

UN Medical Services in New York Configuring your Computer Workstation in 8 Steps

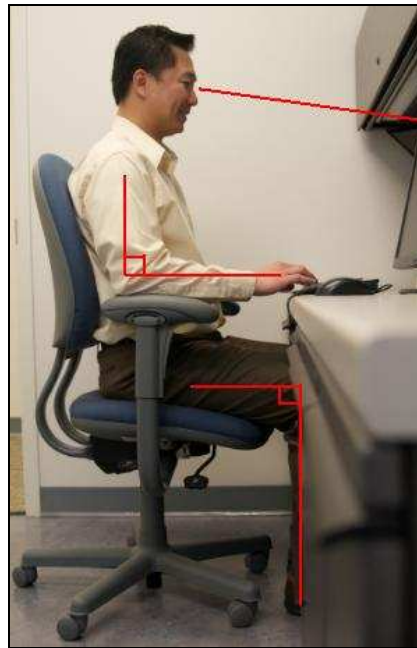
This page contains a practical description of the best way how to configure your computer workstation yourself. MSD will ask you to do this *before* we conduct a site visit. Please give 2 weeks for these changes to take effect. The vast majority of ergonomic issues can be resolved by these simple steps. If you still have concerns after following this guidance and making the necessary changes, then contact MSD by email (msdnurses@un.org) for further assistance.

Objective

Here are a few brief tips on how to sit better at your workspace.

- **Position 1** - While sitting in your task chair, please place your feet comfortably on the floor.
- **Position 2** - Your ankles, knees and hips should be at 90 degree angles and your thigh bone parallel with the floor.
- **Position 3** - Sit back in the chair and use the back of the chair to support your back. Try to rest your back bones on top of each other so you sit erect. Your shoulders are relaxed and arms are at your sides. Elbows are bent at 90 degrees. Hands and wrists are flat and straight in front of you.
- **Position 4** - Computer Screen is arms length in front of you, and not too close or too far.

See the picture below for an ideal workstation.



An important general recommendation is “variety”. Try to take regular micro breaks of 20 seconds in which you stretch your hands, wrist and fingers. Standing up and walk small distances is already enough to “reset” your body. Try not to skip regular break, pauses and lunches. Of course you should spend as few as possible of your normal breaks at your computer.

After using the positions as described above, you may want to review the next 8 steps to ensure your optimal position is achieved.

1: Seat Height

Correct posture is often most easily obtained by changing the seat height and levelling your chair to have your thigh bone parallel to the floor.

Stand in front of the chair, facing the chair, and adjust the height until the seat is just below your kneecaps. At this height, when you sit down, the angle between your lower legs and your thighs will be roughly 90°.

If you are shorter than 5'-2", you may require a foot rest which can be obtained from an office stationary supplier.



2: Seat Depth

Sit on your chair with your back against the backrest of the seat. The seat depth is correct if you can place a fist between the edge of the seat and the back of your knee. If there is too much space, your legs will be incorrectly supported and too little space can restrict the blood supply to your calves. Tilting the seat-pan a fraction downward helps give your body a slightly more open posture and relieves any pressure under the thigh.



3: Back Rest

The backrest or lumbar support must be adjusted to provide sufficient support of your lumbar region and your lumbar vertebrae. This is the part of your back that you can make hollow.

Use the following guideline: The point that supports your back (the curved part of the backrest) should be approximately 25 cm (10 inches) from the seat. The lumbar support is correctly positioned when you feel no pressure/support on your hips.



4: Arm Rests

All armrests are in height adjustable, some are also horizontal adjustable. Usage of armrest is helpful to support your arm-, shoulder- and neck muscles and to avoid resting your wrists and lower arms on the worktop surface.

If necessary, you can adjust the armrests yourself or ask a colleague to help. Sit up straight in the chair with your back against the backrest and place your hands flat on your stomach. Keep your shoulders straight and relaxed and your upper arms next to your body. The arm rest should now be positioned just under the elbow giving you light support. Make sure you position both arm rest on the same height. (note: most armrests have an height indicator by using numbers or stripes).



The United Nations offers the following 2 chairs within the current furniture purchasing programmes. Both are able to provide ergonomic comfort for you. If you have either the adjustable Criterion, or Aeron chair, please refer to the following links for their user guide to adjust your chair:

Criterion: <http://www.steelcase.com/en/products/category/seating/task/criterion/documents/printable%20user%20guide.pdf>

Aeron: pl. copy and paste;

http://www.hermanmiller.com/MarketFacingTech/hmc/products/Aeron_Chairs/ADJ_AER_Lever.pdf

Please note that if the Aeron chair is used, you should ensure that you have the correct size by checking this chart: https://www.hermanmiller.com/content/dam/hermanmiller/documents/product_literature/other/AP_SizeFitRef.pdf

5: The Work Surface

Most work surfaces are built at a height for 95% of the population. If your work surface is too high, you may require a foot rest and then raise your desk chair to find the right balance for your reach and eyeline. If you are taller than 6' -3" you may need to contact your Executive Office for assistance. Sometimes a keyboard can provide support.

6: Foot Support

Situations may arise in which you are perfectly adjusted for keyboard use, with the monitor at a correct angle, with your body in an ideal position (with thigh parallel with the floor), but your feet does not rest flat on the floor. In such circumstances, you could raise the chair, and you may wish to use a foot support.

A foot support should be adjusted in such a way that your knees make an angle of approximately 90°, or larger angle. The foot support should be considered as a replacement / platform for the floor, so try to adjust the foot support to be as flat as possible. A footrest should support the full feet. A feet relax bar is not a foot rest. If the angle between the foot support and the floor is too great, this will lead to unnecessary strain on your ankles and feet. (General tip: do not wear shoes with high heels)



7: The Workstation

The workstation has 2 components, the keyboard and the monitor. The **keyboard** must be placed directly in front of the monitor, on your table top or on a keyboard tray under your table top. The legs of the keyboard should not be used in order to prevent extra strain on your wrists. You should position the keyboard to be in line with the front of the tabletop. Avoid pushing the keyboard away from you and avoid supporting your wrists or lower arms on the tabletop. Keeping your keyboard close to you will force yourself to sit up straight.



The height of the **monitor** should be such that if you look straight ahead, when you are sitting in front of the monitor, you are looking at the top edge to middle of the monitor screen. If the monitor is too high your neck will be bent too far back while you work. This will lead to extra strain on your neck and shoulders.

Take lights into account when positioning your monitor. Try to place it in such a way that no light is reflected on your monitor. Place your monitor perpendicular to the window if direct sunlight interferes with your viewing abilities. The best viewing distance for a 15"-17" monitor is 50-70 centimetres (20-28 inches), about arms length.

If you use a document holder, ensure it is positioned directly in front of the monitor so that you do not have to make frequent movements of the head and neck to look from the monitor to a document. Those awkward postures can lead to muscle fatigue and discomfort of the head, neck, and shoulders.

8: Mouse

To prevent problems with your hands, wrists, shoulders and back, you should pay attention to a number of points when working with a mouse.

These points are:

- Hold the mouse close to your keyboard.

- Never use the mouse with a stretched arm.
- Hold your hand so that it is an extension of your lower arm (a neutral, horizontal relaxed position).
- Try to avoid straining the tendons above your wrist. Prevent the tabletop restricting the blood supply towards your wrists and fingers. This can't happen if you move the keyboard towards you up to the edge of the table top.
- Try to use the mouse left and right handed. Switch the Button functions in your Windows settings via Start/Control Panel/Printers and hardware/Mouse/Tab “Buttons”; then adjust the buttons to suit.



Office Exercises

For information on simple office exercises you can do, please refer to <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stretching/WL00030>