



Working from home

During the COVID-19 pandemic staff may need to temporarily work from home due to Government guidance, here are some practical and helpful reminders for working at home.

Workstation set up

Setting up your workspace at home is the same as for the office. Your workspace should include:

- A table / desk
- Chair
- Laptop or PC

To begin, find a place with sufficient space to set up a work zone. Ensure there is sufficient light, ventilation and no trailing cords.

If you have not already done so, complete the [Home Working Risk Assessment Checklist](#).

Set up your working space following the resources: [Desktop General Guidance](#) / [Portable DSE](#) or follow the suggested desk set-up measures overleaf.

Check your electrical equipment is safe to use. Do not overload sockets or daisy chain extension leads.

Keep regular contact with your line manager and team to keep them informed you are safe and well.

Reporting

Work related incidents, near misses or ill health should be reported by using the [on-line reporting form](#).

Wellbeing

It is important to take regular breaks and maintain positive wellbeing when working.

- If using a makeshift setup take a micro-break (2-3 minutes) every 15 -20 minutes
- Take a break (5 minutes) every hour e.g. make a hot drink or walk around the room
- Do simple [workstation exercises](#)
- Keep hydrated and drink water
- Enjoy healthy snacks and avoid sugary or fatty foods
- Stay connected and maintain social connections with your team, family, friends and community

It is quite normal to feel anxious or stressed during these situations. Contact your line manager or [Staff Counselling Service](#) for free and confidential help.

Other resources

The following links provide additional information to help set up your workspace.

- [Desktop General Guidance](#)
- [Portable DSE](#)
- [Workstation exercises](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Homeworking Protocol](#)

Further Information

For further information or assistance, please contact the CUED Safety team at safety-office@eng.cam.ac.uk

Desk Set-Up When Home Working

A. I will be working from a home office

If you have a home office with a desk, chair and personal computer please try and follow the [Desktop General Guidance](#) as far as you possibly can and try and achieve the ideal sitting position. If you can't achieve this you could try implementing some of the measures suggested below where relevant.

B. I will be working with a laptop and do not have a home office

Location

Use a table and chair (rather than your sofa or bed).

Sitting position

Have a look at the ideal sitting position in the [Desktop General Guidance](#). Try and mimic this as far as you can.

Chair

Try and keep your knees below your hips. As it is unlikely that you will have an adjustable chair you can try to get into an ideal sitting position using a cushion or pillow (folded in half) to sit on and a rolled up towel against your lower back for lumbar support. These measures will help to take the strain and load off your spine but only use them if they feel comfortable. Make sure that your feet are placed on the floor. If you can't do this use a biscuit tin or similar as a footrest.

Screen height

If you have a laptop stand, use this to raise your screen. If you do not have one of these, raise your laptop/tablet up using books, biscuit tins etc. as best you can. You may not achieve the ideal position but aim to raise your laptop/tablet by a minimum of 15 cm. Your eyes should naturally hit the top third of your screen when you are looking straight ahead. Even a small height adjustment should help. The goal is to avoid dropping your head as much as possible to try and avoid neck and shoulder strain.

Mouse and Keyboard

If you are raising up your laptop use an external keyboard and mouse so that you are not working with your arms too high. See if you can take your keyboard and mouse home with you, particularly if you already have ergonomic ones. Make sure that you have enough USB ports to connect these. Your elbows should be at a 90 degree angle, tucked closely to your body, and your wrists should be in a neutral position. This posture helps keep you from rounding your shoulders and pulling your neck muscles.

If you can't attach an external mouse and keyboard, leave your laptop in place on the table rather than raising it up but you must take more breaks. Try and move every 15 minutes (more on taking breaks and exercises below).

Screen Glare

If you can, try not to put your laptop directly underneath a bright artificial light. Try and use natural light as much as possible.

Taking Breaks and Exercise

Regardless of your set up, the best way to look after your musculoskeletal health is to take regular breaks and to move around as much as possible. The more 'makeshift' your set-up, the more important it is for you to move. If you have a good home office set-up, take a break for 5-10 minutes every hour. For other set-ups take a break every 15-20 minutes.

Here are some tips to help you to move more:

- Stand up every time you use the phone
- Try and do more activities away from the screen e.g. reading paperwork
- Set up a reminder e.g. a timer on your phone. You can also install software such as [Workrave](#) on your computer that allows you to set reminders.