A guide to computer keyboard ergonomics

Everything you need to know about keeping yourself comfortable and pain-free while you type at your computer.

When should you consider an ergonomic keyboard?

1. The device you mainly use is a laptop
2. You use your keyboard a lot of the time
3. You experience pain in your fingers, hands, wrists, arms, or shoulders

In one year, it is estimated that an office worker spends 2,080 hours at work and 1,700 hours in front of a computer.

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Ergonomic keyboard design features

Ergonomic design pays special attention to the user, taking into account factors like:

**Your size**
A keyboard that is too big or small can force the hands, arms and shoulders into uncomfortable positions, resulting in unnecessary strain and eventual injuries.

**Work environment**
How much space do you have on your desk? A large keyboard can create cramped, awkward positions. Wireless versions can save space and help create an uncluttered environment.

**Dominant hand**
This can determine where the most important keys are placed. On left-handed keyboards, the number pad is placed on the left side, alternatively use a separate number pad.

**Productivity**
Hotkeys and media keys can be used to make certain functions faster and easier to access, reducing the amount of hand movement needed.

**Personal preference**
There are a variety of key types available that vary in height, size, mechanism and tactile feedback. Everyone has their own preferred style.

**Particular needs**
Large, spaced, high contrast buttons can help people with vision problems, physical or learning difficulties.

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## Types of ergonomic keyboard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full-size keyboard</th>
<th>Mini keyboard/compact keyboard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Full-size keyboard" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Mini keyboard/compact keyboard" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A traditional style keyboard with integrated number pad designed to improve user experience and increase productivity.</td>
<td>Rearranged into a smaller body designed to reduce the space between the keyboard and mouse to minimise stretching and reaching.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Split keyboard</th>
<th>Speciality keyboard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Split keyboard" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Speciality keyboard" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively change the position of your hands for more comfortable typing. There are a variety of different shapes to suit different people.</td>
<td>Designed for specific users or environments. Some keyboards feature high contrast or large font for those with vision problems, while others are made with medical grade materials designed for hygienic lab/clinical environments.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Wired</th>
<th>Wireless</th>
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<td><img src="image5" alt="Wired" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Wireless" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>A keyboard that plugs in with a USB wire.</td>
<td>A keyboard that connects via Bluetooth or wireless USB receiver.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Keyboard positioning

Avoid these postures

- Bending hands up at the wrist, usually due to sitting too low
- Overstretching the fingers, usually due to sitting too high
- Hitting the keys too hard

All of these can be avoided with a correct keyboard set-up.

How to position yourself at your keyboard

- Your shoulders should be relaxed
- Position your keyboard directly in front of you
- Consider using a separate or slide-away number pad and hide away when not in use
- Place close to you when you’re sitting back in your chair
- Have it at elbow height so your forearms are perpendicular to the desk

No matter how good your set-up is, remember to take regular microbreaks, frequently take your hands off the keyboard and gently shake, bend and stretch your fingers and hands.