

Good display screen equipment (DSE) practice

If you normally use a computer for an hour or more a day, then the following guidance is for you



Potential health problems

Poor DSE use or workstation layout can lead to:

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)

Aches and pains in hands, wrists, arms, neck, shoulders or back after long periods of DSE work. Usually temporary but can lead to chronic soft tissue disorders.

Symptoms:

- discomfort
- soreness/stiffness
- pain
- swelling
- numbness/tingling
- functional disability

Eye fatigue

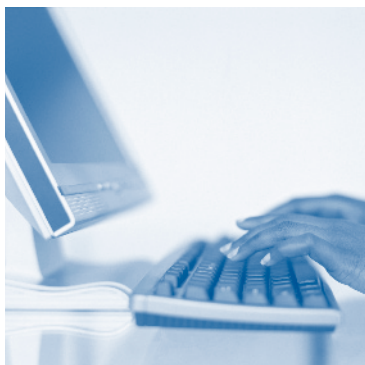
DSE use does not cause permanent eye/eyesight damage, but can lead to:

- discomfort or tired, red or sore eyes
- headache or migraine
- temporary eye strain

Take regular breaks and momentarily look away from intensive DSE work every five minutes or so to relax the eyes.

Stress

Caused by high work rates or deadline pressures. Pace yourself and take regular breaks.



Software-induced stress

Working with unfamiliar software can cause anxiety. University IT Services and the Centre for Staff Training and Development run courses on commonly used software to help you operate and get the best from it.

Finding a comfortable position

(see diagram overleaf)

Adjust chair and DSE to find the most comfortable position.

The chair should provide support for the lower back, forearms should be horizontal, wrists straight and eyes at the same level as the top of the monitor.

Avoid seat pressure on backs of legs and knees.

A footrest is helpful for shorter users.

Provide sufficient space on the desk for documents and equipment.

Allow space under desk to move legs freely.

Try different workstation arrangements – **a document holder may help to avoid awkward neck and eye movements.**

Arrange desk and DSE to avoid screen glare – **adjust curtains and blinds to eliminate unwanted light.**

Adequately illuminate source documents.

Eliminate distractions, such as noise.

Provide adequate heating and ventilation.

Typing

Use a keyboard with legible, tactile keys and adjustable feet.

Rest hands and wrists on the space in front of the keyboard when not keying.

Keep wrists straight – **use a soft touch and don't overstretch fingers.**

Using a mouse

Position the mouse to keep wrists straight without over stretching the arm.

Don't grip too tightly or press too hard.

Avoid placing wrist in an awkward position or leaning it on a hard edge; a padded mouse mat can help prevent pressure sores.

Reading the screen

Make sure screen surface is clean to reduce glare.

Adjust brightness and contrast to suit room lighting.

Screen characters should be sharply focused and flicker-free.

Ensure text is large enough and select appropriate colours.

Posture

Don't sit in exactly the same position for long periods.

Some movement is desirable – **but avoid repeated stretching for things.**

Don't twist the back – **to use a printer behind you, rotate yourself using the chair or relocate the printer.**

Breaks

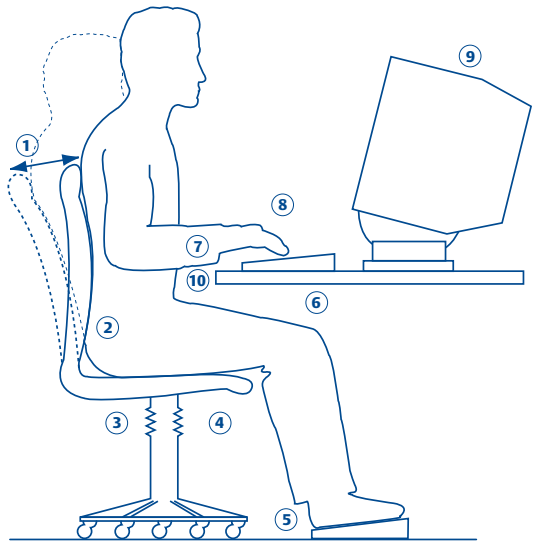
Use natural job breaks or arrange tasks to periodically work away from the DSE.

Rest breaks must be taken if this is not possible.

Don't use DSE for over 90 minutes without a rest or activity change – **shorter sessions are preferable.**



Setting up your workstation



Ideal seated position for DSE work

- 1 Seat back adjustable.
- 2 Good lumbar support for lower back
- 3 Seat height adjustable.
- 4 No excess pressure from seat on underside of thighs and backs of knees.
- 5 Foot support if needed.
- 6 Room for feet under desk – no obstacles.
- 7 Forearms approximately horizontal.
- 8 Minimal bending of wrists.
- 9 Screen height and angle to allow comfortable head position, with neck straight.
- 10 Space in front of keyboard to support hands/wrists during pauses in typing.



Workstation assessments

Managers must ensure that all staff who use computers for more than an hour a day are properly assessed and that staff are trained in the use of DSE equipment. The University's online training and assessment software, DSEasy, should be used. A link to this can be found on the health and safety website.

Your Area Health & Safety Coordinator or trained DSE Assessor will coordinate DSE assessments in your area.

Eye and eyesight testing

Under the DSE Regulations, DSE users are entitled to a free eye test. This can be arranged, with prior approval from your manager, with your own optician, then reclaim the cost from your School/Directorate. Should spectacles be required specifically for DSE work, the University will refund the cost of the corrective lenses and frame up to a maximum cost as shown in Safety Guide 13.

Further guidance can be found in the Safety Guide – Display Screen Equipment (DSE) (SG13). To download the guide visit our website and look under 'resources'.

DSE practice

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