



# OUR GUIDE TO ERGONOMICS



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# WHAT IS ERGONOMICS?

This guide is not a complete list of everything that is available, and without assessing an individual, we cannot say for sure what will work and what will not, but we hope it provides some knowledge and insight and helps put you on a path to more comfortable working



## DEFINITION

The scientific study of people and their working conditions, especially done in order to improve effectiveness



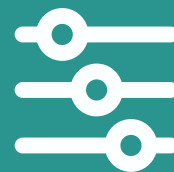
## ITS NOT JUST A CHAIR

Of course a high quality chair offers many benefits, but we need also to consider the work the user is doing and the rest of the equipment



## SAVING MONEY

Good quality equipment always has an upfront cost. But it will last a lot longer and return greater value over it's lifetime



## ADJUSTABILITY

People are not all the same size and shape, we need equipment that adapts to different users and work



# WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHAIR?



## Dynamic Movement

This is where you'll really see the difference in a quality chair. The body is not designed to be still, and a good chair will have a mechanism that moves with you. This ensures that you are always supported and helps your body's systems to function as well as possible. Have you ever fallen asleep sat in a meeting? You would likely not have if you were standing.

For the purposes of this document, we are talking about traditional office chairs, with castors, a seat and a backrest. But there may be other options for you not covered here. For example, saddle stools offer some terrific postural advantages.

**Castors** A work chair must have castors. Chairs can weigh up to 20kg and even if your chair is much lighter, you'll be adopting an unsafe posture to lift the chair to and from your desk

**Fit** Your chair needs to fit you in the same way your shoes need to fit you. A good chair should have enough adjustment so that it can fit most people, but no single chair is going to fit someone who is 6'6" tall and weighs 18 stone, AND someone who is under 5' tall. To make it fit you you need to be able to adjust the seat height and seat depth. Ideally the backrest will adjust for angle, independently of the seat and have height adjustment too.

## Armrests

Your arms weigh about 10% of your body's weight. If there are no armrests to support them, your spine is going to be doing the work.

Armrests need to be adjustable for height and width. Good ones will have fore and aft movement as well.

# MAKE IT YOURS

**Fabric or mesh?** This really is down to personal choice. Mesh is a cheaper way of providing decent ventilation to the body, but done properly, there's no reason why you shouldn't prefer it. Mesh backed chairs often have less adjustment than upholstered back rests.

Good quality foams give the manufacturer greater scope for enhancing the feel of the chair and will usually give you more options to have it finished in a style that suits you. Modern high quality foams with a breathable fabric such as wool should be comfortable in most climates. Leather is often an option too. It's a timeless classy finish but is always expensive.

**Do I need a headrest?** Most chairs will have the option of a neck or headrest. Most people do not **need** one, and for most, a neck rest shouldn't be applying positive pressure when your working, but it is nice to have it there to rest back into. Some job rolls, security for example, can have users in a more reclined position looking up at monitors, in this scenario, a neck rest would be essential.

**Special Adaptions** for most people the basic options as described will be enough. For some, whether they have a historic musculoskeletal issue, injury, they're an unusual size, or the work places special needs on them, it may be necessary to go a lot further. Talk to a specialist, you may be surprised what solutions they can come up with - it's their job after all!



# IS THE DESK REALLY THAT IMPORTANT?



It's somewhat surprising that while we've always known that we're all different heights, we've continued for so long to mostly provide desks that are all the same height, and therefore suit very few people.

A height-adjustable desk provides many benefits. Not all work is well suited to standing, but many things are. There are different opinions on how much time should be divided between sitting and standing. Here at Backworld, we believe that everybody and every job role is different. The really important thing is that you are able to change between different postures. Be mindful of your own body – you'll know when it's time to change.

When choosing a desk, make sure it has a suitable height range for everyone that is going to be using it. Some desks' minimum height may not be low enough for shorter users. Consider the power supply: you can get desks that adjust manually, which brings even more movement benefits, as well as costing nothing to run.





# ANYTHING ELSE?



## AND FINALLY...

None of this stuff will work properly if it is not correctly set up. Buy from an ergonomic specialist and they'll not only guide you to the correct equipment, they'll show you how to use it. At Backworld, we prefer to deliver chairs personally, so that we can be sure you'll get the most out of it.

You've now got a great chair that supports you, and a desk that encourages you to adopt different postures while keeping your energy levels up for the whole day.

There are still other risks and factors to consider, though. For example, most people do not use around a third of the keys on their keyboard, which causes excessive movement when mousing, leading to upper limb disorders. Most mice are too small for a human hand, and hold the wrist in an unnatural position, with the designers instead focusing on packing as many into a shipping container as possible. The most important consideration is screen height, particularly for those working from laptops. It's vital that the screen and keyboard are separate so they can both be placed in the correct position.



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# ABOUT US



Backworld has been providing seating solutions in Devon for over 30 years. Paul Skinner took over the business in 2018 and passionately believes that everyone should be able to sit and work without pain. Originally trading from a shop in Exeter, we found that we can serve more clients more effectively from our van. We have a unit that customers are welcome to visit.

Paul lives in Exeter with his partner Tony, and in his spare time loves white water kayaking, music and walking his dog, Frank Turner.

