

'A healthy workplace is a healthy business'

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WHAT'S IN A DESK?

Choosing the right desk is an important issue if you are spending much of your day sitting at one. It can be an expensive item so you want to make sure you spend your money wisely and that it is comfortable to work at.

Factors to consider are:

- Work tasks – are you mainly on the computer or do you work between computer and paperwork?
- Do you need a lot of space for paperwork, such as in accounting work?
- Is the desk shared by several people, or is there regular staff turnover – so different people will use it?
- Is a straight desk or an L-shaped one better?
- What surface is best?
- Should you have an adjustable height shelf for the keyboard?
- What height should the desk be, or is it worth paying more for a height adjustable desk?



Here are some recommendations:



If your job involves frequent moving between paperwork and the computer, or you use multiple screens (a recent client of mine gained my 'Guinness Book of Records' prize for working on five screens at one desk!), get an L-shaped desk with an angled inner corner allowing the user to easily swing their chair round to the different work surfaces.

Use of a rectangular desk for this kind of work often means the user has to stretch to either side of the computer, causing shoulder and back discomfort. If unable to change or in a limited desk space, use of a 'microdesk' between keyboard and screen is one solution (see overleaf).

If the job involves a lot of paperwork, get a desk which is large enough for this, ie. measuring at least 1500 by 1500mm, and mobile rather than fixed drawers underneath.

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To adjust or not to adjust?

Many desks have height adjustability, either with a manual handle, hydraulically or height adjustable legs. This is useful if there are regular staff changes, hot desks (where staff do not have a designated desk such as at some call centres) or for very tall people. However, if staff are not changing regularly, there is little benefit in paying the extra cost for height adjustability.

The desk height recommended for computer work in the OSH VDU Code of Practice is between 670 – 700mm. Many commercial desks are 720mm high, and this invariably means a footrest is required to enable the user to sit at the correct height, without causing shoulder tension. However, if you are getting your desks made to order, you can select the height you want.

Keyboard shelves were once popular in desks but are only useful if wide enough to accommodate a mouse as well as the keyboard. The mechanisms seem to 'give up' after about 5 years, so, overall, desks with one level surface and at the recommended height are more functional

What Colour?

Desks can be made in a wide range of colours, just like kitchen benches. Generally, a neutral colour is easier to work on, and in a non reflective material. Although glass and metal desks have become fashionable in recent years, both are cold surfaces to work on and glare from overhead and desk lights can be a problem.

If getting a desk for a home office, consider some of the great colours available in Melteca, often at little extra cost to enhance your home office.

USEFUL PRODUCT: THE MICRODESK OR BURO COPYHOLDER

This has been designed particularly for people who are working with paperwork for invoicing and other accounting tasks and who are looking frequently between this and the computer screen, whilst also needing the keyboard. The microdesk is at a height where brief writing is easy to do and the keyboard can still be used.

They are also useful for people having to read information from files and then look at the screen.



Contact SitRight WorkWell to trial one in your workplace.

If you would like any advice with buying new furniture to suit your workplace, staff and budget contact Jane Cowan-Harris at SitRight WorkWell on 03 326 5450 or email jane@sitrightworkwell.co.nz

Check out our website to see how we can help you sitrightworkwell.co.nz

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