Ergonomics: Steps to Adjusting Your Office Chair

Be sure to check your chair's specific instruction manual to locate the appropriate lever on your chair.



Chair Height:

- Stand beside the chair and adjust the height of the seat pan so that it is approximately at knee height.
- When sitting on the chair, ensure your thighs are straight across, parallel with the ground. Your feet should be flat on the floor with your knees in line with hips.



Seat Pan Depth:

- Check the space between your calf and the edge of the seat pan. There should be 2 – 3 finger widths. Adjust the seat pan depth position to allow proper clearance between your calf and the seat edge.



Armrest:

- While relaxing your shoulders, with your elbows close to your side, raise your forearm until there is a 90-degree bend at your elbow. Your forearm should be parallel with the ground. The armrest should be adjusted to support your forearm in this position.

Tip: It is not necessary that the armrests are used continuously when you type, however, it is important to use the armrests occasionally throughout the day to provide your shoulders and neck muscles rest breaks.



Backrest Lumbar Support and Angle:

- Adjust the lumbar support of the chair so that it fits into the small of your low back.
- Adjust the backrest angle to a comfortable position between 90-degrees and 110-degrees (angle between seat pan and backrest).

Avoid: Positioning the backrest angle too far forward (shoulders past hips) should be avoided due to potential strain on your low back and muscle tightening at your hips.

Tip: Some chairs will have a separate lumbar adjustment and others will require movement of the entire backrest.



Tilt (ability to rock backwards or lock into a reclined position):

- Most ergonomic chairs have a mechanism allowing the chair to rock forwards and backwards (aka free float). This is a beneficial movement as it relieves pressure on your low back. Unlock the lever to enable this rocking motion and adjust the tension knob to allow the rocking motion with minimal force required.

Tip: Rocking should not be performed while typing, but rather during tasks such as telephone calls, meetings, and document reviews.



Bonus Step:

- When pulling into your computer workstation, notice where your armrests are relative to the keyboard. Your armrests should be in line with your keyboard to allow your forearms to be parallel with the ground while typing. If armrests are lower than the keyboard, you will need to raise the height of your chair and use a footrest under your feet.

Additional Resources

If your chair does not have the mentioned feature, proceed to the next step. If your chair is not comfortable after completing the following steps, consider requesting an ergonomic assessment [1] through Occupational Health and Wellness [2].

Source URL:https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/about-hr/occupational-health-and-wellness-ohw/ohw-programs/ergonomic-services/ergonomic-guidelines-2

Links
[1] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/ergonomic-assessments-and-equipmentchair-fittings-faculty-and-staff [2] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/hr-services/occupational-health-wellness