Making Your Computer Workstations Work with You—at home, at work, at play

A good computer workstation would have an ergonomic chair, a keyboard and mouse, a gel wrist rest for the keyboard and mouse and an easily viewed monitor.

How can your workstation that looks just like everyone else's in your office, work just for you? ADJUSTABILITY!

The seat pan of the chair should be height adjustable. The seat pan should be raised so that it does not hit the back of your calf and you can rest your feet flat on the floor with your ankles and calves straight down from the knees. The back of the chair should have a lumbar support that fits you; chairs with fixed lumbar areas only fit a small number of people.

If the chair has arm supports they should be height, width and angle adjustable. You can test this by sitting in your chair with your shoulders relaxed and your arms to your sides. Now, bend the elbows so that your arms are straight ahead. The arm supports should gently support the weight of your arms at this point. Keep in mind that the hands weigh around 2 pounds each. Trying to support the weight of these for even 1 hour is quite difficult. You'll probably end up resting your wrists against the hard edge of the desk. Ouch!

You should also be able to adjust how far away your monitor is from you while you work so that you don't strain your eyes. Your monitor should be close enough to you that you will not have to lean forward to see your work. You should be looking slightly downward **on** the monitor screen; you may need to raise or lower it. The monitor should also be directly in front of you; don't place it to the right or left on your desk as this will cause you to twist to see the screen and can cause discomfort. Be careful of glare, this can also cause eye strain. If necessary, filters can control this problem. If you enter information from documents you'll want a document holder. This should be at the same height and distance from your eyes as the monitor itself. You might need to raise your chair if you can't lower your monitor. If you do raise your chair, you may need a foot rest.

Don't forget to adjust your keyboard and mouse. You should be able to type on your keyboard
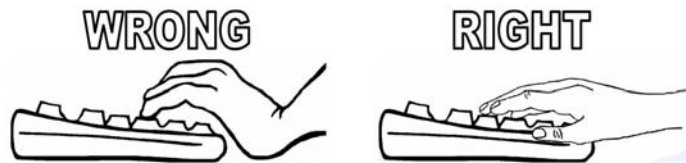
with your wrists straight or slightly higher than the top of the back of your hand, so fold back those little keyboard feet. Here's a test that you can try to determine where the keyboard should be. Relax your shoulders and drop your arms to your side. Now, bend the elbows so that your arms are straight ahead with your elbows still at your side. Look at your fingers. The home row of the keyboard should be just underneath your fingertips. If you use a mouse, it should be at the same height and distance from you as the keyboard. Based on this test, can you work with the keyboard on the desktop or do you need a keyboard tray? Trays should be height and angle adjustable, and have space for the mouse. Helpful partners for your keyboard and mouse are good gel wrist rests that support the arm near the wrist and help prevent resting your wrists against the desk surface, and a telephone headset if you use the telephone frequently while using the keyboard.

You've got one more thing to adjust; your own behavior. Keep frequently used items within 15-inches of your body to prevent awkward reaching motions. It is also important to move and to take breaks regularly. Do stretching exercises. It doesn't just feel good. It gives the muscles a chance to recover from the repetitive motions you've just put it though during your work day and helps prevents injury.
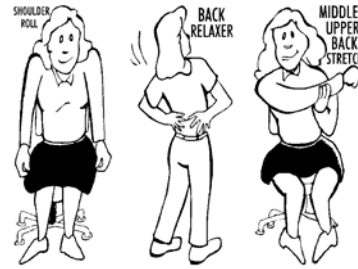
For further information, please contact Environmental Health and Radiation Safety at 2-2520. If you have other health and safety questions, concerns and/or suggestions, please contact the Health and Safety Committee at healthandsafety@temple.edu.