Volunteering – Keeping Safe
Using computers

Potential harms

- Incorrect/damaged/faulty equipment causing user to adopt a poor posture
- Lack of training causing user to set up their equipment incorrectly
- Prolonged use due to deadlines/pressures
- Poor software or lack of training
- Poor environmental conditions i.e. dry, dusty, hot, cold, noisy, etc.
- Poor lighting conditions

All the above hazards can cause or contribute to mental stress, visual fatigue and muscular-skeletal disorders (MSDs)

Best practice and controls:

The information below provides best practice guidance on how to set up your computer and associated equipment (whether at Guide Dogs sites or at home) where you will use it for a significant amount of time as part of your volunteering role.

If you are working on a Guide Dogs premises your manager will ensure you are provided with the correct equipment to allow you set up correctly.

Chair
- Ensure that the chair you use provides support to your back and lower lumbar region. The angle of your back rest should be as upright as possible, 90-95 degrees is best
- The seat height should allow your elbows to be just above the desk/table (relaxed shoulders, upper arms vertical, elbows bent at right angles) and your wrists should be in a relaxed, neutral position over the keyboard
- When sitting on your chair your knees and hips should be at right angles and your thighs should be horizontal with no undue pressure on the underside. If your thighs are not horizontal or your feet are not flat on the floor, use a footrest

Keyboard and mouse

If you use a laptop, we recommend that you use a separate keyboard and mouse. The keyboard should be placed directly in front of you and at a distance to allow you to maintain relaxed shoulders, upper arms vertical, elbows at right angles and a neutral wrist posture.
Position your mouse close to the side of the keyboard in easy reach and remember to take your hand away from the mouse when not in use.
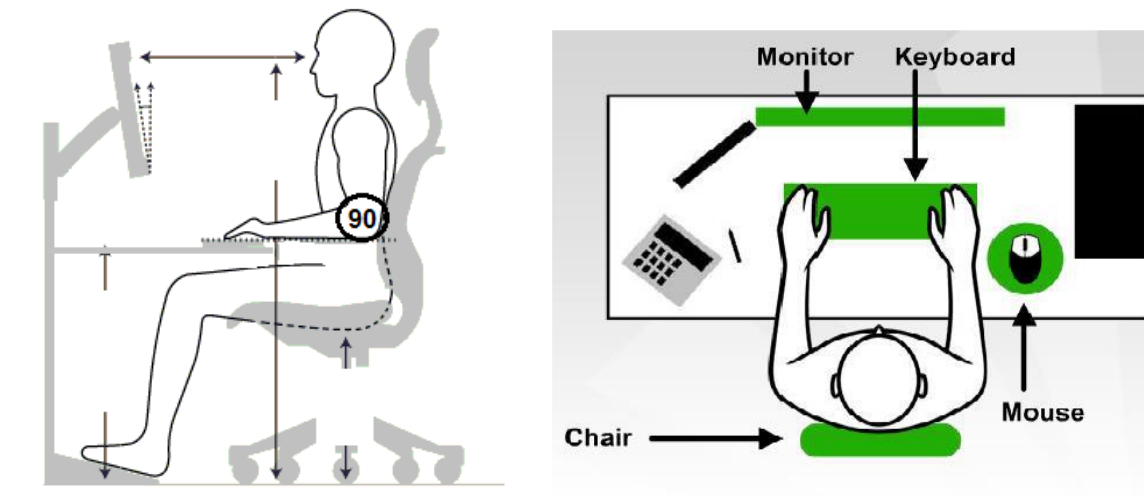
Screen

The screen viewing distance should be at approximately arm's length and the screen height should prevent excessive movement of the head and neck up and down. The top of the screen casing should be at, or just below eye level.

Breaks

Ensure that you take regular breaks from using your computer, it is important to get up and out of your chair at least once every hour to adjust your posture.

The diagram below is example of how a user and equipment should look when set up correctly.

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