General Policy:

Goshen College acknowledges the value of ergonomics in the workplace. Ergonomics is the science of adapting the workplace to meet the needs of the workers and with the goal of:
1) Increasing productivity and
2) Decreasing injuries and workplace inefficiency.

Please employ the following tips for better office ergonomics’ effectiveness at your workstation listed below.

Should challenges persist regarding your workstation, Goshen College may be able to provide you appropriate furniture or another alternative to aid ergonomic effectiveness. The criteria to follow for consideration include:

1. The employee completes the Ergonomic Workstation Evaluation Request/Approval Form (located in the Forms link under HR website). The form requires approval by designees from the Physical Plant, Human Resources, and a member of President Council.
2. Sufficient funds must be available to accommodate the workstation modification as determined by the Vice President of Finance, and must not cause undue hardship for the college.
3. Employees requiring reasonable accommodations due to a disability (determined by an approved medical provider) to accomplish the essential functions of his or her job will be given first priority.

One example used to ergonomically accommodate several employees’ challenge concerning a sedentary workstation was to install an adjustable workstation for their computer.
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Tips for Better Office Ergonomics

Work Techniques
Complete this checklist to determine if you use proper techniques when working at your computer. If not, use information provided in "Tips for Computer Users" to help you make adjustments.

Posture:
- Are you sitting against the back of your chair while you work?
- Is your head/neck upright and centered over your shoulders when you look at the screen or documents?
- Are your shoulders relaxed when keying and using the mouse?
- Are your arms close to your sides when you use the keyboard or pointer?
- Are your elbows bent at a 110-110 degree angle when you use the keyboard or pointer?
- Are your wrists in a neutral position (aligned with your forearm) when keying or using the pointer?
- Are you avoiding awkward postures such as an extended finger or thumb when keying or using the pointer?
- Do you use a headset rather than cradling the telephone between your head and shoulder?

Work Techniques:
- Are you using a light touch to key?
- Do you avoid leaning on the wrist rest while keying and mousing?
- Are you holding your mouse loosely with your hand and fingers in a relaxed position?
- Do you let go of the mouse when not using it?
- Do you take 20 second breaks after every 20 minutes of keying?
- Do you take eye breaks and look at a distance every 20 minutes?
- Do you blink while you look at the screen?
- Do you take stretch breaks throughout the day?
- Have you set up your work to encourage alternating sitting and standing throughout the day?
- Have you optimized your settings on your computer to make your work easier? (i.e. flicker rate, mouse speed, font size)
- *Do you know how to adjust your keyboard tray and chair?
Postural Guide

Always check your working position when using a computer. To avoid unnecessary discomfort, make sure the following key principles are in place.

Neutral Neck Position:

- When looking at your work, keep your neck in a neutral or aligned position. Position the monitor directly in front of you to avoid turning your neck to the side.
- Position the monitor so that you do not have to bend your neck up or down to see the screen. The top of the screen should be approximately 2-3" below seated eye level.
- Place the monitor at least 20 to 30 inches away from you (slightly more than an arm’s length). Adjust as needed for your visual comfort.
- If you must use a telephone simultaneously with the computer, use a headset. Never try to hold the handset between your shoulder and ear. If you chose to use a telephone handset, position the telephone close to you to avoid over-reaching.

Supported Spine:

- Place your feet flat on the floor or on a footrest if necessary.
- Your chair should provide you with good back support. Maximize the contact of your back with the chair back using chair adjustments or cushions as needed.
- Set the back tilt in a slightly reclined position, approximately 100-110 degrees.
- If your chair has an active recline mechanism, use it to change your position throughout the day.
- It is often useful to have armrests. However, they should be adjustable in height and width to allow for resting the arms with your shoulders in a relaxed position.
- The chair seat depth should be sufficient to support your thighs while providing a small space between the edge of the chair and the back of your knees.

Arm/hand Positions:

- The keyboard and pointing device should be positioned at a height to allow for a slightly open elbow angle.
- Elbows should be at a 100 to 110 degree angle.
- If you cannot adjust your keyboard height, raise your chair and use a footrest, or elevate your table on blocks as necessary.
- If you sit in an upright position, your keyboard should be placed in a slight negative tilt so that the wrists can be placed in an aligned or neutral position.
- Your hands should be slightly lower than your elbows with your fingers pointing toward the floor. (Note: If you recline back in your chair, you might not need to tilt the keyboard. Check the alignment of your wrist, and then set the angle of the
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keyboard as needed. Your sitting posture will affect how you adjust your keyboard and pointing device.)

- If you use a keyboard tray, it should be wide enough for your pointing device.
- If you use a palm support, use it to support your palms only when pausing between keying. Do not place your wrists on the rest and turn your wrists from side to side to key. This increases the strain on your wrist.
- Your pointing device should be positioned within easy reach. Over-reaching can result in shoulder and/or arm discomfort. If you are reaching out to use your pointer, elevate it on a mouse-bridge, platform or small book to bring it within closer reach.

Tips for Computer Users

Repetitive and prolonged use of a computer keyboard and/or mouse can lead to muscle aches and discomfort. Posture and positioning are important. Try to incorporate the following tips into your work style to avoid problems.

- Sit all the way back in the chair against the backrest.
- Keep your knees equal to, or lower, than your hips with your feet supported.
- Keep your elbows in a slightly open angle (100° to 110°) with your wrists in a straight position. The keyboard tilt can help you attain the correct arm position. A negative tilt (front of keyboard higher than back) helps when working in upright sitting positions. If you recline, a positive tilt (front of the keyboard lower than the back) might be necessary.

- Keep the mouse and keyboard within close reach.
- Center the most frequently used section of the keyboard directly in front of you.
- Center the monitor in front of you at arm’s length distance and position the top of the monitor 2” to 3” above seated eye level. You should be able to view the screen without turning or tilting your head up or down.
- Place source documents on a document folder positioned between your monitor and keyboard. If there is not enough space, place documents on an elevated surface close to your screen.

- Float your arms above the keyboard and keep your wrist straight when keying.
- If you use a palmrest, use it to support your palms when pausing, not while keying.
- Hit the keyboard keys with light force. The average user keys four times harder than necessary.
- Keep your wrists straight and hands relaxed when using your pointer.
- Don't hold the pointer with a tight grip or extend fingers above the activation buttons.
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- Avoid moving the pointer with your thumb or wrist. Movement should originate at your shoulder and elbow.

- Reduce keystrokes with macros and software programs such as voice recognition. Reduce pointing device movement with scroll locks and keystroke combinations.

- The screen font, contrast, pointer size, speed, and color can be adjusted to maximize comfort and efficiency.

- Place your monitor away from bright lights and windows. Use an optical glass glare filter when necessary.
  - Take eye breaks and intermittently refocus on distant objects. Try palming your eyes in your hands to reduce eye fatigue.

- Take 1 or 2 minute breaks every 20-30 minutes, and 5 minute breaks every hour. Every few hours, try to get up and move around.

- Non-prescriptive medication or wrist splints can often be more harmful than helpful. If you begin to develop symptoms, seek help. Early intervention can prevent future problems.

1 All the tips are graciously provided by UCLA Environmental Health and Safety via http://ergonomics.ucla.edu/homepage/office-ergonomics.html accessed on 5/20/2013.