

COVID-19 is an evolving situation that has already required major changes to the way we live and work. As part of social distancing measures, much of the Australian workforce has now shifted to a 'Work from Home' (WFH) model.

The Workplace Health and Safety Act specifies that “employers shall, as far as is practicable, provide and maintain a working environment to ensure that employees are not exposed to hazards and to make arrangements to ensure work can be carried out in a manner such that the employees are not exposed to hazards”. “Employees shall take reasonable care to ensure his or her own safety and health at work; and to avoid adversely affecting the safety or health of any other person through any act or omission at work”.

To reduce the risk of strains and other injuries while performing WFH, please review your home-based workstation using the Self-Assessment Checklist below. Make any adjustments to your home-based workstation to ensure that you are working from home safely, as per the advice provided below. Once any required adjustments have been made, please complete and acknowledge this form.

Work practices	Acknowledged
Take a break from keyboard usage every 30 minutes and stand up at least once per hour.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep wrists horizontal while typing and make sure they are not supported on any surface while typing.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sit in an upright or slightly reclined position, maintaining a slight hollow in the lower back, whilst seated.	<input type="checkbox"/>
When on a phone call, use your hand to hold the telephone, or wear a headset (do not cradle the phone between your neck and shoulder).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Break up long periods of continuous computer use by performing other tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>

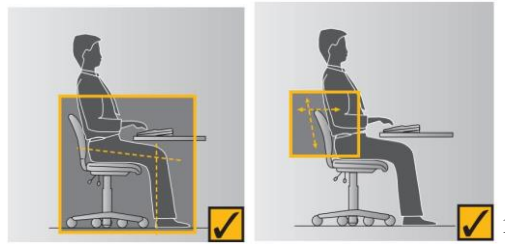
Workstation environment	Yes	No
Is the floor space free of tripping hazards (cables, uneven tiles, carpet etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the lighting adequate for the tasks being performed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are noise levels acceptable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the chair comfortable and stable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the chair have adequate lumbar support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you set up your monitor, keyboard, mouse, chair, and desk as per the advice given below?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you reviewed the below guidelines for setting up home based workstation below?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Guidelines for setting up home based workstation

1. Chair

Height – adjust the chair height so that your shoulders are relaxed and your arms are in a comfortable position when using the keyboard. A common comfortable position is to place the elbows at approximately 90-100 degrees, with fingers relaxed on the keyboard. Your feet should be supported on a surface with hips and knees at approximately 90-100 degrees. If your feet cannot reach the ground comfortably in this position, an adjustable footrest is required. A steady footrest which can be adjusted in height and angle (for various heel types) is typically most appropriate.

Tilt the seat pan (if possible) of your chair so that the front edge of the seat pan is set to either a horizontal position or is angled slightly downward. Adjust to suit your comfort as shown below in Picture 1.



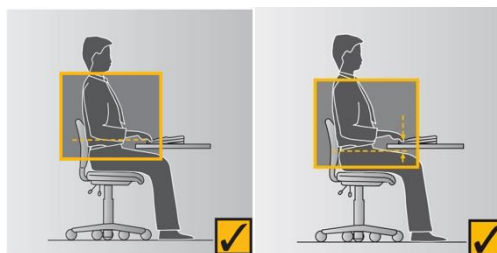
Picture 1

Picture 2

2. Desk

If you have a height-adjustable desk;

After you have adjusted the height of your chair to suit your body size, adjust the height of your desk so that the desk's surface is just below elbow height. To determine your elbow height, relax your shoulders and bend your elbows to approximately 90 degrees and check the elbow height against the desk height.

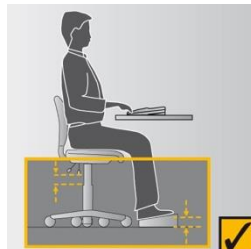


If you do not have a height-adjustable desk;

If the chair has been adjusted and the desk is higher or lower than the elbow, other forms of adjustment will be required. Start by measuring the height difference between the desk and your elbow.

If the desk is too high

Raise the chair by the measured difference and use a footrest. Set the footrest platform so that it is the same as the measured difference from the point above.



If the desk is too low

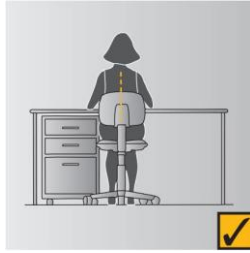
Raise the height of the desk by extending the leg length or sitting each leg securely onto wooden blocks or something similarly stable and secure.

Clearance under the desk

General items, like computer hard disk drives, boxes, rubbish bins and mobile drawers should not be stored under desks as this may restrict the ability to position the legs in a safe and comfortable posture (directly in front of the torso). Placing objects beneath your desk may lead to a twisted or tilted posture that is unsafe for the spine.

¹ All imagery drawn from

https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/atoms/files/guide_to_setting_up_your_workstation.pdf



3. Monitor

The screen should be positioned once the chair and desk heights have been established.

Height

The screen should be positioned so that the top of the screen is level with, or slightly lower than, your eyes when you are sitting upright. If the screen does not have a raising device such as a monitor stand, you may be able to use telephone books, or something similarly flat and stable, to raise the screen height on a temporary basis.

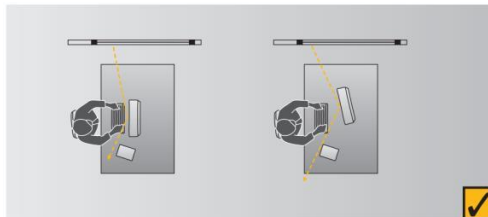
Distance from the eye

Place the screen so that it is comfortable to view your screen from your seated position: this is approximately an arm's length away from your usual seated position. Trial this position and if necessary, move the monitor further away or closer as required. Larger screens usually require a greater viewing distance.



Positioning the screen

The screen should be placed so that it does not directly face, nor sit with the back of the screen directly in front of, a window. Avoiding such positionings will reduce reflections and/ or excess glare from impeding the ability to view the screen without strain.



4. Keyboard and Mouse

Angle

Tilt or flatten the keyboard using the foldaway feet on the bottom of the keyboard to suit your level of comfort. The common and preferred setting is where the keyboard's feet are lowered so that it sits flat on the desk. This positioning assists in preventing an awkward wrist posture.

Positioning on the desk

Place the keyboard as close to the front edge of the desk as is comfortable. Do not place documents between the keyboard and the front edge of the desk while using the keyboard. Doing so increases the reach distance to the keyboard and may also result in excessive bending of the neck to look at the documents. Ensure that there is room to put the keyboard to one side when it is not in use.

Mouse

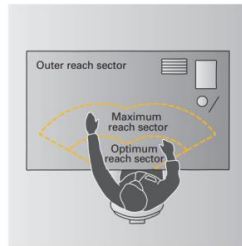
Place the mouse mat directly beside the end of the keyboard on your preferred side. Use the mouse in this position and always aim to keep the mouse on the mat during use.

If you frequently use the mouse, you may wish to:

- learn to use it with both hands so that you can swap between the right and left sides for improved comfort;
- set the tracking speed of the mouse to a setting that suits you;
- maintain your mouse to keep it in good working order (for example, keeping it clean inside and out); and
- where possible, avoid holding on to the mouse when not in use.

5. Key Objects

Keep frequently used objects — such as telephones, staplers or your mouse - positioned close by to minimize reaching.



6. Telephone

For frequent telephone use that also involves typing or writing, avoid cradling the phone between your head and neck. Use of a speaker phone may be a suitable alternative.

7. Footrest

If your chair is too high to allow feet to be positioned flat on the floor, or the height of the desk requires raising the height of the chair, a footrest is to be used.

8. Length of Time Using Keyboard

The maintenance of a fixed posture for long periods is tiring and increases the likelihood of muscular aches and pains. In addition, long periods of repetitive movement and sustained visual attention can give rise to fatigue-related complaints. It is recommended that screen-based workers take postural/stretching breaks to reduce intense periods of repetitive movement.

9. Whilst working from home, if your regular job requires physical tasks to be completed, please review, and implement, the advice of the below checklist.

Where physical activities are required	Acknowledged
Take appropriate breaks to ensure repetitive actions are not continued for long periods.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that breaks involve stretching and changing of posture. Consider switching to an alternative activity after each break to avoid repetitive movements or strains.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure you follow correct manual handling techniques through any activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make sure any lifting, pushing, or carrying type task is well within your physical capacity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use trolleys or other mechanisms to move heavy and awkward items.	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. With social distancing, WFH arrangements, and the uncertainty and stressors of the current COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increased risk of social isolation, mental health challenges, and a loss of work/life balance amongst the workforce. Please review the below mental health and communication checklists to ensure that you are best equipped to manage working from home in a safe, healthy, and productive manner.

WORKING FROM HOME SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Mental Health	Acknowledged
Setup your workstation and establish boundaries regarding your work hours with yourself and others in your household. Ensure that you also observe these boundaries yourself.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule regular (remote) meetings and catchups with your manager, colleagues and clients to help you maintain a sense of connection and productive direction, and to maintain positive working relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stay connected via phone, email and/or online (via your organisation's video conferencing, instant messaging platforms, etc) so that you maintain awareness of relevant developments within your team and organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where it aligns with current social distancing measures, use outdoor spaces when you take breaks. Consider incorporating some light stretching or breathing exercises into your break to refresh yourself.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider using quiet background music to create a harmonious working environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify any potential distractions and put strategies in place to minimise them, for example separating, your workstation from the rest of the house.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Communication	Yes	No
Agree upon an effective and regular communication schedule with your manager (for example, a daily call at a particular time to discuss questions and to maintain a strong, positive working relationship). Consider doing the same for other colleagues or stakeholders that you are required to coordinate with, and back brief this arrangement to your manager.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inform your manager if there is any change that may impact your health and safety or the health and safety of another worker (for example, a new pet, renovations or moving to a new house).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Acknowledgement of employee: _____

Date: _____

Additional Resources:

Workplace Health and Safety Act – <https://www.comcare.gov.au/scheme-legislation/whs-act>

Checklist - <https://www.comcare.gov.au/about/forms-publications/documents/publications/safety/working-from-home-checklist.pdf>

Guideline for setting up home workstation – All Images have been sourced from: https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/atoms/files/guide_to_setting_up_your_workstation.pdf