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Designing and Preparing the Home Office

The following information is provided to assist you in designing your home workstation. An adequate workstation should be safe, comfortable and should facilitate your job performance.

The following information will familiarize you with many of the desirable aspects of an office work environment. If you suspect that something is hazardous, but are not sure, you can contact the University Risk Manager for assistance. **It is recommended that you retain this information as a reference source.**

Workstations

In the office environment, the workstation consist primarily have a phone, work surface and a chair. Your job may also require computer equipment and possibly other related items.

Individual body size must be considered and will influence the design of the chair, the height of the work surface and access to various elements of the workstation, including the computer screen. A height-adjustable work surface is an advantage. In general, a good work surface will provide as many adjustable features as possible.

Following are tips on use and design of typical workstations:

- Sit up straight, keeping your neck as nearly as vertical as comfortable. Improper neck, arm, and wrist positioning are typical causes for strains, other injuries, and discomfort.
- Common recommendations are to have your computer screen at an arm's length from your face and slightly below eye level.
- Use pads or other devices to comfortably support your wrists when using a keyboard. Keep your arms and wrists straight (try not to bend your wrists).
- Reduce eyestrain by temporarily looking away from the computer screen, doing eye exercises, switching to other work or adjusting the brightness of the computer screen.

The Desk

Height of the work surface should be comfortable for typical uses (computer work, writing, or reading). Conventional desk surfaces are usually about 29 inches high, which is adequate for many tasks. The height recommended for a computing surface is approximately 26 inches.

The Chair

The chair is probably the most important piece of furniture in the workstation. The seat should be adjustable, and the height (measure from the floor) of the top surface of the seat should be 15 to 21 inches. The backrest should be adjustable (height and angle) and should provide for the teleworker's lower back. Armrest should be substantial enough to provide support, but not so large as to be in the way.

Lighting

Lighting in the workstation can affect comfort, visibility, and performance. Whether you are using natural daylight or artificial lighting, it should be directed toward the side or behind your line of vision, not in front or above it. Bright light sources can bounce off working surfaces and diminish your sense of contrast.

Noise

Depending on your personality and work style, noisy or totally noise-free environments can be distracting and stressful. Some background sound such as music can be beneficial in maintaining a level of productivity and reducing boredom.