

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Ergonomic Self-Evaluation Form

Name: _____

Date: _____

To use this self-evaluation form, print the page and answer the following questions. Under each category you will find information on the correct ergonomic adjustment. If after completing the self-evaluation you are experiencing discomfort, please contact Jennifer Wicks at 276-6427.

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the chair height adjustable? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the chair back adjustable up and down? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the chair back contoured to support the lower back? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there room between the front edge of the seat pan and the back of your knees? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do the chair arms interfere with you getting close to the work surface? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do the chair arms allow you to sit with your shoulders relaxed? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does your feet rest flat on the floor or are they supported by a footrest? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are your knees bent forming approximately a 90 degree or greater angle? |

Chair Adjustment

To be seated properly in your chair your feet must rest flat on the floor. You should use a foot rest if your chair does not adjust low enough or if your work surface is too high. The key is to not only have your feet flat on the floor (or supported by a foot rest) but also to have your thighs parallel with the seat pan so your legs form approximately a 90 degree (or greater) angle at the knee.

If your chair has an adjustable back up and down with an outward contouring in the lower back of the chair (the lumbar support), adjust the back of your chair so the lumbar support fits in the small of your back. If the chair back is adjustable forward and backward, adjust the angle to what is comfortable for you. The angle you prefer is rather subjective; you should adjust the back angle of your chair so your trunk and upper legs form an angle somewhere between 94-115 degrees.

If your chair has arms they should not interfere with you getting close to your work. In addition, when you assume the typing position with your arms resting comfortably at your side, the chair arms should be at a height where they just barely contact your elbows. The chair arms should not noticeably elevate your shoulders or force you to wing your arms out to use them.

Work Surface/Keyboard/Pointing Device Adjustment

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the work surface at approximately your elbow level? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are your shoulders relaxed, not elevated when working at your work surface? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there approximately a 90 degree angle between your forearms and upper arms? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are your forearms in line and not bent upwards, downwards, or side-to-side? |

Name: _____

Work Surface/Keyboard/Pointing Device Adjustment

For the proper work surface/keyboard height do the following: if your work surface is adjustable, first adjust your chair as mentioned in the chair adjustment section above, then with your arms resting comfortably at your side, raise your forearms to form a 90 degree angle with your upper arms. Adjust your work surface so the home row of your keyboard is at approximately elbow level. If your work surface is too high and not adjustable, adjust your chair to bring your elbows to the home row level of the keyboard. If you raise your chair make sure your feet are properly supported.

Monitor Adjustment

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the viewing distance to monitor somewhere between 18-24 inches? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the top of the computer screen at or just below your eye level? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the computer monitor free of glare or reflections? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the monitor in line with you and the keyboard? |

Monitor Adjustment

Once you have your chair to work surface height adjusted, adjust your computer monitor so the top of the screen is at or just below eye level.

Workstation Accessory Arrangements

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the mouse, trackball, at the same level as the keyboard? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there enough room on the work surface for all the computer accessories? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are your most frequently accessed items (phone, manuals, etc.) easy to reach? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there an adjustable document holder to hold paper for computer inputting? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there a keyboard wrist rest? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there a mouse wrist rest? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do your arms rest on, or contact any sharp or square edges? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you use the telephone and computer at the same time? |

Workstation Accessory Arrangements

If you use an input device (mouse, trackball, digitizing tablet, etc.) make sure it is at the same level and at approximately the same distance as your keyboard. Try to keep your pointing device as close to the centerline of your body as possible. Reaching for your input device or having it at a higher level than your keyboard can cause problems. Keyboard drawers or other type of keyboard support devices can increase the amount of desk space but can cause other problems. One problem with keyboard drawers and other types of keyboard supports is that they force you further away from your primary work surface, put your mouse at a higher level, and force you to reach to use your mouse and other accessories. Another problem with these type of devices is that they often interfere with the thigh clearance under your work surface.

Keep your most frequently accessed items close to you to minimize the amount of reaching you have to do. If you type and reference material from paper you should consider using a document

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holder or slant board. Place the document holder at the same distance and height as your computer monitor. The document holder will help in keeping your head over your spine and can prevent or relieve neck, shoulder, and back discomfort.

A padded wrist rest made out of firm foam will take some of the load off your neck, shoulder, and back muscles; keep your wrist in a straight and neutral position while typing; and keep your arms off the sharp edges of the work surface. Ideally the wrist rest should be made of a firm foam and constructed so the pad height matches the front (toe) height of your keyboard.

Talking on the phone with your neck bent to hold the receiver can cause neck, shoulder, and back discomfort. If you're on the phone a fair amount of time, a phone headset can prevent you from bending your neck and prevent or relieve the discomfort.

Work Habits

It is very important to take a break from working at your computer every 20-40 minutes. Repetitious static work (working at a computer) is very fatiguing on your upper extremities as well as your eyes. Your body needs periodic breaks to rest and recover. Taking a break does not mean you have to stop working, you could make a trip to the copier, talk to a colleague, make some phone calls, etc.

It is also very important to change positions periodically. Sitting in one position or leaning on your arms for an extended period of time can interfere with circulation. Moving around can help with circulation and prevent you from putting pressure on one location for an extended period of time.

It is often working overtime and the stress of deadline situations that force people to ignore and work through their pain and discomfort. It is very important that once you start to notice some pain or discomfort to be very careful. Pain that goes away over night is usually a sign of fatigue, pain that is continuous and does not go away over night is more serious and should be attended immediately. Once you detect any pain or discomfort while working see your doctor. It is much easier for them to treat you and for you to recover from a pain episode the earlier you are treated. Ignoring pain can lead to serious injury.

Finally, be careful with what you do outside of work. Repetitive stressful activities outside of work (home improvement projects, hobbies that require repetitive motion, etc.) can sometimes lead to repetitive motion injuries as well. When working on a new task you should treat it just like preparing for a race. Whenever you engage in a new task gradually build up your strength and endurance, don't just jump right in.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Wicks at 276-6427.