

SAFE USE OF DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT (DSE)

This leaflet gives advice on setting up your DSE workstation for comfort and can be used as a reminder of good practice. You may find it useful to refer to it as you carry out your *DSE Self Assessment*.

DSE USE

Users: The more that you use DSE, the greater the risk of harm. The questions on use at the start of the Display Screen Equipment Self Assessment Form will help determine how at risk you are. If you use DSE regularly as a significant part of your work, you will be defined as a **User** under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations. A User:

- has to use DSE for certain tasks
- uses DSE daily for continuous spells of an hour or more and
- has work that requires quick transfer of information and/or high levels of concentration

YOUR HEALTH

Aches, pains and sensory loss: If you get aches and pains whilst using the computer, check that you are following the guidance on recommended seating position (see below). Also ensure that you are taking regular breaks from DSE work. If the aches and pains continue after you make adjustments, or you are experiencing them after work, you should contact the Occupational Health Service on extn: 2933, ohquery@essex.ac.uk for advice. Don't ignore aches and pains, as it can lead to permanent harm.

Eyesight tests: If you are a DSE user (see Use above) you are entitled to regular eye and eyesight tests. If you would like an eye and eyesight test, please contact the Occupational Health Service on extn. 2933, ohquery@essex.ac.uk

BREAKS FROM DSE WORK

Breaks from DSE Work: Prolonged use of DSE can cause aches and pains and visual fatigue. It is recommended that you do not use DSE continuously for over an hour without taking breaks, (e.g. by carrying out a different type of task). A free program called *Workrave* is available at www.workrave.org. It can be programmed to remind you to take screen breaks at suitable intervals.

CHAIR AND RECOMMENDED SEATING POSITION

Your chair: should have adjustable height, a back that is adjustable in height and tilt, a seat slide mechanism (if necessary), casters or gliders, and a swivel mechanism.

Check your seating position:

- Chair back: Back vertical and backrest adjusted so that the lower back is supported and a space between the front edge of the chair and back of knee (approximately the width of three fingers together)
- Chair height: adjust so that:
 - Your elbows are vertically under the shoulders when typing
 - Your forearms and hands need to be horizontal when the fingers are touching the middle row of letters, with a right angle at the elbow.

If the seat is too high or low it will force the wrists to be bent into a poor position

- The underside of your thighs should not be compressed when feet are flat on floor. If your feet do not touch the floor, you need a footrest.
- If it is not possible for you to sit fully back and upright in the seat, without the back of your knees hitting the front edge of the seat, then a chair with a shorter bottom cushion is needed.
- If your armrests prevent the chair getting close enough to the desk you need to remove them or lower the height of adjustable armrests.



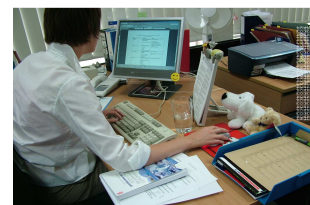
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DESK

Desk: You should have enough space on your desk for the equipment and materials you use frequently. They should be within easy reach.

Ideally you should be sitting at the straight edge of your desk (if you have a curved desk) and be able to sit in front of the screen, without twisting and position keyboard, mouse etc comfortably in front of you, without overstretching (see pictures on right).

You should have sufficient space under your desk for comfort. If your pedestal, equipment or personal belongings under the desk are stopping you from sitting close to the desk, or square on to the keyboard and screen, you will need to move the equipment or adjust the position of your workstation.



DISPLAY SCREEN

Image quality: the screen characters should be clear, readable and flicker free and the text size comfortable for you.

Reduce glare and reflections: by tilting or repositioning the screen. Close blinds if the source is daylight. Adjust colours, brightness or contrast to make the screen clearer.

Position the screen: so that you avoid prolonged or repetitive tilting of your neck. Your eyes should be roughly the same height as the top of the screen. If you find yourself leaning forward to peer at the screen, adjust the font size, bring the screen closer or arrange an eyesight test. If you copy type, you may find it useful to have a document holder positioned at the same height as the screen or between your screen and keyboard.

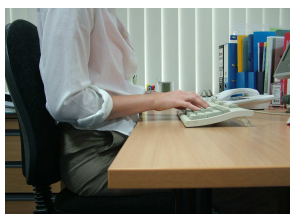
KEYBOARD AND MOUSE/INPUT DEVICE

Keyboard: Your keyboard should be separate from the computer and screen and it should be tiltable. Position it so that you have some space in front of the keyboard to rest your hands when you are not typing.

When you type make sure your hands are horizontal and level with the middle row of letters. Do not rest your wrists on the desk when typing, as this will make you bend your wrist awkwardly. (See picture (i) below).

Using a mouse: Place the mouse as close to you as possible (picture (ii)). Use a relaxed arm and straight wrist. Avoid overreaching (picture (iii)) or gripping the mouse.

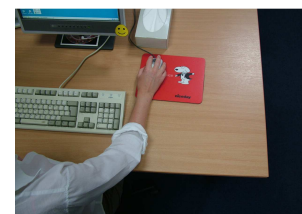
(i) Correct hand position



(ii) Correct mouse position



(iii) Overstretching



Portable equipment: If portability is a requirement it is not necessary for the keyboard and screen to be separate. However, if laptops are used for a prolonged time in the same place, a separate keyboard and mouse should be provided. It may also be necessary to raise the screen or provide a separate one. If you find the laptop heavy to carry, you may need a rucksack or trolley.