



# PROCEDURE

## Workstation ergonomics



Issued with the authority of the Chief Commissioner  
and Chief Executive Officer of Scouts Australia NSW

Chief Commissioner signature		Chief Executive Officer signature	
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# Workstation ergonomics

## Table of Contents

1	Purpose.....	3
2	Workstation Ergonomics .....	3
3	Miscellaneous ergonomic equipment .....	3
	Mouse with scroll function .....	3
	Document holder.....	3
	Footrest .....	4
	Headphones.....	4
	‘Portable desk extensions “lozenges” .....	4
	Monitor risers .....	4
	Sit stand desks .....	4
4	Rest Breaks .....	5
5	Exercises .....	5
6	Records & references .....	5
7	Associated Forms.....	5
8	Appendices .....	6

# 1 Purpose

Ergonomics is the process for designing or arranging the workplace or a task to fit the people using it. Workstations are one place where appropriate and ergonomic set up is needed in order to avoid musculoskeletal disorders as a result of suboptimal arrangement.

All employed staff who perform office work at Scouts NSW will have access to information on how to appropriately set up their workstation. The concept of self-assessment is important, in order that workers become familiar with the requirements and become responsible for their own set up, seeking assistance or special equipment when needed.

# 2 Workstation Ergonomics

Scouts NSW will develop and maintain self-assessment checklists to enable staff members to review and correct their own ergonomic set-up in their work station, including for working at home.

The Head of Risk shall be responsible for ensuring currency of the self-assessment checklist, and for assisting staff members to complete the checklist with an appropriate level of knowledge and information.

As a guide, each staff member should complete a workstation ergonomic self-assessment upon commencement and each time a change or relocation occurs.

# 3 Miscellaneous ergonomic equipment

The following section describes various items of ergonomic equipment that are not necessary for everyone but may be of assistance.

## Mouse with scroll function

For staff who work on or edit large documents or enter data for up to or for more than four hours per day, a mouse with a scroll function can be an advantage. The benefits of a scroll function are that it minimises the number of times a user has to move the mouse, and therefore their wrist, to the scroll bar at the side of the screen. The scroll function allows you to leave the mouse pointer where it is and to scroll rapidly up or down to the required place in the document without moving your hand or wrist to do so.

## Document holder

When referring to documents while we work it is quite common to see people leaning over a document placed on the flat surface of their desk. This can place a great deal of stress and strain on the muscles of the neck and shoulders. Some fit to the monitor, while others sit on the desktop. There is a wide range of different types of copy holder, one of which will meet most people's needs. They also come in A3 and A4 sizes to hold different types of documents.

## Footrest

A footrest is needed by workers who cannot adjust their desk to their height, have to raise the height of their chair so that they can obtain the correct posture; in doing so their feet are not able to sit flat on the floor. Footrests are then used as support under the feet and legs. It is important, that if you have decided that you should have a footrest that you remember to use it when at your workstation. If you push it out of the way or do not use it you could experience excessive pressure on the backs of your thighs which could lead to diminished blood circulation to the lower legs and feet.

## Headphones

Staff who are continuously answering phones, if a traditional desk phone is used are required to bend and stretch to pick up the receiver numerous times each day. Depending on where the phone is able to be placed this may create a considerable amount of repetitive stretching. Headphones are an ideal solution.

There is a wide variety of headsets on the market so it will be important to trial several till you find the correct one for you that feels comfortable. Once you have selected the one with the right 'fit' ensure that you adjust the volume level so that is not too loud or too soft.

Maintenance is important with headsets as the enclosed space behind the soft cover of the ear-piece can become dirty. Clean it regularly. It is advisable to never allow another person to use your headset as this can lead to the possibility of the transfer of various infections.

## 'Portable desk extensions "lozenges"'

These are small, modestly priced (eg < \$50) portable surfaces that bridge the work area of an "L shaped" desk. They allow the user to gain a little more space in an L shaped or curved L shaped workstation. A lozenge also provides a straight-edged surface on which to place the keyboard. Subsequently it can increase comfort by making it easier for the user to maintain the keyboard at the right angle relative to the monitors.

## Monitor risers

A common shortfall of computer monitors, is that even when they claim to be height adjustable, their adjustment range is limited. This has led to the common practice of workers raising their monitor by placing books or reams of paper underneath their monitors. A more elegant alternative to this is to purchase a monitor riser. If you use dual monitors, you will need to purchase risers for both monitors.

## Sit stand desks

Sit stand desks are becoming popular however they are expensive and their high price tag means they are not commonplace. Although everyone can benefit from sit / stand flexibility, the most realistic solution is for individuals to take regular breaks through the day.

## 4 Rest Breaks

People are different in their need to take rest breaks from their work, however it is important that, given that you are allowed to take them, that you take and enjoy morning and afternoon teas and the lunch break. If you work in an office environment and at a computer it is very important that you use these breaks to move around and get the blood circulating again. Take a walk if you can and get some fresh air.

During periods of intense work of your desk it has also been found to assist in preventing MSD that staff stop every 25 minutes or so and take a short, five minute break. Do something else while you are not working on the computer or task. It is important to use another range of muscles. If you cannot stop after 25 minutes make sure you stop at 50 minutes and take a ten-minute break.

## 5 Exercises

If you are able to and wish to really maintain good posture you can undertake a range of fairly unobtrusive exercises while either seated or standing beside your desk. These exercises are outlined in WorkCover NSW Guide 1319 "Health and Safety in the Office" 2004 which is available to you through Workcover website.

If you do not feel comfortable performing these exercises and you wish to take a ten minute break then make sure that you do a range of other physical tasks which use different muscles than those which you use when keying. Such tasks can involve filing, cleaning up your office or general work area, going for a short walk around the office etc.

While we want to minimise hazardous stretching and reaching it is important to remember that your body was not designed to be held in a static position for too long (try holding your arm horizontally from your body for as long as you can and see what it feels like!). We also do not think as clearly when we sit for long periods; our breathing can become shallower and our circulation slows down and we can get stiffness and soreness in our muscles. Movement is essential to the body. Use every opportunity to keep yourself flexible. Check your posture out every so often and see if you can detect any pressure points or other areas of soreness. If you find one or two- then it's probably time for a break.

For any additional guidance, support or assistance to address what you may feel to be a problem, first talk to your immediate manager. If they need help, your Manager will seek further assistance from outside sources.

## 6 Records & references

- Worksafe Victoria Officewise guide to health and safety in the office 2006

## 7 Associated Forms

- 29.1 Workstation ergonomic self-assessment checklist

- 29.1 Working from Home Checklist (for employed staff only)

*Whenever this procedure is revised, the sponsor of this procedure will review the above forms, to determine whether the changes made to the procedure impact the forms. If changes are required, the sponsor must also make the appropriate revisions to the forms.*

## 8 Appendices

- Nil