

Stand up straight? How do you do that?

A guide to posture in the workplace

Many of us heard it a lot growing up – “Stand up straight! Don’t slouch!” But what does it really mean to stand up straight? Experts have come up with some guidelines for correct posture. So sit up straight, and read on.

Correct sitting position

- Sit up with your back straight and your shoulders back.
- Distribute your body weight evenly on both hips.
- Bend your knees at a right angle. Keep your knees even with your hips, using a footrest or stool if necessary. Keep your feet flat on the floor. Try to break the habit of crossing your legs.
- Try to avoid sitting in the same position for more than 30 minutes.
- At work, if you have a desk job, adjust your chair height and workstation so you can sit at a comfortable distance to your computer screen and paperwork. Your eyes should be looking at the top of your computer monitor, then washing down over the screen. Rest your elbows and arms on your chair or desk, keeping your shoulders relaxed, and your elbows at about a 90-degree bend.



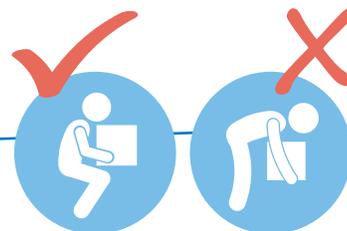
Correct driving position

- Use a back support (lumbar roll) at the curve of your back. Your knees should be at the same level as your hips.
- Keep your arms relaxed and avoid “over-gripping” the steering wheel.
- Move the seat close to the steering wheel to support the curve of your back. The seat should be close enough to allow your knees to bend and your feet to reach the pedals, but far enough to stay a safe distance from the airbag. Placing yourself 10 inches from your driver airbag will give you a clear margin of safety.



Correct lifting position

- Before you lift a heavy object, make sure you have firm footing.
- To pick up an object that is lower than the level of your waist, keep your back straight and bend at your knees and hips. Do not bend forward at the waist with your knees straight.
- Stand with a wide stance close to the object you are trying to pick up and keep your feet firm on the ground. Tighten your stomach muscles and lift the object using your leg muscles. Straighten your knees in a steady motion. Don’t jerk the object up to your body.
- Avoid lifting heavy objects above waist level.
- Hold packages close to your body with your arms bent. Keep your stomach muscles tight. Take small steps and go slowly.
- To lower the object, place your feet as you did to lift, tighten stomach muscles and bend your hips and knees.



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* Adapted from Posture For a Healthy Back, clevelandclinic.org, with details from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nhtsa.gov.