

Documents

Overview

Do you work from or read paper documents while using your computer? If you do, positioning them properly is an important way to avoid neck and shoulder pain. Follow the same principles for good head and neck posture while viewing paper documents as you do while viewing your computer monitor. Your head and neck should not be twisted or bent at awkward angles while you are working because this can lead to neck, shoulder, and eyestrain. Follow the important tips below when working with paper documents.

Set-up & Positioning

1. Don't put the documents flat on your desk or work surface while working with them.

You'll likely have to twist and tilt your neck to read the documents, and then move your head to see the computer screen. This repeated neck twisting and head movement can cause neck discomfort.

Use a copyholder, or place the documents as close as possible to the computer screen - at about the same distance and level as your monitor.

2. Keeping documents at the same distance as your screen minimizes the refocusing your eyes do when switching between the two. Positioning the documents (and the monitor) directly in front of you minimizes the number of times you need to turn or swivel your head. Lastly, placing documents at roughly the same level as your monitor means you don't have to tilt your head as much to view them. All of these can be helped by a copyholder. There are three major types:
 - Screen-mounted document holders. These attach to the side of your computer monitor and suspend the paper document in the same vertical plane. This kind of holder is good for single sheets of paper or lightweight documents.
 - Freestanding document holders. Although a number of different designs are available, most of these have a sloping surface that angles the document in the same plane as your computer screen. You can adjust the angle and/or height on certain models. Some are designed for lightweight documents (a single



sheet of paper), while others can support large books. Whatever the design, this kind of holder should be placed close to the side of the computer monitor at the same distance as the screen. Because the visual field curves to either side, you can also rotate the document holder slightly at an angle to the screen to follow this curve.

- In-line document holders. This kind of document holder places documents between the keyboard and computer screen at an angle that follows your field of vision, which naturally curves down. In-line document holders eliminate side-to-side head movements and let you look from the screen to document and vice versa. These document holders are very useful if you work with oversized documents, such as wide-legal paper or wide-format computer printouts.

3. Make sure you have enough light to see your documents clearly.

Be especially sensitive to adequate lighting if you have reduced your lighting to help glare problems. If you cannot adequately light paper documents and keep monitor glare low, consider using a separate task light to illuminate the documents or a high quality glass glare screen on your monitor.