below your hips and an open 100 degree hip angle (see image above). As it is unlikely that you will have an adjustable chair you can try to get into an ideal sitting position using a cushion or pillow (folded in half) to sit on and a rolled up towel against your lower back for lumbar support. These measures will help to take the strain and load off your spine but only use them if they feel comfortable. Make sure that your feet are planted on the floor. If you can't do this use anything available (a biscuit tin, box, or similar) as a footrest.



### Screen height

If you have a laptop or tablet stand, use this to raise your screen. If you do not have one of these, raise your laptop/tablet up using books, tins etc. as best you can. You may not achieve the ideal position but aim to raise your laptop/tablet by a minimum of 15 cm. Your eyes should naturally hit the top third of your screen when you are looking straight ahead. Even a small height adjustment should help. The goal is to avoid dropping your head as much as possible to try and avoid neck and shoulder strain.

You could also use a separate screen to attach to your laptop if you have one available to raise your gaze.



### Mouse and Keyboard

If you are raising up your laptop/tablet you may require an external keyboard and mouse, check with your department if purchasing these items would be acceptable if you were not able to take these home with you already. Make sure that you have enough USB ports to connect these. Your elbows should be at a 90 degree angle, tucked closely to your body, and your wrists should be in a neutral position. This posture helps keep you from rounding your shoulders and pulling your neck muscles. If you can't attach an external mouse and keyboard, leave your laptop in place on the table rather than raising it up but **you must take more breaks**. Try and move every 15 minutes (more on taking breaks and exercises below).



### Screen Glare

If you can, try not to put your laptop/tablet directly underneath a bright artificial light or next to a window with no blinds. Try and use natural light as much as possible.



### Taking Breaks and Exercise

**Regardless of your set up, the best way to look after your musculoskeletal health is to take regular breaks and to move around as much as possible.** The more 'makeshift' your set-up, the more important it is for you to move. If you have a good home office set-up, take a break for 5-10 minutes every hour. For other set-ups take a break every 15-20 minutes.

Here are some tips to help you to move more:

- Stand up every time you use the phone
- Try and do more activities away from the screen e.g. reading paperwork

Here are some workstation exercises you can do in your microbreaks.

<https://www.posturite.co.uk/help-advice/useful-resources/learning-guides/workstation-exercises>