Ergonomic Tips for Laptop Users

ERGONOMICS@WORK
UC Berkeley's Ergonomics Program for Faculty and Staff
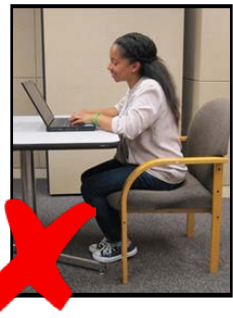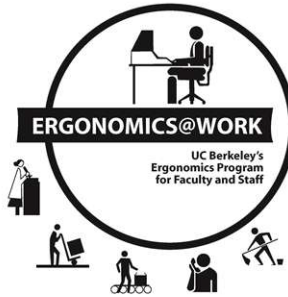
Laptop computers are lightweight, portable and convenient. Unfortunately, the laptop's compact design, with attached screen and keyboard, forces laptop users into awkward postures. When the screen is at the right height, the keyboard position is too high; when the keyboard is at the right height, the screen is too low. This creates an ongoing trade-off between poor neck/head and hand/wrist postures.
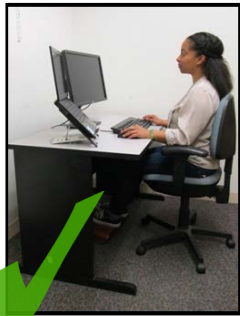
Setting Up Your Laptop

A comfortable workstation setup promotes:

☑ Neutral postures with the neck aligned with the spine (NOT bent or thrust forward)

☑ Back relaxed and supported

☑ Shoulders relaxed (NOT hunched or rounded)

☑ Elbows close to the body and bent at an angle between 90 and 120 degrees

☑ Wrist and hands straight (NOT bent or turned)

Long Term Use (*more* than an hour)

☑ Maintain a neutral neck posture by placing the top of the screen at about eye level or slightly lower if using bifocal glasses.

A docking station more closely resembles a standard desktop workstation with an external keyboard, mouse and monitor attached.

☑ Use an external monitor, laptop stand or place your laptop on a stable support surface, such as monitor risers, reams of paper, or phone books so that the screen height can be adjusted.

Use a laptop stand if you don't use an external monitor. Attach an external keyboard and mouse at or slightly below elbow height. Use a footrest if needed.

Short Term Use (*less* than an hour)

☑ Place the laptop on your lap to help keep your wrists straight while typing. Try a binder or *lap platform* to maximize the height of the screen and maintain an upright head posture.

☑ Use a chair that supports a comfortable upright or slightly reclined posture. Use a towel roll or inflatable lumbar pillow for lower back support.

☑ Tilt the screen to maintain a neutral posture.

Make sure to keep an upright posture. Don't hunch your shoulders forward or lean your body towards your laptop screen.

Transporting Your Laptop

The weight of a laptop and accessories can add up. Here are some tips to reduce the stress on your body when transporting your laptop:
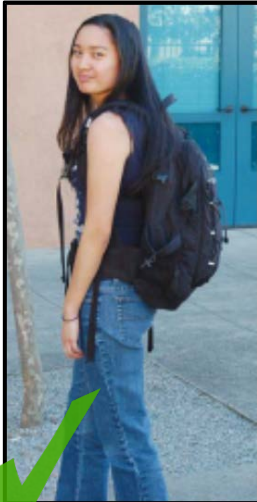
- ☑ Carry your laptop in a wheeled case or backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a sturdy hip belt
- ☑ Switch hands or shoulders frequently when using a carrying case with a handle or shoulder strap
- ☑ Lighten your load by purchasing a lightweight laptop. Reduce the weight of your carrying case by removing unnecessary items, such as external hardware and cables
- ☑ When carrying files, binders, and additional items, consider putting them into a separate case to balance your load

Campus Resources for Laptop Users

- **Ergonomics website:** http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu/facstaff/ergonomics
- **User Friendly Workstation:** http://uhs.berkeley.edu/facstaff/ergonomics/computer/erguser.shtml
- **Mobile Ergonomic Products:** http://uhs.berkeley.edu/facstaff/Ergonomics/matchingfunds/productlist.shtml
- **Eye exams:** Call the School of Optometry's Eye Clinic for an appointment at (510) 642-2020.
- **Typing tutor software:** Visit the CalPACT's website at http://calpact.berkeley.edu/resources/.
- **Medical Appointments (faculty/staff):** Call the Occupational Health Clinic for work-related medical problems at (510) 642-6891.
- **Medical Appointments (students):** Call the Tang Center appointment office at (510) 642-2000. Physical Therapy may be available with a medical referral.
- **Stretch Break software (faculty/Staff):** Contact your unit's IT department to install CtrlWork-PC/Stretch Break-MAC Stretch Break software that reminds you to take breaks and stretch.
- **Stretch Break software (students):** Go to software central (http://ist.berkeley.edu/software-central/) to install Stretch Break software that reminds you to take breaks and stretch.
- **Workshops (faculty/Staff):** Free Computer Health Matters workshop on workstation setup and stretches. Enroll online- http://uhs.berkeley.edu/facstaff/programs/ergonomics.shtml.

Check out the products below and ordering information at:
http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu/facstaff/ergonomics/matchingfunds/productlist.shtml

UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES *Tang Center*
People. Campus. Community.