

## **Article: Proper Ergonomics for the Remote Worker**

We can't predict where you're reading this.

In the past, we could have been more certain. We would have assumed you were sitting at a well-positioned desk, on a lumbar-supportive chair, with optimum lighting, reading from a computer screen at the correct eye level — all within a traditional office environment.

And if you are, congratulations! Your back, eyes, neck, and wrists will thank you.

However, there's a strong chance you're not in an office. Perhaps you're reading this on a tablet while sitting on a train, or on a phone while queueing at a coffee shop. Or maybe you're at home, sitting on a dining chair, reading from a laptop balanced on a stack of cookery books. Such is the variability of the modern workstation.

This variability stems from one of the most significant shifts in modern working over the past decade: the widespread adoption of remote and hybrid work.

The move away from traditional office setups has brought several advantages — better work-life balance, increased productivity, and reduced commuting time and costs. As a result, employees are adjusting their professional lives to better align with their personal needs. However, as remote and hybrid working has become the new normal for many companies, a new need has emerged: remote workspace ergonomics.

Unlike traditional office environments — which are professionally designed using ergonomic principles to meet health and safety standards — remote working setups are typically more improvised and inconsistent. With home and remote workspaces varying widely, and many people forced to work with limited equipment and space, a growing portion of the workforce is operating in less-than-ideal conditions for healthy working.

In the less structured and regulated environment of the remote workspace, it is up to the employee to proactively manage their own ergonomics to ensure they are working in a safe and sustainable way. This has, therefore, accelerated the need for employee training that covers two crucial knowledge areas: first, how to set up an optimal ergonomic workspace yourself, and second, key ergonomic principles for maintaining healthy remote working.

That's why we created our new *Ergonomics for a Remote Workplace* course. It addresses key knowledge gaps with detailed ergonomic best practices, enabling remote employees to set up and maintain a safe and comfortable workstation, as well as continue to practice correct working ergonomics — whether in the office, at home, or on the move.

To illustrate what you can expect from the course, let's outline a few tips that address some of the unique challenges a typical remote worker faces when working outside the controlled environment of an office.

**No fancy chair? No worries**

If you don't have access to an adjustable chair with dedicated lumbar support, don't worry. You can maintain a healthy, ergonomic working posture by placing your feet flat on the floor or a footrest, allowing your knees to bend at a 90-degree angle. This promotes better alignment between your legs and hips. If you don't have a footrest, a stack of books, a thick cushion, or a shoebox will also do the trick!

### **DIY lumbar support**

To avoid slouching, create your own lumbar support by placing a small pillow or rolled towel at the base of your back to support the natural curve of your spine. Adjust your posture periodically, ensuring your shoulders are back and relaxed. This helps maintain a neutral seated position throughout the day.

Who needs a super-expensive, hyper-optimized chair designed by NASA scientists when you've got cushions, towels, and shoeboxes, right?

### **Tweaking your makeshift workstation**

Many remote workers must contend with limited space, often having to repurpose kitchen or dining tables into workstations. While not ideal, there are some simple ergonomic tips you can follow to ensure you use your remote work environment in a sustainable and safe manner.

Ensure the height of your work surface allows your elbows to rest at a 90-degree angle, with your forearms parallel to the floor. Keep your wrists in a neutral, straight position to avoid strain — your hands, wrists, and forearms should form a straight line from elbow to fingertips. If you have access to an external keyboard and mouse, position them at a comfortable height and within easy reach to prevent overreaching and support better posture.

### **Keep on moving**

Office workers typically move around more — to take breaks, go to meetings, chat with colleagues. Remote workers, by contrast, may remain seated for extended periods without taking breaks. This lack of movement increases the risk of static posture-related issues like back pain, eye strain, and repetitive strain injuries. To counter this, make it a routine to stand up, stretch, and move your body throughout the day. Ideally, this would be every 30 minutes, as regular movement has been proven to reduce muscle tension and improve blood circulation.

Remote workspace ergonomics are inherently more variable and flexible — and often dictated by personal circumstances — than traditional office ergonomics. Ultimately, the success of a remote workforce depends on employees having the knowledge and skills to take responsibility for their ergonomic health. By applying ergonomic best practices, remote workers can create safer, healthier, and more productive working environments, wherever they are.

