

How to set up your workstation

*The simple strategies **that work!***

by Mark Wong from the PostureDirect blog

www.posturedirect.com

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

Let's get straight to the point.

Let's answer the question of, "Why should you even read this e-book?".

My intention is simple. ***I want to help you.***

I want to help you discover the simple strategies to ***improve your workstation setup.***

Now... why would we want to know the best way to set up your workstation?

Because by doing this, it can help:

- a) Completely eliminate your pain.
- b) Prevent any current pain from developing into an even worse problem.
- c) Fix your posture!

If any of these sound like something you'd be interested in, I know for a fact that you can immediately benefit from this e-book.

But before we get into all of the good stuff, let me quickly introduce myself to you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Hi there! My name is Mark Wong and I am a registered physiotherapist (Physical therapist).

Firstly, I would like to extend my warm thanks and gratitude for taking the time to download this e-book.

It really means a lot to me that you have shown interest and taken the initiative to improve your posture.

It is with this e-book, I hope to draw attention to the importance of **optimizing your workstation to improve your posture.**

MY STORY

In my opinion, ***posture is everything.***

... And to be quite honest with you, most of us actually have absolutely shocking posture.

I know firsthand that being in pain can drain the energy from you.

Over several years, I had let my own bad posture create imbalances in my body leading to nagging aches and pains.

You probably even shared the same feelings of helplessness and frustration.

Until one day, I decided to take control of it once and for all.

Fixing the workstation seemed like one of the first and logical thing to do. So I did... And it made a big difference!

Let me share with you the simple strategies I used to help myself and many of my patients to conquer their postural pain!

THE BIRTH OF POSTUREDIRECT.COM

By first identifying our problem, we can start to do something about it!

Over the past 10 years of practicing as a physiotherapist, I began to notice an emerging pattern in many of my patients who would continually present to the clinic over and over again.

Every day I would see the same type of people coming in with neck, shoulder, upper back and lower back pain.

Everyone had the same story: Too much sitting. Too much sitting with bad posture. Too much pain from sitting with bad posture!

Aha! (... *This was my light bulb moment.*)

What could I do to help the vast number of people who have developed pain as a result of their bad posture whilst sitting at work all day?

It was then I realized that I needed to create an effective strategy to help and reach out to these people.

This is why I created [PostureDirect.com](https://www.posturedirect.com).

DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this e-book is for informational purposes only.

I have not specifically assessed you and therefore cannot guaranty that all of the recommendations contained in this e-book are suitable for you.

Any advice stated is based on my opinion and personal experiences.

Although I am a qualified health practitioner and offer the very same information to many (if not all) of the patients I see in the clinic, I still strongly encourage you to do your own research and decide for yourself if you think the suggestions in this e-book will be appropriate for you.

Please seek professional advice if you require further clarification or if you are unsure of anything.

By reading this e-book, you agree that myself and PostureDirect.com is not responsible for any injury that may arise as a result of following any information presented.

But having said that, I have written this free e-book for you with the aim of optimising one of the most common factors that contribute to poor posture and postural pain - that is, your ***workstation ergonomics***.

THE RELATIONSHIP: POSTURE AND WORKSTATION

Does this sound familiar?

You started to develop some **postural pain** from all the sitting you are doing at work.

You've done a few stretches and went for a couple of massages, but still the pain persists.

...Why?

Maybe it's not necessarily the fact that you have bad posture (*or maybe it is*), but could it be that **your workstation is preventing you from maintaining a good posture?**

No matter how good you think your posture is, your sitting environment (ie. your chair and desk) will ultimately influence how you sit.

That is why it is so important to make sure your workstation is corrected – **it gives you the opportunity to maintain your best possible posture.**

IDEAL POSTURE

In order to give you an idea of how to set up your workstation, we need to understand the reason **why** we want to set it up in a specific way in the first place.

It is imperative to have the appropriate workstation set up **to promote and maintain the best possible posture.**

So, to answer the question on, "**What is the best way to set up my workstation?**", one must first ask "**What is the ideal posture?**"

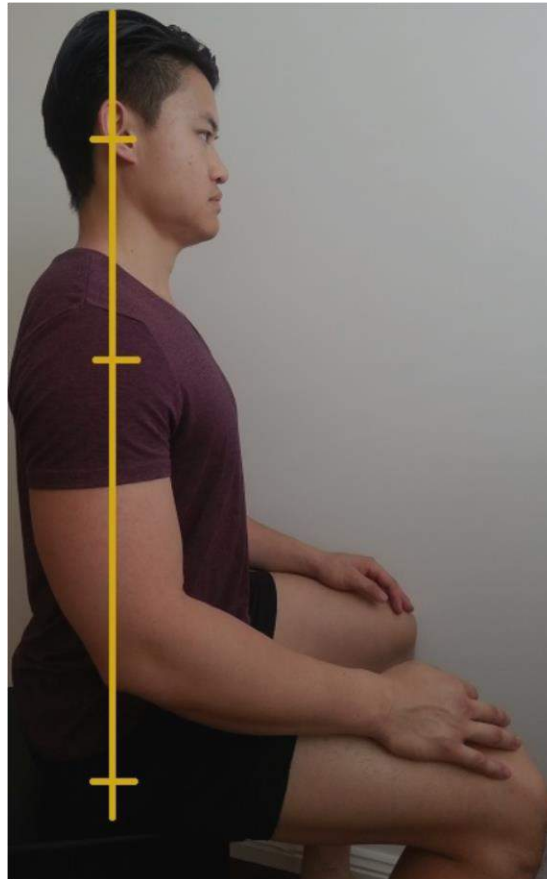
I have written an in-depth post on the PostureDirect website about [sitting posture](#). It is important that you keep the ideal posture in mind when setting up your workstation.

THE IDEAL SITTING POSTURE

WHAT IS THE IDEAL SITTING POSTURE?

The alignment of the ideal sitting posture involves the body being optimally stacked over each other in a natural and relaxed manner.

This can be illustrated as a straight line through side of the body.



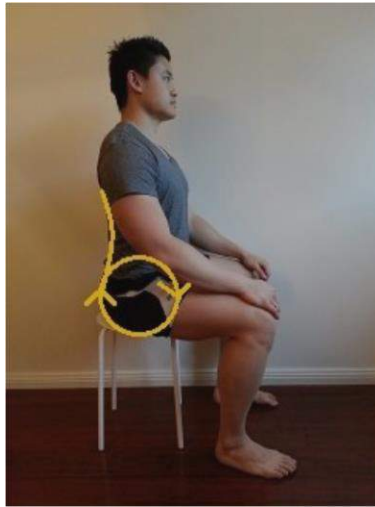
This line should ideally pass through the:

- Ear canal
- Shoulder joint
- Thorax
- Rib cage
- Pelvis
- Hip joint.

The aim of your sitting posture is to achieve as much elongation and symmetry as possible.

THE 4 STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE IDEAL POSTURE

STEP 1: PELVIS



Instructions:

- Whilst sitting, tilt your pelvis forwards and stick your chest up high. (This is called the "military posture" and is actually an exaggeration of what good posture should be.)
- You should feel fairly stiff in your whole back and have flared ribs at the front.
- Be sure to distribute your weight evenly between your buttocks and ensure that you do not lean to one side.
- You should also be sitting directly on top of your sit bones. [Click here](#) if you don't know what your sit bones are.

STEP 2: RIB CAGE



Now that your pelvis is in a good position, the next step is to get your rib cage aligned with your pelvis.

Instructions:

- Whilst maintaining the military posture, place your hands on the front of your lower rib cage.
- Gently lower the rib cage by pushing it down (see above) until the rib flare completely disappears.
- As you perform this movement, your shoulders may slightly move forward. This is normal. We just need to re-adjust the position of your shoulders now.

STEP 3: SHOULDERS



Instructions:

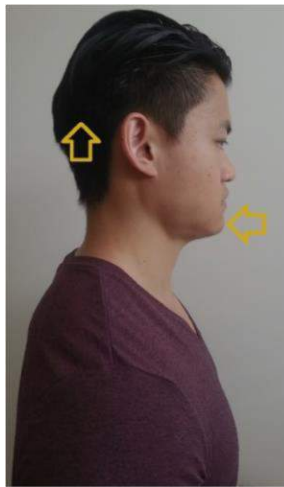
- Reach and stretch out your hands as far to opposite sides as possible. (see above)
- **Retraction:** Slightly bring your arms backwards.
- Make sure you can feel a gentle contraction between your shoulder blades
- **Posterior Tilt:** Turn your palms towards the back as far as you can so that your thumbs are almost pointing towards the floor.

Take note of your shoulder position. **Keep this position!** And gently lower your arms by your side.

Think: “Wide and long shoulders”.

Do NOT over squeeze your shoulders back together.

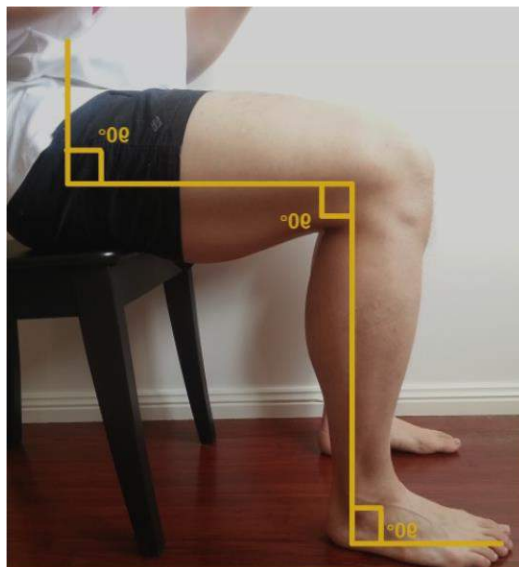
STEP 4: HEAD



Instructions:

- Elongate your head.
- Imagine your head is being pulled up towards the roof.
- Gently tuck your chin in.
- This is a great way to re-align your head and prevent your head from poking forwards.

Note: The following structures are dictated by the chair that you sit on.



Hip position: The angle of your hip joint should be around 90-100 degrees.

Knee position: The angle of your knee joint should be around 90-100 degrees.

Foot: The angle of your ankle joint should be at 90 degrees. Your feet should ideally remain completely flat on the ground

ERGONOMIC SET UP

Now that you know what the ideal sitting posture is, all we need to do is **adjust your workstation to reinforce and maintain this posture.**

Remember:

Manipulate your workstation to fit **you**. Do not sacrifice good posture to fit into a poorly set up workstation.

We are all unique.

We come in different shapes and sizes, so the workstation needs to be uniquely tailored to suit you and only you.

One size does not fit all.

Sitting at a workstation that is not specifically set up for your individual measurements can lead to unwanted changes in your posture.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CHAIR

The main thing to look for in a good chair is **adjustability**; the more you can change it, the better you can customize it to suit your needs.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD ERGONOMIC CHAIR:

Adjustable height: It is imperative to have a chair that can be adjusted to accommodate for your height.

To set up the chair to the correct height:

- a) your hip and knees must be at a 90-100 degrees angle and;
- b) your feet must be flat on the floor (If you have shorter legs, consider getting a foot stool)

Seat depth: When you sit right back into the chair, there should be at least 3-4 fingers gap between the edge of your seat and the back of your knee.

Seat tilt: The seat of the chair should be flat or tilted slightly forward which will promote the neutral position of the pelvis.

Adjustable back rest: The back rest should be fixed at a 90-100 degree angle to the seat. It should also be able to recline to 120-130 degrees to allow the user to alleviate any pressure on the lower back when required.

Adjustable lumbar support: A good lumbar support should mould to your lower back and reinforce your natural lumbar arch.

Arm rests: I personally feel you should get rid of your arm rests because they often prevent you from getting close enough to the desk. This can promote a sub-optimal posture as you move forward in your chair to get closer to the desk.

Mobility: If you need to move short distances around your workstation, getting a chair with a swivel and wheels will make moving around easier, which is very important in preventing repetitive strain injuries from leaning over and reaching.

If the flooring material makes it difficult to wheel your chair around, consider using a plastic chair mat.

Seat cushioning: The padding on the seat cover and back rest should be thick enough to support sitting for prolonged periods of time.

If it doesn't feel comfortable the minute you sit in it, it definitely won't be after a few hours.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A DESK

I would recommend that you set up your chair **before** adjusting the desk. In terms of the ergonomic appeal of a computer desk, one should consider the following points.

Adjustable height: With your seat set up correctly, the height of the desk should be at the level of the hands when the elbows are by your side and bent at 90 degrees.

Width of table: There should be ample space for all of your desktop equipment to be placed and accessed easily. A crowded desk top may compromise your ideal posture.

Adjustable keyboard/mouse table: This allows for the position of the keyboard and mouse to be customized to an appropriate level in relation to your body.

Leg room: There should be an ample amount of room for your legs to fit underneath the desk. Your legs should not touch any part of the desk as this will alter your posture.

There should be enough room to allow you to stretch your legs out when necessary.

COMPUTER SCREEN POSITION

To put it simply: **A good monitor position will encourage a better head posture.**

Keep in mind – *wherever the head goes, the whole body will follow.* If your head is in a bad position, then your whole body is unlikely to adopt the correct posture.

Main points:

Height: The top of the monitor should be *approximately* at eye level.

Position: The middle of the monitor should be positioned with the midline of your body.

Distance: The monitor should be at an arm's length away and;

Angulation: The monitor should be slightly angled upwards towards the face (10-20 degrees is optimal).

If you can not satisfy the above criteria for the optimal computer screen position, you may need to reconsider your chair or computer desk settings.

KEYBOARD AND MOUSE POSITION



Optimal keyboard and mouse placement is important in maintaining proper wrist position.

Assuming that you have now correctly setup your chair and desk, your mouse and keyboard should be placed directly in front of your hands (with your elbows bent at 80-90 degrees).

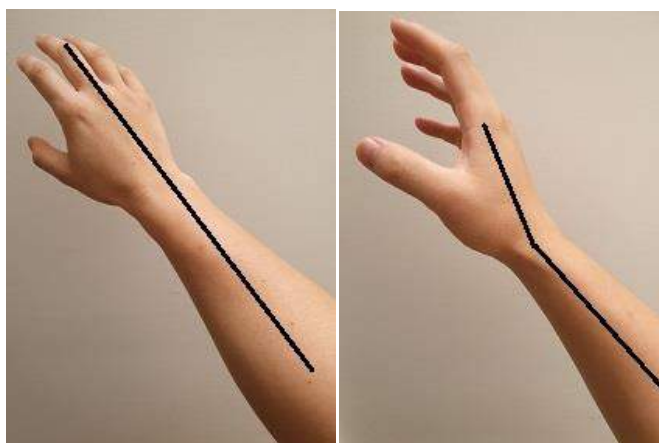
Now instead of simply placing the keyboard in the middle, try placing the keyboard so that your hands match up with the centre of the letters section (*space bar button should be in the middle*).

WRIST POSITION

Essentially the goal is to keep the joints in a ***natural neutral position***.

Any deviations in your wrist position over a prolonged amount of time may lead to repetitive strain injuries.

NEUTRAL WRIST POSITION



Keep the line of your middle finger aligned with the mid line of the fore arm.

The wrist should be in a slight degree of extension.

IMPORTANCE OF CHANGING POSITION: KEEP MOVING!

I am and have always been a strong advocate of moving around.

We sit too much... And is not uncommon to remain seated without taking any breaks.

Even if you have the best posture in the world and the best chair any money can buy, prolonged sitting is an action that is still placing a lot of stress through your body.

Unfortunately, the demands of many of our work places require us to continue to sit throughout most of the day.

What is a possible solution for this dilemma?

What I propose to you is simple. Even logical. We need to **move**. We need to change positions. We need to allow our body to rest and recover from unhelpful postures.

SWITCH BETWEEN SITTING AND STANDING: THE STANDING DESK

Enter the Standing desk: also can be referred to as stand up desk, sit stand desk, standing workstation and adjustable desk.

Essentially, as the name states, it is a desk which allows you to use whilst standing.

The good thing about it, the height of the desk can be easily adjusted. This mean it can be used for both for sitting or standing. This is great! It provides the user with options of changing positions.

IS STANDING BETTER THAN SITTING?

Not exactly. Prolonged standing can also give rise to a whole another group of problems... But having the ability to switch between sitting and standing gives more options to move and be productive at work at the same time.

SWITCH BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHAIRS

Instead of remaining seated in the same chair all day, why not interchange between different styles of chairs?

This well help distribute the sitting associated pressures among the structures in your body. This way, we can continue our work requirements whilst giving our postural structures a rest.

Here are 3 different types of chairs:

1. KNEELING CHAIR:



Description: This chair involves the sitting platform slanted slightly forward at an angle typically anywhere from 20-30 degrees. There is also a knee/shin rest.

Benefits: The aim of this chair is to prevent the user's pelvis from slouching and allows the hip angle to be more opened. Typically, most chairs will allow 90 degrees hip flexion, which often becomes less when someone tends to slouch.

2. EXERCISE BALL:



Description: It's an inflated ball. Nothing much to describe here. It is the very same ball used for core exercises that you may have seen at your local gym. They come in different sizes.

Benefits: Using an exercise ball as a chair challenges the user to engage their core and stabilising muscles. The mobile nature of the ball also allows for pelvic and lower back exercises to be conducted easily.

3. SADDLE CHAIR:



Description: This chair is distinguished by the saddle-shaped sitting platform (you know, like a horse saddle). Some saddle chairs come with arm rests and back supports.

Benefits: The saddle allows the hips to be more opened which in turns allows the pelvis to sit in a more neutral position.

Note:

There is no one superior chair.

The benefit of using these particular chairs is that they encourage you to change positions and assume different postures.

And just in case I forget to mention: You can actually use these chairs incorrectly which in turn may actually make your posture worse. *So, please be aware of this!*

BONUS TIPS

Here are a few more tips to help you whilst you are sitting for long periods of time.

Learn to touch type. Looking down for prolonged periods places extra stress on your postural muscles.

Use a document holder that sits upright and in front of you. This will reduce the need to look down for sustained periods.

Use head phones or a hands-free headset if you require to use the phone often. Squashing the phone between your ear and shoulder is just asking for a neck issue.

Avoid leaning to one side. Sit upright and symmetrically.

If your chair permits it, **recline the seat** backwards to ~130 degrees to take some pressure off your back every hour.

Change positions every 30-60 minutes. I know that this is not always practical, but even standing up for just 10 seconds will make a big difference in the long run.

You can alternate between sitting and standing with the use of an adjustable standing desk or perhaps even alternate between different types of computer chairs.

Hourly exercises. Stretch tight muscles and strengthen weak muscles! (*See attachment*)

Minimize the use of multiple computer screens. If you require to use 2 or more screens, try to position your main computer screen right in front of you. If you use the 2 screens equally, consider using smaller monitors to minimise sustained rotated neck positions.

WORKSTATION EXERCISES

Whether if you have pain or not, prolonged sitting postures will eventually give rise to all kinds of problems.

To counteract the amount of sitting that you are doing on a daily basis, I strongly recommend doing these **5 simple exercises**. (*see attachment*)

The great thing about these exercises is that you can do them quite easily whilst you are at work. All you need is a spare couple of minutes.

So simple, yet so effective. (...that is, if you do them regularly!)

In no way are the following exercises an exhaustive list of *everything* that you should be doing, but it is definitely is a great place to start.

Feel free to add or remove any exercises as you deem fit.

The point is, just do it. And do it regularly.

Note:

The exercises are designed to be absolutely pain-free. If you experience an increase in your symptoms, stop the exercise.

FINAL WORDS FROM MARK

Congratulations! If you have made it this far, you have reached the end of the e-book!

High 5 for you!

It is through this e-book I hope to have drawn attention to the importance of achieving and maintaining your optimal posture.

I hope that it has provided you with some valuable information in which you can exercise immediate action.

The simple strategies to improve your workstation ergonomics is a great starting point to address your posture and postural related pain.

How much you succeed is all up to you: Now that you have an idea on what to do, go and apply what you've learnt. Success comes from doing. Your posture is not going to improve by itself. You are in control!

It takes time: Remember that your bad posture has taken time to develop... It will also take some time for it to be corrected. Be consistent and stay motivated!

Make the most of it: Optimizing your workstation is only one piece of the puzzle to solving your postural issues. If you really want to unlock your full potential, there are several other effective things you can do to improve your posture at PostureDirect.com.

Don't be afraid to ask for help: I'm here for you! Please do not hesitate to leave me a comment on the [PostureDirect Facebook](#) page!

Thanks again! I wish you all the luck!

DID YOU FIND THIS E-BOOK HELPFUL?

If you did, I would be more than grateful if you helped me spread the word.

Please share this e-book with your work colleagues, family and friends (*... or anyone that you know of who has bad posture!*).

I am confident that they can benefit from what this e-book has to offer.