

Tips for Dining Table or Couch Telecommute Areas

Telecommuting creates a need to adjust a part of your home to be a designated work space. Below are some tips and suggestions for working at a dining table or couch.

Dinner Table Surface

If you do not have a desk, a dining table is a good option to provide adequate work space for your computer monitor and/or laptop. Consider using a blanket or towel to pad a hard or sharp surface where it contacts your wrists and forearms. Ideally, the surface will sit level with your forearms when your shoulders are relaxed and your elbows hang at your sides. Consider using a seat pillow or blanket to elevate your body if the surface is too high.



Dining Table Chair

Identify a chair that provides adequate hip and lower back support. The seat depth should be short enough that you are able to shift your hips to the back of the seat and relax your upper back and shoulders into the backrest. Consider placing towels, blankets, or pillows behind your hips to artificially shorten the length of the seat while building up backrest support to maintain the S-curve of your spine. Feet should be flat on the floor, if the chair is too tall consider placing boxes or books under your feet so that knees and hips are parallel to floor.



Couch

Although we would recommend to avoid sitting on a couch, it may be an option if you do not have a dining table to work at. Similar to the dining table chair, make sure there is adequate support using pillow, towels, etc. to maintain and support your spine.

It is recommended you do not work with a laptop on your legs for an extended period of time, as it can heat up and prevents you from being at the optimal posture. Pillows are also not a good idea to place between your legs and the laptop as it can cause the laptop to overheat. A lap desk or platform, box that allows adequate venting for the laptop, or tall end table could suffice in

bringing the laptop screen to the appropriate height. Small end tables can also be used as the work surface.

Please see the Laptop Logistics Fact Sheet for more information on recommended set-up.

Breaks

Breaks: Dining tables and couches are, in nature, less conducive to a supported working posture. For this reason it is more important than ever to be mindful of your standing/movement break schedule. Take more frequent breaks: 5 minutes every 30-40 minutes to move around or stretch to promote circulation and prevent stiffness. The constricted space of a laptop can force the arms and hands into awkward positions. Here are some quick stretches.

- Spread the fingers of both hands apart while keeping your wrists straight. Hold for three seconds and complete five times.
- Stretch and massage your fingers, wrists and forearms intermittently while you work to increase circulation and relieve tension.
- Lean forward and squeeze your shoulder blades together bringing your elbows behind your back. Keep your shoulders lowered when doing this.

Additional Information

- Available at ergonomics.ucla.edu/telecommute