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**Social Security Administration**

**Home Office Ergonomics**

**Self-Assessment with Tips and Techniques**

**Script DRAFT (February 18, 2021)**

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**Table of Contents**

[Title Slide 5](#_Toc64465677)

[Working at Home? 5](#_Toc64465678)

[Successful Home Office? 5](#_Toc64465679)

[Comfortable 5](#_Toc64465680)

[Objectives/SSA Home Office training Policy 5](#_Toc64465681)

[Health Care Professional 6](#_Toc64465682)

[What is the “Best” office set-up? 6](#_Toc64465683)

[Let’s talk about Ergonomics 6](#_Toc64465684)

[What is Ergonomics? 6](#_Toc64465685)

[Ergonomics Principles 6](#_Toc64465686)

[Eliminate physical and mental fatigue? 7](#_Toc64465687)

[How to recognize fatigue 7](#_Toc64465688)

[Intellectual involvement 7](#_Toc64465689)

[Movers and shakers 7](#_Toc64465690)

[30/30/30 Micro-break Guideline 7](#_Toc64465691)

[Other Fatigue Control Strategies 7](#_Toc64465692)

[Body Position and Support in Neutral and Reach Zone 8](#_Toc64465693)

[Spine Neutral Position – Seated and Standing 8](#_Toc64465694)

[Limb Neutral Position 8](#_Toc64465695)

[Reach Zone 8](#_Toc64465696)

[Ergonomics Principles – Summary 8](#_Toc64465697)

[Setting up of Your Home Office 9](#_Toc64465698)

[Step-by-Step Approach 9](#_Toc64465699)

[Location 9](#_Toc64465700)

[Space – Dedicated 9](#_Toc64465701)

[Space – Shared or Dedicated 9](#_Toc64465702)

[User – Single or Multi 10](#_Toc64465703)

[Worksheet 10](#_Toc64465704)

[Chair and Desk Set-up and Use 10](#_Toc64465705)

[Chair – Critical Office Component 10](#_Toc64465706)

[Chair Features and Adjustments - Seat 10](#_Toc64465707)

[Chair Features and Adjustments – Back 11](#_Toc64465708)

[Chair Features and Adjustments – Armrests 11](#_Toc64465709)

[Chair – Maintenance Issues 11](#_Toc64465710)

[Chair Features and Adjustments – Full Advantage 11](#_Toc64465711)

[Chair Adjustment Strategies 11](#_Toc64465712)

[Best way to sit? 11](#_Toc64465713)

[Upright Keyboard Position 11](#_Toc64465714)

[Semi-Reclined Conversation Position 11](#_Toc64465715)

[Chair Worksheet – Chair Features 12](#_Toc64465716)

[Modify Chair 12](#_Toc64465717)

[Repair Chair 12](#_Toc64465718)

[Replace Chair 12](#_Toc64465719)

[Best advice? 12](#_Toc64465720)

[Chair Worksheet – Issues and Recommendation 13](#_Toc64465721)

[Worksheet – Inter-relationships 13](#_Toc64465722)

[Computer Set-up – General Guidelines 13](#_Toc64465723)

[Keyboard and Mouse Position 13](#_Toc64465724)

[Monitor Position 14](#_Toc64465725)

[Monitor Position – Height and Distance 14](#_Toc64465726)

[Two Monitors 14](#_Toc64465727)

[Laptop Computer 14](#_Toc64465728)

[Laptop Computer – Separate Keyboard, Mouse and Monitor 15](#_Toc64465729)

[Desktop Computer 15](#_Toc64465730)

[Table/Desk and Chair Set-up 15](#_Toc64465731)

[Fixed Height Table/Desk and Fixed Height Chair 15](#_Toc64465732)

[Fixed Height Table/Desk and Fixed Height Chair 16](#_Toc64465733)

[Fixed Height Table/Desk and Fixed Height Chair 16](#_Toc64465734)

[Shorten the desk 16](#_Toc64465735)

[Raise the desk 16](#_Toc64465736)

[Fixed Height Table/Desk and Adjustable Height Chair 16](#_Toc64465737)

[Adjustable Height Table/Desk and Adjustable Height Chair 17](#_Toc64465738)

[Standing 17](#_Toc64465739)

[Sit/Stand Workstations 17](#_Toc64465740)

[Standing Height 17](#_Toc64465741)

[Footrest 17](#_Toc64465742)

[Couch 18](#_Toc64465743)

[Complete the Worksheet 18](#_Toc64465744)

[Desk Features 18](#_Toc64465745)

[Desk Issues and Recommendations 18](#_Toc64465746)

[Feet/Legs Features 18](#_Toc64465747)

[Feet/Legs Issues and Recommendations 18](#_Toc64465748)

[Laptop or Desktop Computer Features 19](#_Toc64465749)

[Document Holder 19](#_Toc64465750)

[Telephone/Webcam 19](#_Toc64465751)

[Storage 20](#_Toc64465752)

[Lighting 20](#_Toc64465753)

[General Lighting 20](#_Toc64465754)

[Task Lighting 20](#_Toc64465755)

[Recommended Specifications Section 20](#_Toc64465756)

[Follow-up Section 20](#_Toc64465757)

[Ergonomics – A Potent Tool 20](#_Toc64465758)

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| **Slide** | **Script** |
|  | Title Slide |
|  | Working at Home? Working at home on your computer?  Well, join the crowd because you are not alone!  Many people who typically have worked at their regular office setting are now working at home.  With this change, comes the challenge of setting up your home office and using sound work practices.  Hello everyone, welcome to ***SSA Home Office Ergonomics: Self-Assessment with Tips and Techniques.*** |
|  | Successful Home Office? What is the first word that comes to mind that best describes your ***successful home office***?  Your ***successful home office*** should be \_\_\_(fill in the blank)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  Interesting question isn’t it. |
|  | Comfortable Well, now that you have thought about it, was the first word that came to your mind: ***“comfortable”***?  If you did answer, ***“comfortable”***, you’re in good company.  Informal surveys reveal about 9 out of 10 people indicate ***“comfortable”*** is what they want to be in their office where ever it may be.  Then of course, words like “productive”, “efficient”, “satisfying”, “effective”, “safe” and so on follow along. |
|  | Objectives/SSA Home Office Training Policy In this training we’ll focus on helping you achieve your objective of establishing a home office that is comfortable, safe, and productive.  To accomplish this, we’ll go through a step-by-step self-assessment process.  Please note that in order to obtain the maximum benefit from this training please download and reference the ***SSA Home Office Worksheet*** and the ***SSA Home Office Quick Reference Guide*** while viewing the presentation. |
|  | We do recognize the first time you look at the ***Worksheet*** it looks like a lot of information and may be even seem a little bit intimidating.  Please be assured, we’ll take you step-by-step through the ***Worksheet.*** Experience tells us it will be a “road-map” for setting-up your ergonomically correct and comfortable home office. |
|  | SSA Home Office Ergonomics Policy SSA’s policy regarding Home Office Ergonomics training is that all employees view the ***“SSA Home Office Ergonomics: Self-Assessment with Tips and Techniques***” VOD, complete the **“SSA Home Office Self-Assessment Worksheet”** and reference the ***“SSA Home Office Ergonomics Quick Reference Guide”***. Note: SSA does not provide employees with equipment or furniture for home offices. |
|  | Medical Advice ***Here is an extremely important point.***  ***The information included in this training in not intended to provide medical advice. If you are experiencing significant medically related vision or musculoskeletal symptoms that could include joint and muscle tenderness, swelling, pain, numbness or tingling, you should consider following up with your health care professional to receive appropriate care.*** |
|  | What is the “Best” office set-up? People often ask what is the best home office set up? Honestly, there is not one right answer. Your set-up will be unique to your particular situation and the ***Worksheet*** will help you figure it out.  Also, make sure you check out the accompanying handout, ***SSA* *Home Office Quick Reference Guide***for additional information. |
|  | Let’s talk about Ergonomics Before we get into the details of setting up your home office, let’s talk a bit about ergonomics and some important ergonomics principles.  You probably have heard the word, ***Ergonomics*** before.  It has become common in the marketing of products such as beds, cars, and kitchen utensils, among others. In fact, did you know you can buy ergonomically designed salsa chips?  Yep, ***ScoopsTM*** are designed to not break when you dip!  Which is a good thing, otherwise the next person has to figure out how to get the broken chip out of the salsa bowl! |
|  | What is Ergonomics? What is ergonomics?  Ergonomics has many definitions for example user friendly, fitting the job to the worker and others. |
|  | All about relationships Basically, it’s all about relationships.  Picture yourself sitting in your chair at your desk using your computer.   * Does your chair provide you with comfortable back and hip support? * Does the position of your keyboard and mouse provide for comfortable hand and arm position and support? * Does the position of your monitor provide you with a comfortable head and neck position?   When you apply ergonomics principles in the setting-up of your home office you establish safe and functional relationships with your chair, desk and computer. |
|  | Ergonomics Principles To appreciate how ergonomics works, let’s define three basic ergonomics principles.  First principle; position and support your torso and limbs in what is called a Neutral Position, more about this is in a moment.  Second principle; set-up the workspace so you can use your hands in your Reach Zone. More about this is a moment too.  And third, practice strategies that will help you identify and control physical and mental fatigue. |
|  | Eliminate physical and mental fatigue? Here’s a question for you.  Is it possible to ***eliminate*** physical and mental fatigue?  What do you think? Well. we are suggesting the answer is, “No”.  Fatigue is a normal occurrence of using up our physical and mental energy. We recover from it by taking rest breaks, having adequate nutrition and fluid intake to get ready for the next day. |
|  | How to recognize fatigue But what about today, anything we can do today to help ourselves manage fatigue?  Well, substitute the word “eliminate” with “control” and you will get a sense of what we’re talking about. |
|  | Intellectual involvement Now, the good thing is, we can get very involved intellectually with what we are doing in the office to get our work done.  But the bad thing is we can get very involved intellectually with what we are doing in the office and all of sudden two or three hours have gone by.  When we finally get out of our chair our body cries out in stiffness and soreness from being in one position for too long. We didn’t pay attention to our body’s need for position change and movement! |
|  | Movers and shakers We are made to be movers and shakers. Sustained sedentary positions are not good for us.  Anyone have a dog or cat in the home office? Many of us do. Ever notice the first thing they do when they get up after a nap? Yes, they take a really good stretch.  How do they know how to do this? We suspect you did not send them to stretching school when they were puppies and kittens. They instinctively know to stretch and they act on the instinct.  We have the same need; we just don’t act on it! We are meant to movers and shakers! |
|  | 30/30/30 Micro-break Guideline The 30/30/30 Micro-break Guideline encourages taking a physically active micro-break of about 30 to 45 seconds in length about every 30 to 45 minutes. and practice for the next 30 days to make it a habit.  Everyone agrees it makes good sense. Remembering do actually take a micro-break is another matter!  Plan a strategy that works for you: post-it notes, drink a lot of water, set reminders on your calendar, and so on.  Make it happen as much as possible and reap the reward. |
|  | Other Fatigue Control Strategies Here are some other simple strategies to better manage fatigue.  Mix up job tasks to provide a variety of physical activities.  Break larger tasks into smaller ones. such as alternating sitting computing tasks with standing phone or reading tasks.  Throughout the day replenish energy supplies and fluid intake. Try to not skip breaks and lunch.  Work on your personal physical fitness level. We know now that even a few minutes of physical activity done periodically throughout the day can add up. You don’t necessarily need 30 to 45 consecutive minutes of physical activity to gain the benefit |
|  | Body Position and Support in Neutral and Reach Zone Recall we mentioned two other ergonomics principles – set-up your office to position and support your torso and limbs in what is called a Neutral Position and set-up the workspace so you can use your hands in your Reach Zone.  Let’s provide a bit more detail about these two principles. |
|  | Spine Neutral Position – Seated and Standing When viewed from the side, the spine’s neutral position is an inward curve in the low back and neck and an outward curve in the mid-back.  The appropriate set-up of your chair will promote and support these curves – particularly the low back.  Later, in the Chair Section we’ll go over the specifics of adjusting your chair.  If an option to sometimes stand at your desk is possible, the standing position should promote the neutral spine principle as well. |
|  | Limb Neutral Position What about for your limbs? Neutral position for your limbs is what is called “mid-range of joint position”. What does this mean?  Think about using your keyboard and mouse. You want your wrists to be relatively straight; not flexed or extended.  Appropriate chair adjustment in relation to the desk height works well to promote neutral limb and joint positions. |
|  | Reach Zone How much do we use our hands every day?  Of course, the answer is a great deal.  We can define two specific areas where we use our hands in the office. We call them Reach Zones.  The first zone is called your Comfort Reach Zone and is determined by the length of your forearm. This is where you want to position your keyboard, mouse, writing materials and so on so that you can comfortably reach these items.  The second reach zone, called the Extended Reach Zone, is determined by the length of your arms. This is where you want to position items and materials to include the telephone, documents and other materials you need to access. |
|  | Ergonomics Principles – Summary So, from the ergonomics perspective, your goal is to set-up your home office to position and support your body and limbs in the Neutral Position and use your hands in the appropriate Reach Zones.  Additionally, you want to utilize safe work practices and include strategies to control physical and mental fatigue.  Let’s put these principles into practice as you set-up your home office! |
|  | Setting up of Your Home Office Let’s outline some setup considerations.  First, we’ll discuss some ideas about where to locate your office.  Next, do you need to share the office with other household members ?  Your chair is a vital component. Chairs in the home office range from kitchen chairs to fully featured office ergonomics chairs. We’ll discuss chairs in detail in a moment.  How about the desk or table you use? We suspect for many people it might be a fixed height desk or table. For others it may be a height adjustable work surface.  What type of computer equipment do you have? We know some of you may be utilizing the laptop that came from your work office. Perhaps, some of you have a desktop computer. |
|  | Step-by-Step Approach In terms of setting up your home office, you need to get a sense of what is possible and then come up with creative solutions to make it work. We’ll take you through a step-by-step setup process and offer suggestions based on your situation.  For example, we know of a home office in a spare area in the basement that is 5 feet by 7 feet. In that office is a desk, a chair, a desktop computer with two monitors, a stand for a printer and other office equipment, a rolling file cabinet, a bookshelf, two desktop lights and an overhead light. It works quite well for this person.  We know of another person who occasionally works at home, this person tends to use the kitchen counter and a stool with a laptop. It really comes down to figuring out what works best for you! |
|  | Location As you think about where to locate your office in your home, identify some potential options based on these questions.  Will it be a dedicated or shared space?  Will it be used only by you or by other household members as well? |
|  | Space – Dedicated In some households there may be an area or room that can be dedicated for a home office. By dedicated we mean you can leave it setup in the office configuration.  It may be a spare bedroom. We have seen closets that have been turned into a functional office space. It might be an existing space on an available kitchen counter or dining room table.  A dedicated space may offer additional privacy – both visual and auditory; this could be an important factor to consider based on the type of work you perform. |
|  | Space – Shared Some home offices may be part of a shared or multi-purpose area. During work hours the space may be a work desk but come meal time you may need to shift it back to being the kitchen or dining room table.  For a shared-space home office, a primary objective is to make it as easy as possible to make the transition. Think about how you can quickly pack up the office equipment and store it in an easily accessed location.  Perhaps a travel backpack could be used to pack and store the equipment.  Small rolling file drawers are often used to store office supplies and other equipment and be readily rolled out of the way. |
|  | User – Single or Multi Will the office be yours only or will you share it with others? We call it a single-user office if only you use it. You can get it setup for yourself and leave it that way.  If it is shared by others, we call it a multi-user office. No question this does add more complexity to the setup. For example, one person may be 6 feet tall and another may be 5 feet tall. You need to consider how the chair and potentially the desk height may need to be adjusted from one person to the next. |
|  | Worksheet – Location We have found that many shared-space home offices evolve over time as you get more proficient at figuring out the most efficient way to setup and take down the office components. Work on “making it work” the best for you.  For right now, take a look at the Self-Assessment ***Worksheet***.  In the ***Location*** section determine if your home office space will be shared or dedicated, if it will single or multi-user.  In the ***Location Field*** fill in your decision. |
|  | Chair and Desk Set-up and Use Moving on, let’s get into the details of your chair and desk setup and use.  Experience tells us that home offices have a wide range of chair and desk configurations ranging from a fixed height chair and desk setup to a fully height adjustable chair and desk setup and all combinations in between. We also recognize the living room couch or recliner sometimes becomes the workstation while others may have the option to work in the standing position as well.  We’ll work through strategies for the desk setup but first let’s talk chairs. |
|  | Chair – Critical Office Component No doubt about it, your office chair is a critical component in your home office.  Depending on the chair at hand, you might be using a kitchen or dining room chair that doesn't have any adjustments to an office chair that does have quite a few adjustment features.  In a minute, we’ll go through some ideas on some recommended ways to sit in the chair, but first if your chair does have some levers, play with them to get a sense of what they do. |
|  | Chair Features and Adjustments - Seat Here are some of typical office chair features and adjustments.  Probably the seat is height adjustable and many chairs also allow the seat to tilt or rock and possibly have a depth adjustment of the seat.  If the chair can tilt or rock it may also have a tension knob to adjust the rocking tension.  Figure out what your chair’s seat can do!  The manufacturer’s name and chair model may be listed on a label on the bottom of the seat; if so, check on-line for information about the chair’s adjustment features. |
|  | Chair Features and Adjustments – Back Look to see if the back support is fixed with no adjustment or if it is height and angle adjustable.  If it is height adjustable, see if you can get the low back cushion in the back support about in line with the inward curve in your lower back. For most individuals this is about level with your belly button.  With some chairs you can independently adjust the angle of the back in relation to the seat. |
|  | Chair Features and Adjustments – Armrests Office chair armrests may be in a fixed position, but some are height adjustable and may be side-to-side adjustable as well. Some chairs even have armrests that can be rotated front to back.  Armrests are intended to provide support for your forearms to unload weight from your neck and shoulders when you are using your hands. Explore what your chair has to offer. |
|  | Chair – Maintenance Issues And always be on the look-out for any chair maintenance issues. It is no fun to have your chair break down, especially if you are in it! |
|  | Chair Features and Adjustments – Full Advantage Unfortunately, many people don't use their chairs to full advantage. We’re asking that you take a good look at your chair and invest some time to understand how it works. |
|  | Chair Adjustment StrategiesBest way to sit? Here’s a question for you, “Is there only one best way to sit?”  Or does it make sense to adjust your chair throughout the day, if you can?  What are some chair adjustment strategies? |
|  | Upright Keyboard Position When you’re doing hand related activities like using your keyboard and mouse or hand writing, see if you can adjust your chair to the “upright keyboard position”.  The back support is fairly upright with your head balanced over your neck and shoulders and you have good access to using your keyboard and mouse in the Comfort Reach Zone. |
|  | Semi-Reclined Conversation Position Other times when you’re not using your hands on your keyboard and mouse, see if the chair can tilt back some to let it rock.  If your chair does have a rocking chair function remember to look for a rocking tension adjustment knob usually located under the seat of the chair. If this is too loose the chair will flop backwards when you recline and you will not be happy. The correct tension will make it feel like a comfortable rocking chair.  We call this the “semi-reclined conversation position” because it works well when you’re talking on your phone or to someone in nearby. Or maybe just thinking and talking to yourself! |
|  | Chair Worksheet – Chair Features Now that you have an understanding of your chair’s features and adjustment strategies, please fill out the **Chair Features** section of the Worksheet. Check the appropriate boxes based on your current chair.  Most office chairs will have 5 legs to limit the tippy nature of the chair.  Caster type indicates if the caster is suitable for the floor surface in the office area. You will see a hard plastic shell caster for use on a softer floor, like carpet, we consider a chair floor mat to be a softer surface.  You will see a soft rubberized caster on a hard surface floor like linoleum, wood or tile.  Identify if you see any maintenance issues.  Leave the ***Issues and Recommendations Sections*** blank for now, we’ll get to them once we have discussed chair strategies. |
|  | Modify Chair If you find your chair lacking in features, can you modify it? That is a good question and the answer in many cases is yes.  For example, by adding a seat cushion you can sit higher in the chair.  A small pillow secured on the back support can improve your lower back support.  Pads placed on armrests can improve arm support. |
|  | Repair Chair If you find any maintenance issues with your chair, please don’t ignore them. Either have the chair repaired or consider replacing it. |
|  | Replace Chair Now, if you recognize your chair just “doesn’t do it for you”, consider replacement options.  Check with your supervisor and/or the SSA Ergonomics Program website for guidance. **(NEED LINK)** |
|  | Best advice? Of course, the best advice we can offer you about your chair is to, “Get out of it on a regularly basis!”  Intermittently stand up and work at a counter if that is possible. Stand when you talk on the phone when you can.  Drink a lot of water. You know what we’re talking about.  Remember the 30/30/30 Micro-break Guideline.  Bottom line – work hard on giving your body frequent movement breaks. |
|  | Chair Worksheet – Issues and Recommendation Now that you better understand the features of your chair, fill out the ***Chair*** ***Issues*** and ***Recommendations*** section of the ***Worksheet***.  Your chair fit and adjustment may be just fine and you won’t have any issues or recommendations.  On the other hand, you may have noticed some issues. Take a look at the ***Issues*** list and check any boxes that apply and then check the appropriate ***Recommendations*** checkboxes.  Make any comments if needed to add further information. |
|  | Worksheet – Inter-relationships What’s next on the ***Worksheet***?  You’ll see there are sections on the ***Desk, Feet/Legs, Laptop Computer, Desktop Computer*** and then a few more sections.  We mentioned earlier that ergonomics is all about relationships. We also will say it really is all about inter-relationships.  What do we mean?  Well, all the components that make up your home office are inter-related.  For example, if you have a fixed height desk you may actually raise the height of your chair to obtain the recommended relationship between your body and hands in relation to the desk. This may result in your feet no longer being on the floor and then you will need a footrest to get the foot support you need.  All of these factors are inter-related.  We’ll take you through general guidelines for computer set-up and use.  Then we’ll go through a series of typical home office set-ups so you can figure out how to make your particular situation work for you.  Then we’ll come back the ***Worksheet*** and ask you to complete the sections. |
|  | Computer Set-up – General Guidelines Let’s go over general guidelines for setting up a home office with a laptop or desktop computer. |
|  | Keyboard and Mouse Position Position the keyboard and mouse on the work surface within your Comfort Reach Zone so the wrists are reasonably straight with no pressure on the forearms from the edge of the worksurface. |
|  | Keyboard and Mouse Position People primarily tend to position a keyboard and mouse in one of two ways: “piano player” or “forearm supporter” Piano Player Piano players position the keyboard close to the edge of the worksurface. They relax their elbows at their sides, bent to about 90 degrees and float their hands over the keys to type. Armrests, if available may be used. Forearm Supporter Forearm supporters position the keyboard farther forward on the worksurface and rest their forearms on the worksurface. Make sure the chair armrests are not in the way.  Either method works but a crucial difference is that the worksurface heights are different for the two styles! The worksurface height needs to be slightly lower for the forearm supporter. |
|  | Wrist Rests A keyboard wrist rest may be in place used to rest the palms when not actually keying. It may be built into the keyboard or be separate.  A mouse wrist rest may be place; just make sure it doesn’t “lock” your wrist in one position causing excessive side-to-side hand motion to use the mouse. Keyboard Shortcuts We also encourage the use of keyboard shortcuts to reduce overall mouse use. They can save time and minimize repetitive motions. Check your software program for a list of them. |
|  | Monitor PositionMonitor Position – Height and Distance A great deal of information comes to us through the computer monitor. Our guideline is to position the monitor so the top of the screen is about or slightly above eye level when you are seated or standing and at least arm’s length distance from you eyes.  An exception to this may be for someone who wears bifocal eyeglasses and views the monitor through the bottom part of the lens. In this case, one option is to lower the monitor to improve head and neck position.  Some individuals have tri-focals or dedicated computer glasses to manage their visual needs. |
|  | Two Monitors Two monitors are becoming very common these days. If you use two monitors determine how to best view them. Primary/Primary If you view both monitors about 50% of the time each, you are a primary/primary monitor user. Position the monitors so they are centered on your nose. You will then have equal right and left head rotation. Secondary/Secondary On the other hand, if you predominantly view one monitor you are a primary/secondary user. Position the primary monitor directly in front of you and the secondary monitor angled to the side and adjacent to the primary one.  With these general guidelines in mind, let’s discuss laptop and desktop computer set-up strategies. |
|  | Laptop Computer Some home office setups will have a laptop as the primary computer system.  You’ll use the laptop’s keyboard, touch pad and monitor. If this is your situation, as you see in this example, try to position the laptop height so your wrists are straight when using the keyboard and touchpad.  Because the monitor is attached to the laptop, experiment with angling the monitor to minimize the amount of forward head tip to view the monitor. The way our eyes work we have about 20 to 30 degrees of downward eye gaze to look at materials lower than eye level. |
|  | Laptop Computer – Separate Keyboard, Mouse and Monitor Some home office setups will have a laptop with a docking station that allows you to have a separate keyboard, mouse and monitor.  Position the keyboard and mouse so the wrists are reasonably straight.  Look at this setup, you can see the laptop is the processor for the computer system, but he has a separate keyboard, mouse and monitor on a stand. To make use of the laptop monitor as a second monitor he has it on a stand to position it in an appropriate viewing position.  In this example, the monitor is positioned so the top of the screen is about eye level and at least arm’s length distance.  Another laptop option is to have a separate keyboard and mouse but still use the laptop monitor placed on a stand to position it at the correct viewing height and distance. |
|  | Desktop Computer If you utilize a desktop computer you will have a separate keyboard, mouse and monitor. Follow the ***Computer Set-up General Guidelines*** we discussed to position the keyboard and mouse so the wrists are reasonably straight and the monitor position allows for neutral head and neck position. |
|  | Table/Desk and Chair Set-up With the general guidelines in mind let’s go through several specific home office set-up scenarios. |
|  | Fixed Height Table/Desk and Fixed Height Chair First let’s take a look at a fixed height table or desk and a fixed height chair scenario.  If you are able to sit all the way back in the chair with your lower back supported with your hands on the keyboard  AND  you have 1 to 3” of space between the back of your knees and the front edge of the chair  AND  your feet are directly on the floor  AND  your wrists are straight with keyboard and mouse use  AND your monitor is adjusted appropriately.  Guess what?  You guessed it – you fit. You are one of those individuals that fit in this fixed height scenario. We can predict you are about 5’9” to about 6’ 1” tall and you fit in “adult standard” dimension furniture.  Take a look at the example. She has a folded up towel (it could be a pillow or something similar) stuffed all the way back in the chair for lower back support.  Her desk has a pull-out drawer for her keyboard and mouse and her wrists are in a good position.  Her monitor is about eye level.  This works for her! |
|  | Fixed Height Table/Desk and Fixed Height Chair What about this next scenario? Your home office also consists of a fixed height desk or table and a fixed height chair.  Now though when you sit in your fixed height chair and place your hands on your fixed height desk, your wrists are not straight, and your forearms are in contact with the edge of the desk. You are sitting too low!  What can you do?  A different height chair could be an option to sit higher.  Another option could be to place a cushion on the chair’s seat so you can literally sit higher in the chair and obtain the recommended wrist position.  Now, if that means your feet are no longer supported on the floor, obtain a commercially available footrest or create one (a box or stool) that provides support for your feet and legs.  Now with the changes made, your wrists are straight and you have an acceptable arm and hand position with good foot and leg support. |
|  | Fixed Height Table/Desk and Fixed Height ChairShorten the desk Occasionally, we have seen where the desk could be shortened; literally the legs cut down for the needed table height (that matches your seated elbow height). If this is an option, you will now have a “height adjusted ” desk to use with your fixed height chair and feet placed on the floor. Raise the desk For taller individuals, it may be possible to increase the desk height. Desk risers are commercially available in one-inch increments. For stability purposes no more than 3” are to be used. Other options may include wood or similar blocks. If you use this option, make sure the desk is secure at the new height. |
|  | Fixed Height Table/Desk and Adjustable Height Chair How about if you're at a fixed height desk or table but your chair is height adjustable?  First adjust your chair height so when you put your hands on the keyboard and mouse you achieve the desired relationship between your arms, wrists and hands on the keyboard and mouse. Use a seat cushion if needed.  Next check your foot support. For some people, your feet may no longer be on the floor. We never want to dangle our feet for any length of time when seated; this can result in potential for circulation issues.  You want your feet supported. To support your feet, you need some type of footrest. Footrests are available commercially but a sturdy box or stool at the right height will work just fine.  Check the computer equipment positioning and adjust as needed.  You are good to go. |
|  | Adjustable Height Table/Desk and Adjustable Height Chair If you have the ability to adjust the height of your desk and have an adjustable height chair here's the strategy to get your body in a good position with good support.  First, adjust your chair height to get your feet placed directly on the floor.  Next, adjust the height of the desk so when your hands are on the keyboard and the mouse your wrists will be relatively straight.  Look at the example. This person has adjusted her chair height, so her feet are on the floor. The desk height has been adjusted so her wrists are straight and her shoulders are relaxed. Her monitor is at a height that promotes neutral head and neck position. She has put a document holder between the keyboard and monitor.  She is good to go. |
|  | StandingSit/Stand Workstations In the last several years we have seen a trend toward more standing workstations in the office and are starting to see that trend occur in home offices as well.  Fully powered sit/stand desks intended for the home office are in the marketplace. If circumstances indicate that you are moving towards a full-time home office status, considering a sit/stand arrangement may be an option. It is important that the table will raise high enough to at least match your standing elbow height.  For right now though you can probably figure out some creative ways to stand at work.  Maybe a counter is at the right height for you or you can place a box on a counter to achieve the correct height. |
|  | Standing Height This brings up the question, “What is the correct height?”  Here is the strategy.  With whatever shoes you will wear when standing – here is a side note, we do encourage some cushioning for your feet when standing more than a several minutes at one time. For shoes, it they are good for walking they will be good for standing. Another option is standing mats for those that like stocking feet.  At any rate, to determine your standing worksurface height, you want to be able to stand comfortably “tall” with your elbows at about 90 degrees, your shoulders relaxed and your wrists straight with hands on the keyboard. Match the worksurface height to your hand position. Footrest As possible, use a footrest to allow for alternative foot position. You can also shift weight forward to the balls of the feet and backwards to the heels when standing on both feet or alternately when standing with one foot in front of the other.  Perform “heel lifts” frequently. This will improve lower extremity circulation.  Remember you don’t want to stand up all day. Mix up some standing with seated activities and get in some walking as well.  Modify the time periods. Remember this mantra . . . “Don’t wait until it’s too late!” Move on a regular basis! |
|  | Couch Are we saying never sit on the couch or recliner and use your laptop?  The answer is no! You can certainly spend some time on the couch, just not for hours on end!  Recalling that ergonomics is all about body and arm position and support here are tips for couch and recliner use with your laptop.  Place pillows underneath your elbows to support your arms and shoulders.  Laptop lap desks are available. Be careful they allow for ventilation for the laptop.  Angle the monitor for optimal head position.  Make sure your legs and feet are well supported. Sofa servers can work pretty well.  Limit your time spent on the couch. As humans we have great ability to get intellectually engaged for hours on end. All of sudden its two or three hours later and you realized you haven’t moved. And honestly, your body is not happy!  Get in the habit of the 30/30/30 micro-breaks! |
|  | Complete the Worksheet Let’s pull the information together by completing the ***Worksheet***.  We’ll start with the ***Desk*** and ***Feet/Legs*** section, move onto the ***Laptop*** ***Computer*** or ***Desktop*** ***Computer*** sections as appropriate for your situation and finish with the ***Document Holder***, ***Telephone/Webcam***, ***Storage*** and ***Lighting*** sections. The ***Recommended Specifications*** section is optional based your situation. |
|  | Desk Features Pull out the ***Worksheet*** and let’s work on filling out the ***Desk Features*** section.  Configuration is the shape of desk. It could be a straight desk or table, a corner shape, an L-shape or even a U-shape.  Next note if it is height adjustable in some way like a sit/stand desk or is fixed height like a traditional desk.  Document the height of the current desk or table by measuring from the top of the surface to the floor for the Stand and/or Sit height. Desk Issues and Recommendations Fill out the ***Desk Issues*** and ***Recommendations*** pertinent to your home office situation. Please review the ***VOD*** and ***SSA* *Home Office Ergonomics Quick Reference Guide*** if you need to. |
|  | Feet/Legs Features Moving on to the ***Feet/Legs Features***, indicate if your feet were initially dangling or supported, if you had a footrest in place and if you had adequate leg clearance under the desk. Feet/Legs Issues and Recommendations Fill out the ***Feet/Legs Issues*** and ***Recommendations*** pertinent to your home office situation. Please review the ***VOD*** and ***SSA* *Home Office Ergonomics Quick Reference Guide*** if you need to. |
|  | Laptop or Desktop Computer Features Based on whether you have a ***Laptop*** or ***Desktop Computer*** fil out the pertinent ***Features*** section.  ***Location*** is where the laptop or desktop is physically located.  ***Keyboard*** is what type of keyboard you have. This could be the laptop keyboard. A straight keyboard is a standard keyboard, A curved keyboard is an “ergonomics” keyboard like a Microsoft or Logitech.  ***Keyboard Technique*** is your preferred style of keyboard use; “piano player” or “forearm supporter”.  ***Keyboard Wrist Res***t notes whether you have a wrist rest in place.  ***Keyboard Tray*** indicates whether you have a keyboard tray or not and if it is adjustable.  Fill out the Issues and Recommendations pertinent to your home office situation. |
|  | ***Mouse*** is what type of mouse you have. This could be the laptop touchpad or a separate mouse. A shell mouse is a standard mouse, A rollerball/trackball has some sort of ball, a vertical mouse positions your hand so your thumb is pointing up.  ***Mouse Wrist Rest*** notes whether you have a wrist rest in place.  Fill out the Mouse Issues and Recommendations pertinent to your home office situation. |
|  | ***Monitor*** is whether you use the laptop monitor or have a separate monitor and how many if you have more than one. Also note how you use monitors if you have more than one; either Primary/Primary or Primary/Secondary  Fill out the ***Monitor Issues*** and ***Recommendations*** pertinent to your home office situation. Please review the ***VOD*** and ***SSA* *Home Office Ergonomics Quick Reference Guide***if you need to. |
|  | Document Holder If you reference hard copy often, you may want to use a document holder. The holder elevates and positions documents on an incline thereby improving head and neck posture.  This can be placed either directly in front of the you between the monitor and keyboard if enough room is available or can be placed on a desktop copy stand placed adjacent to the monitor.  Fill out the Worksheet for ***Document Holder Features*** and ***Issues*** and ***Recommendations.*** |
|  | Telephone/Webcam Your telephone may be one of your essential work tools. Think for a moment about how much time you utilize the telephone.  If you make only a few short calls a day, a telephone handset will probably work well.  Avoid cradling the handset between your ear and shoulder particularly if you are using your keyboard or handwriting.  Hold the handset with your hand.  If you spend hours on the phone every day or if you make frequent short calls, you may want to use a headset. It allows for “hands-free” computing and promotes neutral head and neck position. It may take some getting used to, but if needed, the benefit of a headset is well worth it. You may also want to consider using the speaker phone feature of your phone for hands-free listening while computing.  If you have a webcam, it may be built into the laptop or be a separate camera/microphone. Make sure you can maintain a comfortable position when using the webcam.  Fill out the Worksheet for ***Telephone/Webcam Features*** and ***Issues*** and ***Recommendations.*** |
|  | Storage Make use of the reach zone principles we discussed to position your office equipment; tools such as calculators, printers, fax machines, pens and scissors.  Keep them within your Comfort or Extended Reach Zones as it makes sense for you. If you find yourself frequently reaching outside of your extended reach zone, consider moving the item into the reach zone if possible or relocating it entirely.  It’s amazing how much “stuff” we can accumulate in our offices. The old adage, “a place for everything and everything in its place” makes good sense. On a regular basis remove clutter that can negatively affect your postures and functionality.  Fill out the Worksheet for ***Storage Features*** and ***Issues*** and ***Recommendations.*** |
|  | Lighting Office lighting is a significant issue. When you think about home office lighting, consider two factors: general illumination for the entire work area and task lighting that is specifically focused on your work area itself. General Lighting General illumination in the office area may be an issue: either too much or not enough. Think about controlling light coming through windows with shades or blinds as needed. Can the computer setup be at 90 degrees to windows to avoid glare? Task Lighting Task lamps are a great way to add additional light where needed. They come in a variety of configurations and wattage. For example, you may use a desktop lamp to provide additional light on your documents.  How you position the task light is important. Don’t point it directly at your computer screen - that will create glare. Make sure it is not in your direct line of vision.  Fill out the Worksheet for ***Lighting Features*** and ***Issues*** and ***Recommendations.*** |
|  | Recommended Specifications Section The drawing provides a graphic illustration of a typical ergonomics workstation and work posture. As needed, you can record the measurements to serve as reference points, especially if you are seeking additional assistance from a specialist. |
|  | Follow-up Section Use the Follow-up Section to record and track actions you need to pursue in optimizing your workstation and work practices. |
|  | Ergonomics – A Potent Tool Thank you for viewing this VOD and working through the ***Self-Assessment Worksheet.***  Ergonomics is a potent tool. We hope you were able to identify and act on the opportunities to optimize your home office setup and work practices.  Improved comfort, well-being, and productivity will be your reward!  Employees who have viewed the “SSA Home Office Ergonomics: Self-Assessment with Tips and Techniques” VOD, completed the Self-Assessment Worksheet and implemented ergonomics adjustments/changes to improve their ergonomics, and believe they require additional assistance can request an ergonomics assessment by following the instructions provided in SSA’s Ergonomics Program document: “How To Obtain An Ergonomics Assessment” (see Appendix B).  We appreciate your time and attention! |