

# Healthy At Home - Keeping Your Homeworkers Safe.

## Did you know your duty of care to your staff doesn't stop at the office door?

Businesses that can facilitate homeworking need policies to make sure they manage the hazards effectively such as a remote worker using the family sofa or the dining table & chairs as their new workstation.

### Risk assessment

As a manager/employer the main risk assessment issues you need to consider are:

- work environment
- work equipment

A risk assessment template compiled by the Health & Safety Executive can be found [here](#). You should also consider telling your employer's liability insurance company that you're arranging remote working for your staff.

### Work environment

You should apply similar furniture and equipment standards to a home workstation as you would in an office. An adjustable chair will normally be needed. It should be designed to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal problems.

“computer workstations need to be competently assessed and legally compliant as a minimum.”

-Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, Home Office Report, 2014

### Work equipment

#### Computer Workstations:

Workstations should be assessed and legally compliant. Accessories such as footrests may be necessary – this will be determined by the workstation risk assessment.

If an employee based at home uses a laptop regularly for long periods you need to provide accessories, such as a mouse, keyboard, screen (or laptop riser) or docking station.

The specific details should be determined through the workstation assessment, taking account of the user's needs, space restrictions and how long they spend at the computer.

### Portable Electrical Items

Electrical items require regular inspection to check that they're still safe. Some equipment may also need combined inspection and testing. This could be done by the employee after suitable training.

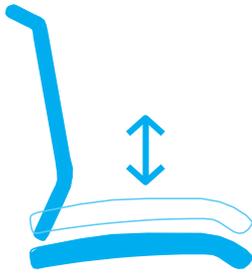
“If you have DSE (display screen equipment) users, you must:

- analyse workstations to assess and reduce risks;
- make sure controls are in place;
- provide information and training;
- provide eye and eyesight tests on request, and special spectacles if needed;
- review the assessment when the user or DSE changes. “

-Working with display screen equipment (DSE), Health & Safety Executive, first published 05/13

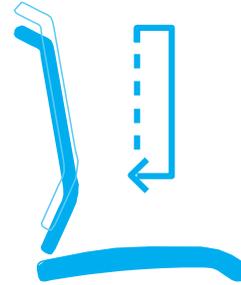
Lets look at some specifics regarding workstation ergonomics, purpose made task seating, desks and equipment stands/ supports.

## Task Chairs - A seat's just a seat, right?



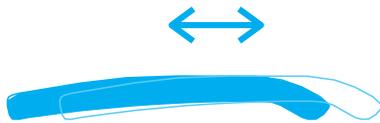
### Seat height

Adjust the height so that you are either flat footed or with a footrest. Hips should be at a slightly higher angle than the knees. This reduces pressure on the thighs and hamstrings, helps maintain the pelvis in an upright position and prevents slouching.



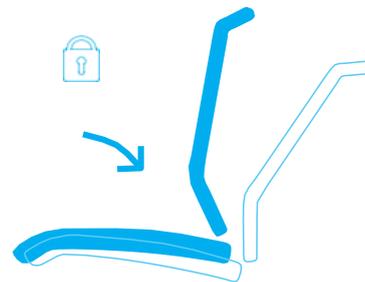
### Backrest Height

It is essential for the backrest or lumbar support to be at the correct height for the user, enabling support in the correct area of the user's spine. The lumbar region should be supported to maintain the 'S' shape curve of the spine.



### Seat depth adjustment (where fitted)

Cover the entire surface of the seat pad maintaining contact with the backrest. Ensure there is not less than 2 fingers gap in between the back of the leg and front of the seatpan. This ensures that no undue pressure is being caused to the back of the calves



### Dynamic sitting and lockable pre-set positions

Working in 'free float' is recommended. This promotes blood flow around the body and spinal cord to maintain back health. The ability to lock it is also beneficial, ensuring support whatever the positioning. The tension should be set (balanced) to the users' bodyweight and not too resistant or not too light.



### Armrest positioning

Armrests should ideally be height adjustable to provide upper body support.

They should be set so the elbow is in contact with the arm pad and at a height allowing the user's arms and shoulders to be a 90° angle. Too low and the user's arms are not in contact with the rests. Too high produces a 'hunched' position.

The more arm length in contact with the arm pads, the more the shoulders are being supported and relieve the weight of the arms off the shoulders.

## Workstations - Size Matters.

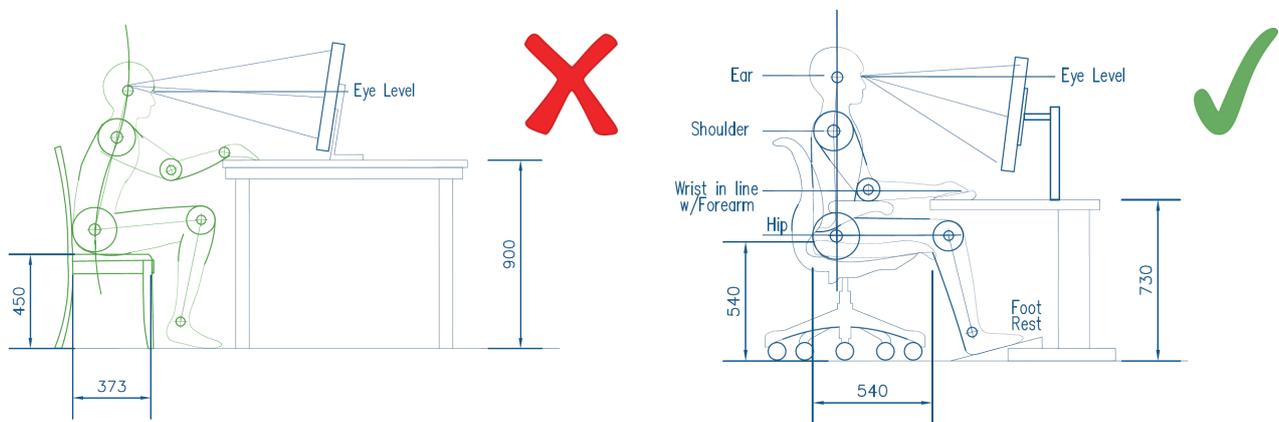
The height of a standard desk is 730mm in comparison to ,say, a dining table which varies from 750mm to 900mm high.

If a workstation has been set up correctly it will enhance the performance of the user and make work more efficient. The user should be comfortable whilst minimizing risk to their health and safety.

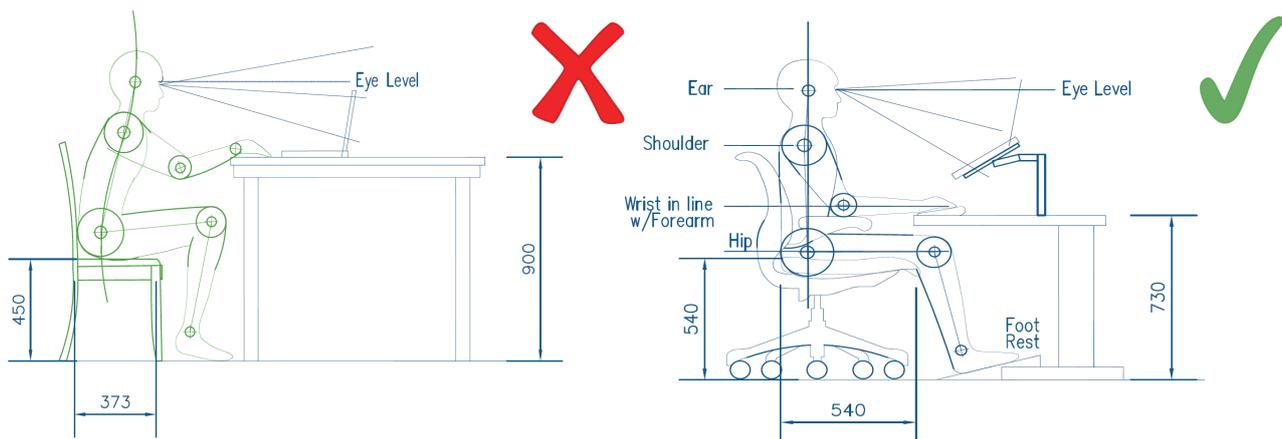
Points to consider include:

1. Monitor at eye height and an arm's length away
2. Feet firmly on the ground or a footrest
3. Eyes looking ahead towards screen
4. Sufficient space in front of keyboard to support arms and hands

Try to maintain a straight line through the ears, shoulders and hips.



Adjust monitor height so you are looking horizontally straight or slightly downwards.



You should sit as close to the desk as possible with your arms able to comfortably reach the keyboard without any obstructions. The screen should be an outstretched arms length away.

Poor workstation ergonomics can have a detrimental effect on the body's major hinges and supporting muscle groups.

For more advice on how to keep your staff healthy at home and for ergonomic products suitable for home use give us a call or check out our website [www.whitespaceni.com](http://www.whitespaceni.com)