

Home Office Ergonomics: Your Prolonged Remote Work from Home Guide

This guide is developed by the OHS Division to help with the ergonomic setup of your home office.

LOCATION OF HOME OFFICE

Choose an adequately lit location in your home that provides acoustical and visual privacy, is uncluttered and free from distractions. The space should also be adequately ventilated and set to a comfortable temperature.

SET UP KEY FEATURES OF HOME OFFICE

Chair: Choose a chair that supports your spinal curves. Adjust the height of your chair so that your feet rest flat on the floor or on a footrest and your thighs are parallel to the floor. Adjust the armrests so that your arms gently rest on them with your shoulders relaxed. Adjust the back so that it is straight or in a very slightly reclined position, and fully supports your back and lumbar with no gaps. If you need lumbar support and don't have a lumbar pillow, use a rolled towel instead.

Desk: Ensure there is clearance for your knees, thighs and feet under your desk. Do not store items under your desk. If your desk is too low and not adjustable, place sturdy boards or blocks under its legs; if your desk is too high, raise your chair. Use a footrest to support your feet as needed, or use a small stool or stack of sturdy boards or books if you don't have a footrest.

Monitor: Place the monitor directly in front of you, about an arm's length away. The top of the screen should be at or slightly below eye level. Use a laptop stand or a book to maintain the monitor at the proper height. The monitor should be directly behind your keyboard. If you wear bifocals, lower the monitor an additional 1 to 2 inches for more comfortable viewing. Place your monitor so that the brightest light source is to the side. If you use dual monitors, set them to the same height side by side with no gaps in between, either in a symmetrical way, or with the main monitor slightly centred.

Keyboard and Mouse: Place your mouse within easy reach and on the same surface as your keyboard. While typing or using your mouse, keep your wrists straight, your upper arms close to your body, and your hands at or slightly below the level of your elbows. Use keyboard shortcuts to reduce extended mouse use. If possible, adjust the sensitivity of the mouse so you can use a light touch to operate it. Alternate the hand you use to operate the mouse by moving the mouse to the other side of your keyboard.



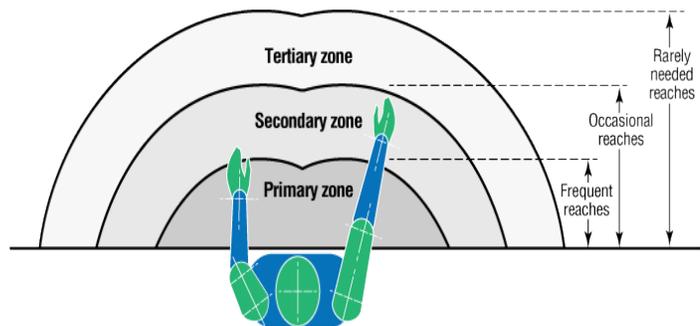
Working from a Laptop: Limit your time of continuous laptop usage by taking frequent breaks. If your laptop comes with a docking station, or if you have a regular sized keyboard and mouse, make sure you use them. Take advantage of the laptop's mobility by setting up an alternative work surface of suitable height, such as using an ironing board, and switch between sitting and standing.

Telephone: If you frequently talk on the phone and type or write at the same time, place your phone on speaker or use a headset. Do not cradle the phone between your head and neck.

Footrest: Use a footrest if your chair is too high for you to rest your feet flat on the floor, or the height of your desk requires you to raise the height of your chair. If a footrest is not available, use a small stool or a stack of sturdy boards or books instead. Do not work with your feet dangling.

Key Accessories: Keep frequently needed objects such as telephone, pen and paper, stapler or printed materials close to your body to minimize reaching. Stand up to reach anything that cannot be comfortably reached while sitting.

SPECIAL NOTES ON PROLONGED REMOTE WORK FROM HOME



More Frequent Breaks: Without the face-to-face conversations at the office, we can easily concentrate on longer tasks and forget the time, therefore increase exposure to ergonomic hazards. Under the new norm of remote work from home, it is extremely important to take more frequent regular breaks. Do not sit for long uninterrupted periods, set a 30-minutes timer alarm to act as a reminder. To avoid eye strain, focus on objects 20 feet away for 20 seconds every 20 minutes and periodically focus your eyes on distant objects.

Move and Stretch: Stand up, move around, and do some stretches. These will help in preventing strain or discomfort. Open the window to get some fresh air. Take a walk in your yard, or neighbourhood within the limit of your local public health order.

Change Positions Frequently: Start each workday with a plan such that tasks requiring different postures will alternate. Rotate your regular tasks to allow your body changing positions frequently. Doing office work for long periods does not have to match neck, back or wrist pain over time.

Proper office ergonomics, including correct chair height, adequate equipment spacing, good desk posture, and frequent breaks, can help you and your joints stay comfortable at work. Refer to the [Office Workstation Checklist](#) and ECC's telework location inspection checklist for more information as well as this online [Office Ergonomics training](#) offered by the Institute for Work and Health.

Any questions can be directed to your [OHS Advisor](#).