

Quick Guide: Using VDUs Safely

We can all spend long hours at work each day in front of a computer screen – and sometimes go home and do it all again! So it's important to do as much as we can to minimise any potential hazards and avoid things like eye strain, backache and WRULD (Work Related Upper Limb Disorders). So here are the top ten tips:

1. **When using your PC for the first time each day**, raise or lower your seat until your forearms are horizontal. Make sure your wrists are straight when your hands are on the keyboard and your elbows are at a 90 degree angle.
2. **Sit right back** in your chair so that the back rest can support you – ears over shoulders and shoulders over hips. Form a relaxed curve in your lower back and adjust your back rest to provide support when in this position.
3. **Remove any obstacle** under your desk that prevents you sitting in an upright position. Use a footrest if your feet do not comfortably touch the floor, after having adjusted your seat height.
4. **Adjust the brightness** control on screen to suit the office lighting level, time of day and amount of daylight. Make sure you do not sit with your back to a window and with glare on your screen.
5. **Have your eyes tested** regularly! And if you need to wear glasses for VDU work that they are to a current prescription.
6. **If you use a copystand**, check you can reach it without leaning forward, especially if you need to turn pages regularly. And adjust your screen and copystand angle to suit your sitting position, not the other way round!
7. **Negotiate deadlines and relax!** As daft as it might sound, we really do need to avoid working under tight time scales, otherwise we grind our teeth, all our muscles tense, and this can give rise to bad posture and squinting.
8. **Break up your work!** Not literally into tiny pieces: but vary the tasks you do so that you do not spend long stretches at your PC.
9. **Rest your arms and shoulders**, and exercise your legs and back by stretching and walking, whenever your work routine allows.
10. **Avoid excessive wrist and arm activities** during breaks: avoid writing your autobiography, or taking up knitting during the lunch break!

Compiled by Des Whitehorn