



Using a computer?

Advice on safe use

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Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Facilitators

Departments have appointed a DSE Facilitator to assist with problems associated with using a computer at work. A list of DSE Facilitators can be found on the Health and Safety pages of the University's website.

Training and DSE Workstation Assessment

You are required to do the online Computer Safety training course and DSE self assessment. When you have completed your self assessment form you should give it to your Departmental DSE Facilitator. For access to the online course, email safety@essex.ac.uk.

Your chair

You should have a swivel chair which is in good condition. The back height and tilt, seat height and tilt should be fully adjustable, with the seat slide, where fitted, adjusted to support your legs.

If you require assistance to adjust your chair to a comfortable position, you should contact your DSE Facilitator.

Your desk

Desktop layout must be set out properly with the screen and keyboard in front of you. If a document holder is required, it should be next to the screen, or between the screen and keyboard. Frequently used items should be close to you. Take notice of whether you are right or left handed and ensure you have space to the side for non-computer based work.

Keep clutter to a minimum.

Your mouse

Aches and pains can be caused by keeping the fingers tensed and slightly raised from the mouse. Maintain the natural drop from the shoulders to avoid muscle ache, tuck the elbow into the side of the body and keep your wrist flat. Alternatives to the conventional mouse are available.

Laptops

Laptops should only be used for short periods to input information when working away from your normal workstation.

Find a posture in which you can keep your wrists straight, your shoulders relaxed and your back supported.

Make sure the laptop is supported and stable and will not wobble or slide as you work. Do not support the laptop on your lap (because of the heat). On return to the office use a docking system.



PDA or Blackberry

Hand held devices, such as PDAs or Blackberrys should only be used for checking dates, numbers or quick communication and not as a substitute for a computer or laptop. Poor posture often causes neck and upper back pain so hold the device in a similar position to how you would hold a book. Do not bend the head forwards to peer at the screen. Keep the screen clean as it can become very dirty with fingerprints. "Blackberry Thumb" is very common due to excessive use of the thumb - use a stylus or your fingers.

Space

There is never enough space so make good use of what you have. Your computer desk must be adequate to allow you to move your computer back from your face, with enough room underneath to change position. Ensure lighting levels are adequate and comfortable. Check the screen for glare and reflections. Make sure the blinds are in good condition and use them.

Fatigue

Long periods of intense use can lead to tiredness, eyestrain and increased stress levels. Take regular breaks from DSE work; think 20-20-20: for every **20** minutes of working look away from the screen for **20** seconds and focus on something **20** metres or more away. Headaches and eye strain can be the result of defects in your eyes. Contact the Occupational Health Service on extension 2399 for details of eye tests.

Lunch breaks should be taken away from the workstation – enjoy a walk in the fresh air and return to your work refreshed and re-energised!



How to contact us:

Health and Safety Advisory Service

T (01206 87) 2944

E safety@essex.ac.uk

Occupational Health Service

T (01206 87) 2399

E ohstaff@essex.ac.uk

For more detailed information on a wide range of health, safety and wellbeing topics, visit the University's Health and Safety / Occupational Health web pages via the A-Z search.

