

Home working: Laptop setup

Dos

Raise your screen: Make sure your screen is raised so that the top of the screen is at eye level. This can be done using an adjustable laptop stand, a box or some books if necessary. Use a separate keyboard and mouse if possible. This enables the laptop screen to be positioned correctly.

Eyes, elbows and legs – setting up ergonomically

- **Eyes:** Laptop on stand, bringing screen up to a height where the top of the screen is approximately at eye-height. Raise with some books or a box file etc. if too low.
- **Elbows:** Try and use an adjustable chair and adjust your chair height so that your arms are at right angles, with forearms lightly supported by the work surface. Sitting at a height that means the external keyboard is at approximately elbow height. If an adjustable chair is not available, try and use a chair that is the best height to achieve the position described above and use cushions to raise height.
- **Legs:** Ensuring that the underside of your thighs are supported if sitting. You may need something to place your feet on if your feet are not firmly on the floor.

Make sure the lower back is well supported. Support for your lower back will help encourage good posture. You can use a folded towel to give you more support or consider a back-support cushion if needed.

Movement is important and there are plenty of simple stretching exercises that can be done when sitting or standing. Remember that no posture is good when sustained for too long.

Take regular, short breaks move around for five or ten minutes every hour, aiming for frequent, short breaks. Consider taking micro breaks to stretch, move around, change activity by taking a phone call, do some reading or get a drink to avoid prolonged static postures. Take more frequent breaks if your DSE setup is not optimal or if you are experiencing discomfort.

Can you (and do you) adjust the screen brightness to fit the environment?

Adjust screen brightness to match conditions- i.e. when sunlight is directly on the screen or in bright environments. Check whether your laptop adjusts screen brightness automatically. Newer laptops have this function but older ones may not.

Don'ts

Posture: We may slouch at a work desk but on soft furnishings at home and when we are out, it is even easier to form an unhealthy 'C' shape with the spine. Guidance about office postures often applies just as well elsewhere. Aim for your spine to be a healthy 'S' shape. Avoid sitting on unsupportive seating such as a sofa, or staying in a static posture.

Avoid working with sunlight directly on your screen. Keep a clean screen

Keep your screens clean and free from dust and smears, to reduce veiling reflections (glare) which can make screens more difficult to read.

Try to avoid working with your laptop directly on your knees

Working with your laptop on your knees leads to poor neck posture and should be avoided. Consider if work done this way is essential. If the work is essential and there is no table to use, place something on your knees underneath the laptop to raise the screen height and reduce neck strain (e.g. a briefcase or some books / magazines). Make sure, the arrangement is stable and that the laptop cooling vents are not obstructed.

Take frequent breaks if you cannot raise the laptop

If it is not possible to raise the laptop off your knees, you should minimise the amount of time you work with the laptop on your knees, and take very frequent breaks (e.g. 2 to 5 minutes rest at least every 15 minutes). There is limited information available on how long it is safe to work on mobile devices (which are not set up ergonomically) before taking a break. In reality, it will vary depending on the exact circumstances and type of device. However, based on research and guidance it is recommended that 15 minutes should be considered as a sustained period of mobile work.

This 15-minute figure should be viewed as cumulative time, it applies even if a break occurs after 15 minutes and work continues again after a break. This is on the basis that in reality, taking a significant break every 15 minutes is likely to be disruptive and unfeasible, and so it is unlikely it will actually be done. The cumulative aspect is intended to make it is less disruptive overall to make changes to the way you are working and set

yourself up more ergonomically – e.g. using an external keyboard, or voice dictation.