Ergonomics Checklist for Office Workers

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INTRODUCTION

Shoulders relaxed

Back support

Arm support

Thighs horizontal

Feet flat on the floor

18-24"

90°

90°

16-20"

25-30"
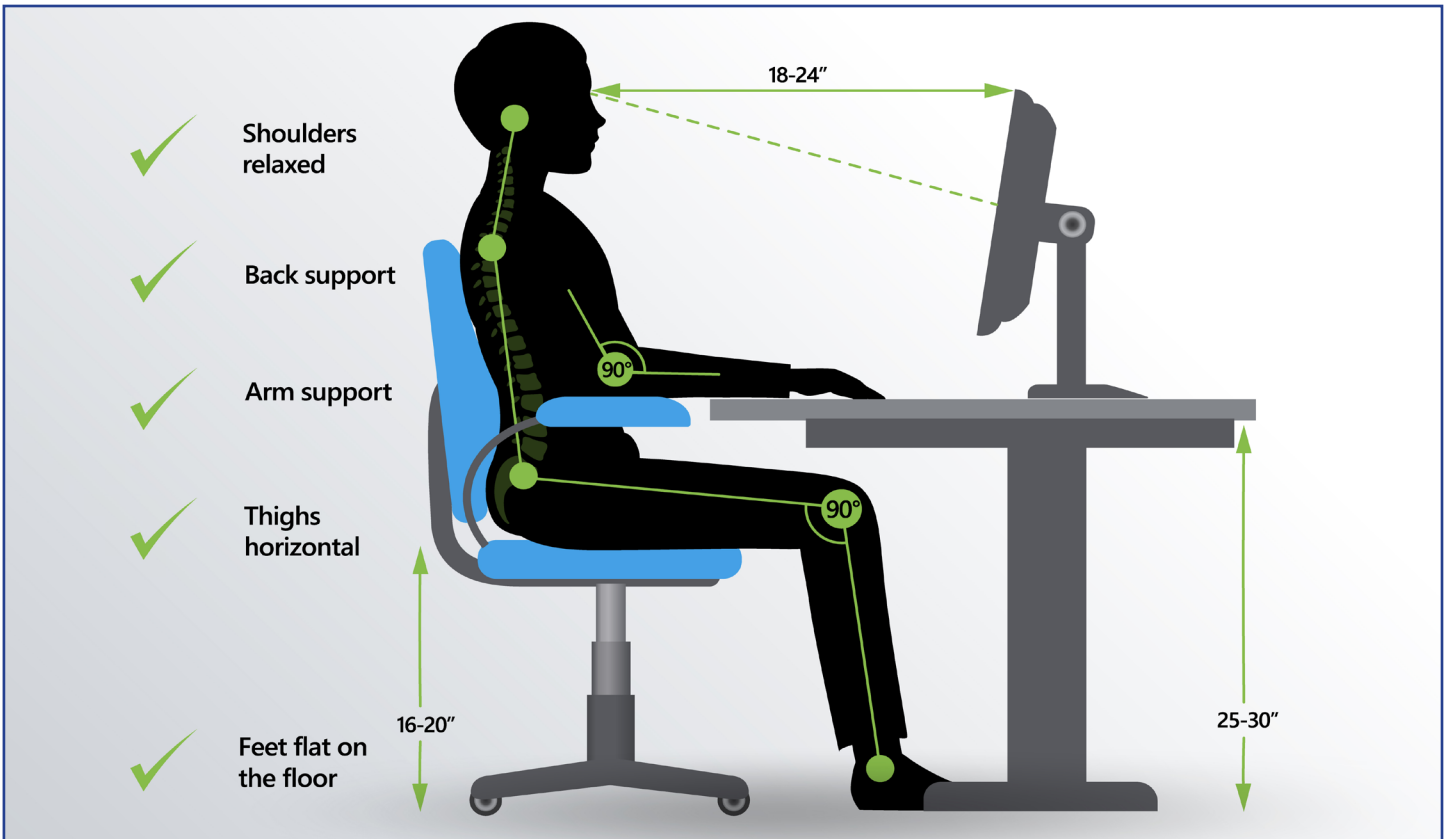
Ergonomics is the process of designing or modifying work to fit the worker. In the workplace, the goal of ergonomics is to increase the productivity and profits of an organization by eliminating discomfort and the risk of injuries on the job. When employees are working at improperly designed workstations, muscle fatigue, eyestrain, headaches, and other discomforts can become factors in decreasing the effectiveness of an organization. These factors can decrease morale and motivation and increase injuries and illnesses. Fortunately, a good ergonomics program can help reduce the physical and mental strain put on employees and have a positive effect on overall performance and operations.

All offices require people to interact with the working environment. The layout of their desk, the placement of the computer, the type of chair, and the overall space people work in affects the ergonomic conditions. Furthermore, people come in different sizes and shapes, so the work environment needs to adjust to meet their individual needs. If the work environment is not adjusted to meet their needs, injuries and illnesses can result.

This publication provides a checklist that employers can use as a tool to determine how compatible employees are with their work environment. It helps identify factors that can contribute to discomfort and injuries on the job. Some of the factors may include **employee posture, excessive reaching and twisting, wrist position, lighting, equipment placement**, and other factors. By using the checklist, identified factors can be addressed and corrected to prevent further or new injuries from occurring.

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Office Ergonomics Checklist

This checklist consists of interactive forms with a series of yes/no and fill-in-the-blank questions that serve as an ergonomic assessment to determine problem areas.

Part 1: General Information

Complete the following general information about the ergonomic assessment. This information is important because it tracks who has had an assessment, when that assessment was conducted and by whom, and when that assessment was reviewed to determine if any training or new equipment is needed.

Date of Assessment:_____

**Work location
of employee:**_____

**Assessment
conducted by:**_____

**Assessment
reviewed by:** _____

Assessment review date: _____

Part 2: Sharp Edge Hazards

This section of the checklist involves looking for sharp edges that the employee presses against regularly. These sharp edges can cause localized pressure injuries that can include bruising, slowing of blood circulation, and nerve damage. Common areas for sharp edges are the edges and supports of desks, staplers, keyboard trays, filing cabinets, and various other pieces of office equipment, depending on the age and quality of the equipment. Newer office equipment tends to have a better ergonomic design, making sharp edges less of an issue.

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Part 3: Adjustable Equipment

A good ergonomic environment allows for maximum adjustability of the office equipment including desk height, chair height, backrest, seat pan, armrests, footrests, computer screens, keyboard position, document holders, and lighting. The adjustability of the office equipment is the key factor in creating safe working environments for your employees.

Are the following items easily adjustable?	Yes	No
Seat height?		
Backrest/lumbar support height?		
Backrest movement forwards and backwards?		
Chair arms?		
Chair seat pan moves forward and backward?		
Chair seat pan tilts?		
Footrest?		
Desk height?		
Computer screen tilt?		
Distance from computer to the operator?		
Keyboard height?		
Keyboard angle?		
Distance from keyboard to the operator?		
Document holder?		
Lighting?		
Other comments?		

Part 4: Posture

After determining if adjustable office equipment is available to the employee, it is time to see if it is properly adjusted. The first thing to look at is the employee's posture when working. A proper posture will help ensure good circulation and reduce muscle fatigue which is essential to preventing injuries and increasing motivation and morale. This checklist step is going to involve watching the employee work to see if the following conditions are met:

Proper posture for the employee:	Yes	No
Are both feet flat on the floor or on a footrest?		
Are the knees bent at 90° angles?		
Are the thighs parallel to the floor?		
Do the thighs fit comfortably under the desk?		
Is the upper back supported by the backrest?		
Does the lumbar support the lower back?		
Are the upper arms hanging by the sides?		
Are the lower arms parallel to the floor?		

Part 4: Posture (continued)

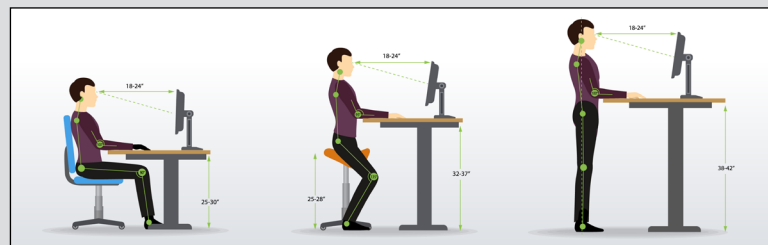| Proper posture for the employee:*	Yes	No
Are the wrists in a neutral position?		
Is the neck bent forward to look at the computer screen?		
Is the neck bent forward to look at documents?		
Does the employee lean forward while typing?		
Is the employee hunched over the work?		

Pay close attention to the above section of this checklist but remember that poor posture can be a product of a lifetime of bad habits. Simple readjustments of office equipment may not be the solution. Training may also be needed to teach the importance of good posture in day-to-day living.

Part 5: Work Environment

Computer screens, monitors, keyboards, and mouse	Yes	No
Can the employee access the computer without excessive reaching or twisting?		
Is there any glare on the computer screen caused by lighting from overhead lights or windows?		
Is the top of the computer monitor tilted back?		
Is the first line of text on the computer screen at eye level?		
Is the computer monitor positioned directly in front of the employee?		
Is the computer screen at a comfortable viewing distance from the employee?		
If a laptop is the employee's primary device, are external monitor(s), keyboard, and mouse connected?		
Does the keyboard angle allow for the wrists to maintain a neutral position?		
Is the keyboard at the appropriate height to maintain the wrists in a neutral position?		
Can the fingers reach all of the keys without awkward straining?		
Does the employee have to reach for the keyboard?		
Is the employee's wrist in a neutral position when using the mouse?		
Is the employee using the whole arm to move the mouse?		
Is the mouse next to the keyboard or does the employee have to reach for the mouse?		
Does the employee let go of the mouse when they are not using it?		

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Workstations - After reviewing how the employee interfaces with the computer, check out the workstation layout. A workstation is a location where employees perform their job. In the office environment, employees work in a wide range of environments, from small to large cubicles or offices with desks. Different factors need to be taken into consideration when reviewing the workstation including clutter from personal items that may force the employee to spend long hours in awkward postures or too much or too little light that can cause eye strain, fatigue, and headaches.

| Workstation layout	Yes	No
Are frequently used items within arm's reach?		
Does the employee have to twist or excessively reach to perform job duties?		
Is the workstation height at a comfortable height for the employee?		
Is the working surface covered with excess clutter?		
Is there adequate legroom under the desk for the employee?		
Is there adequate lighting that prevents computer glare?		

Phones can be a major pain for employees. In offices where employees continue to use hard-wired phones, the receiver tends to get cradled between the head and the shoulder, causing the median nerve in the neck to be constricted. Smartphones, too, are often used in a person's job. While the phone and screen size, shape, and thumb length vary, smartphone use can cause tendon inflammation, hand fatigue, and other injuries caused by awkward postures and repetitive movements. As more offices move to software-based phone systems with headsets, some phone-related soreness is prevented. However, good phone ergonomics can provide healthy solutions.

Phones	Yes	No
Is the phone within easy reach?		
Is the employee cradling the phone in an awkward position?		
Can the employee use a speakerphone?		
Is there a company-provided headset?		

Part 6: Training

This part of the ergonomic checklist is one of the most important. All employees need training on how to work safely in the office environment. By taking the time to train your employees on the proper ergonomic techniques, injuries can be avoided.
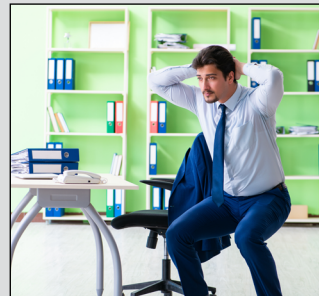
Has the employee been trained on:	Yes	No
Proper posture?		
Proper work methods?		
When and how to adjust their workstations?		
The importance of stretching and taking regular breaks?		
How to seek assistance for their concerns?		

For more information on ergonomics, download or stream any of the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC)-Workplace Safety's free workplace publications or videos; or contact a DWC safety training specialist at www.TxSafetyAtWork.com to help your company create or expand your ergonomics program.

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