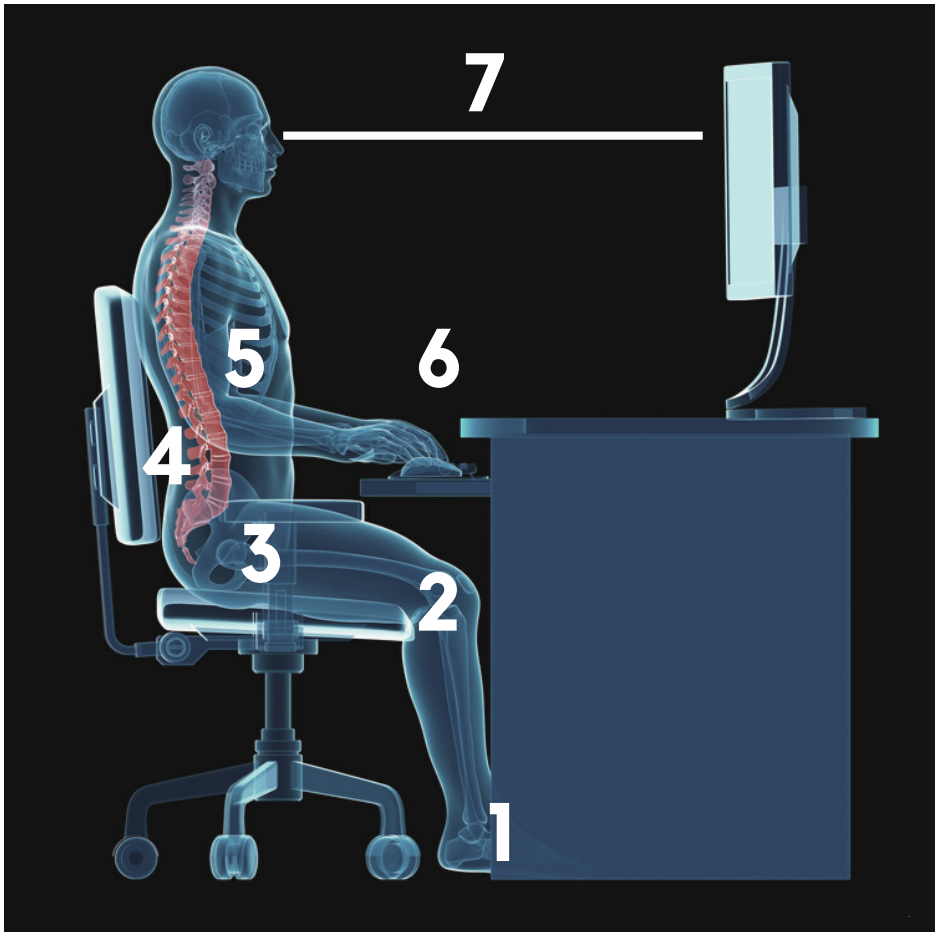


# Desk Posture

## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE



# Get your work done, keep your body happy.

There are a few key factors to consider when setting up your computer workspace to make it as friendly to your body as possible. By supporting your spine in its neutral position, you can reduce stress on the discs and help prevent tension in the muscles of the back, neck and shoulders. This can decrease your chance of getting low back pain, neck pain, headaches, and carpal tunnel syndrome, among other issues.

**You'll start from the bottom up, because believe it or not, to keep your spine happy you have to start from the floor. On the cover photo, you'll find a number that corresponds with each step below, and it works best if you go in order.**

## Step 1 - Your Feet

Position yourself with your feet flat on the floor. If you have short legs or a tall chair, you may eventually need an object under your feet to keep them from dangling (footrest, large book, wood plank, etc.). You'll decide in Step 6 how tall this object should be.

## Step 2 - Your Knees & Hips

While your feet rest on the floor (or footrest), your knees should be at or just below the height of your hips, and just about in line with your heels.

### **Step 3 - Finding Your Sitting Bones**

You should sit directly on top of your sitting bones (the bones that would get sore if you sat in bleachers for a long time), not slouched backward toward your tailbone.

### **Step 4 - Stacking Your Spine**

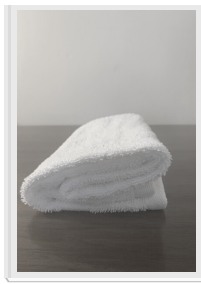
Now you need some back support, which means you need to scoot far enough back in your seat to actually touch the backrest.

So, scoot, and then check, did that cause the front edge of the seat to press against the crease at the back of your knees? If so, in a fully adjustable desk chair you'll need to move the backrest forward until the seat no longer touches the back of your knees when your back is against the backrest. If your chair doesn't have this option, place a standard (bed-size) pillow vertically between your back and the backrest, maybe two if you need it.

If your chair has a lumbar (low back) support built into the backrest, the fattest part of that lumbar support "bump" should hit near the level of your belly button. If your backrest can move up or down, adjust the backrest height to allow this.

If you don't have a fancy chair with lumbar support, grab a straight back chair and a small towel, folded as shown on the next page. The towel will go behind your back at belly button level to create support. If you already have a pillow behind you from the first part of Step 4, keep the pillow and add the towel in front of or behind it.

## Step 4, continued (stay with me here!)



You might need to play with how fat the towel is. Fold the towel as shown above or roll it if you need thicker support. A hand towel is enough for people with a short torso or flatter spine, but if you're longer in the torso or have more defined spinal curves, you may need something larger. Use a few rubber bands or some tape to keep it folded, and you can even attach it to the chair at belly button height if you want to leave it in place.

Once you are seated against your lumbar support, draw your lower and middle ribs backward to find the backrest- if you can't reach, you may have too much lumbar support. Try reducing the amount of support from the chair (if possible) or make your towel roll smaller until your ribs can reach the backrest.

Now imagine your head is floating directly between your shoulders (not in front or behind). This is approximately your neutral spine position, which distributes your body weight evenly over the strongest parts of the bones in your spine.

**Next you'll tackle the monitor, keyboard, mouse, and chair height.**

## **Step 5 - Your Elbows**

Make sure your chair is close enough to the desk (and your keyboard close enough to the desk's front edge) to keep your elbows within a few inches of your body while you type. Rest your elbows on the armrests when possible if you have them.

## **Step 6 - Keyboard, Mouse, and Chair Height**

Your keyboard and mouse should be on the same surface as one another. Adjust your chair height so your wrists can be straight, and your hands at or below elbow level when you type. Now check, did that change in chair height take your feet off the floor? If so, time to find a footrest to make up the difference!

## **Step 7 - The Monitor(s)**

When you sit in your supportive chair with an upright spine (see steps 1-4) and look straight ahead, your gaze should land somewhere in the upper third of the monitor and it should be about an arm's length away from you.

If you're using a laptop, you'll need either an external monitor, or an external keyboard and mouse, to achieve this. The external keyboard and mouse are usually the less costly route, and you can often purchase a wireless set made just for this purpose. You'll keep your external keyboard and mouse on the desk and place the laptop on top of a book or other object to get it to eye level and about an arm's length away.

## Step 7, continued

If you use multiple monitors, consider how often you use each one when choosing their positions. Do you use two monitors equally? Then center them side-by-side so they split the middle of your line of sight. Do you use one much more often? Consider placing that one directly in front of you, and the other one(s) to the left or right. Try to use your eyes or turn your chair to look at the side monitor(s) when you use them; avoid keeping your head turned in one direction for more than a few seconds.

## Finally, the phone.

If you use the phone frequently or for long calls, the speakerphone function or a headset are your best options, depending on your privacy and noise control needs. Something as simple as the headphones that came with your smartphone can work great for hands-free calls. Holding the phone to your ear with your hand, or cradling it between your shoulder and your ear, for minutes at a time or hours in a day just begs for neck and shoulder trouble.

## Now you're ready to work!

Will you keep this posture all day, every day? Of course not! You will naturally drift away from it, but if you start to feel stiff or uncomfortable, try to come back to this position. And **STAND UP OFTEN!** Move for at least 2-5 minutes every hour, stand during phone calls, etc.

**If you need more advice on positioning,  
please get in touch. I am always happy to help!**