06.01.03

Ergonomics and Manual Handling – Ergonomics

The desk >

When setting up your workstation, the desk helps determine the placement of nearly all other equipment. This information bulletin will help you to get the most from your desk.

If you have a height-adjustable desk

Having first adjusted your chair to suit your body size, adjust the desk so the top surface is just below elbow height. See Figure 1. To determine your elbow height, relax your shoulders and bend your elbows to about 90 degrees and check the elbow height against the desk height. See Figure 2.

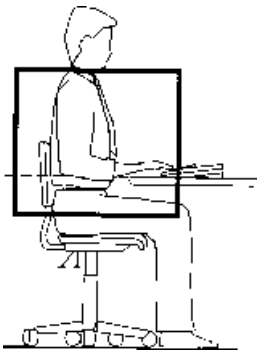


Figure 1

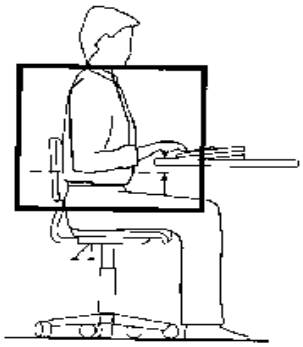


Figure 2

If you don't have a height-adjustable desk

If the chair has been adjusted and the desk is higher or lower than the elbow, other forms of adjustment will be required. Start by measuring the height difference between the desk and your elbow.

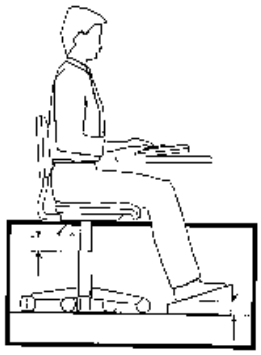
If the desk is too high

Raise the chair by the measured difference and use a foot rest.

Set the foot rest platform so that it is the same as the measured difference. See Figure 3.

Or

Lower the desk by cutting the legs down by the measured difference. Do this only if you are the sole user.



putting safety first >

If the desk is too low

Raise the height of the desk by extending the leg length or sitting it on wooden blocks or something similar. Remember to ensure that any such changes are secure and stable.

Clearance under the desk

General items, such as computer hard disc drives, boxes of documents or files, rubbish bins and mobile drawers should not be stored under desks where they will decrease or interfere with the space required for the legs. This may force the person to adopt a twisted or awkward posture of the spine. See Figures 4a and 4b.

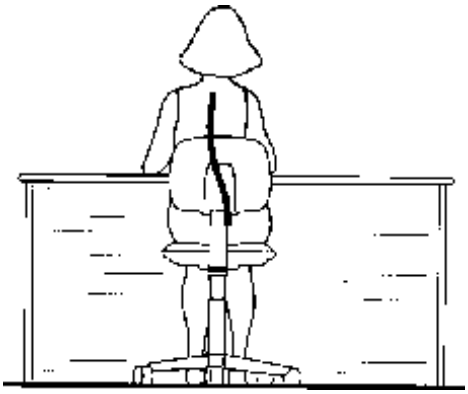


Figure 4a

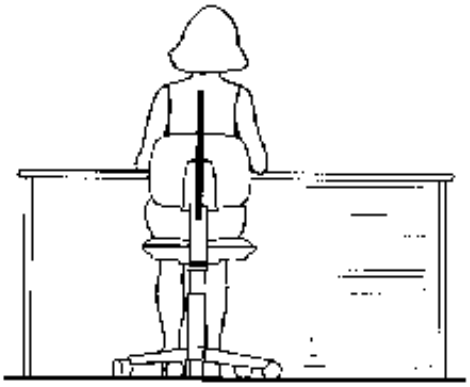


Figure 4b

Drawers

Most commonly used items should be placed in the top desk drawer to improve access and reduce reaching and bending movements. Where drawers are fitted to the desk, equipment such as the key-board and computer screen should be arranged on the desk so that the operator can sit comfortably in the leg-well space.

General storage on the desk

In trays

Place in-trays at the outer reach sector. See Figure 5. In-trays should not be located above shoulder level.

Stationery

A variety of containers are available for mixed stationery items. These should also be stored at outer reach sector (see Figure 5) or in the top desk drawer.

Reference books and folders

Large or heavy references such as telephone directories and manuals should either be stored within close reach of the seated user or in a nearby position where the user has to stand to access them. Handling of these items should not be conducted at the limit of a person's reach capacity while sitting as this can result in undue strain on the back, shoulder and arm muscles.

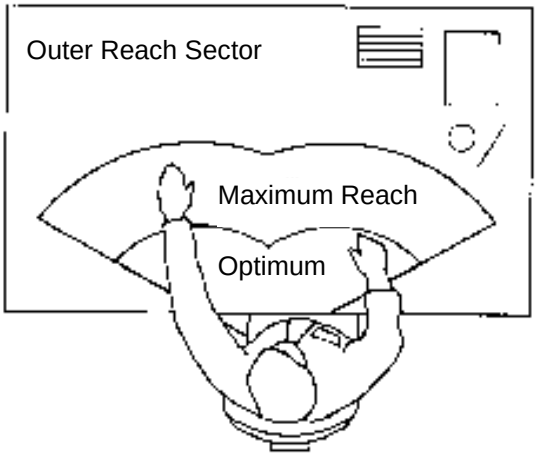


Figure 5: Showing outer reach sector, maximum reach sector and optimum reach sector

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