



OUR GUIDE TO DRIVING SET UP



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CARS – NOT THE PERFECT ENVIRONMENT

About this guide

Setting a car seat in the correct position for you can be particularly tricky. We choose our office chairs because they suit us. But we don't have the luxury of a choice of seats in a car.

Furthermore, the car seat designer has more than the world's drivers varying proportions to take into account. There are controls for the feet and the hands which have to be reached. The road ahead and the car's instruments, which have to be in view. And of course crash protection all have to be taken into account.

All of this tends to make the final position a compromise. For example you get the seat height perfect, but when you bring the back rest up to a comfortable angle your head is now rubbing the roof.

We can't be sure what adjustments and features your car seat has, but we'll do our best to cover the common items.



We'll assume that you have a car that fits you. If you are 6'8" tall and you're driving a small car, there's probably not much we can do!

And just as in desk work, it's really important to take regular breaks. Keep yourself hydrated, and ensure everything is working properly. You might achieve the perfect position, but if you're unable to clear the windscreen and you're having to contort your body to see the road ahead, your good set up will not help you!

THE BASICS

When you get into a car for the first time, it's usually harder to finesse a 'nearly right' position than it is to start from scratch. So rather than making lots of little adjustments, push the seat way back, lower it all the way down, recline the back and push the steering wheel up.

Seat Height & Tilt

Adjust the seat so that your hips are at least as high as your knees. In the past (and of course you may have an older car) the rear of the seat would be considerably lower than the front. This helps prevent a body from 'submarining', or sliding forward during braking and in an accident.

Most, if not all modern cars have seatbelt pre-tensioners fitted which means we can now safely adopt a flatter driving seat.

Sports car seating still tends to have a preference for a bum down, knees up position. This may well be advantageous if you are racing, as it will provide a more bracing position to cope with the extra violence of the race track, but for normal driving, it's not good for the body.

If you're unable to raise the back of the seat and are uncomfortable, consider a wedge shaped cushion.

Check that you can clearly see the road ahead, and the instruments, although we'll adjust the wheel later.

If you can't get the seat high enough to see the road and the instruments, you should look at a booster cushion.



BACK AND FRONT

Raise the seat back to an angle that is comfortable for you. We may have to change this in a minute, and don't think it needs to be upright, a more open angle at the pelvis is better for you. Check again you have proper forward visibility. If you now find your head is rubbing the roof, lower the seat a little.

Slide the seat forward so that your feet can fully depress the pedals. Also check that there is a gap between the front of the seat and the back of your knees.

If your steering wheel does not adjust, hopefully now you are comfortable and have a good view of the road and instruments. If not, you'll have to make some compromises to correct this.

Steering Wheel

You should now hopefully find that the seat is comfortable. Now let's bring in the steering wheel and hope that doesn't mess everything up! Bring the steering wheel forward and down. Ideally, you'll be able to hook your thumbs over a central spoke somewhere between the quarter to and ten to position. You want to be able to do this with the wheel as low as possible. The higher your hands, the more effort on your back and shoulders keeping them there. You want your elbows bent but relaxed, and you should be able to place your wrists on top of the wheel. Pay attention to the instrument panel and make sure all of it, or as much as possible is in view.



THE OTHER BITS



MIRRORS

Adjust the mirrors so you can see behind with as little obstruction as possible. Be aware of the car's natural blindspot. Most newer cars have mirrors that do much to eliminate blind spots, but they still exist! You will find that your posture sinks a little during the day, and later on you'll notice the mirrors are no longer correct. Rather than change the mirrors, have a stretch, and sit up. Try to realign your posture as it was earlier.

HEADRESTS

Headrests form a vital part of the chair's safety features. Whiplash injuries occur in accidents even at slow speeds, and a decent headrest will greatly reduce the severity. In a more severe accident, the spine will stretch as the head is thrown back and forth. Be aware of this and place the headrest behind the head, not the neck. This should be high enough to deal with whiplash. Adjust the rest forward so it is close to the back of the head, not neck, and close to it, but without touching.

SEATBELTS

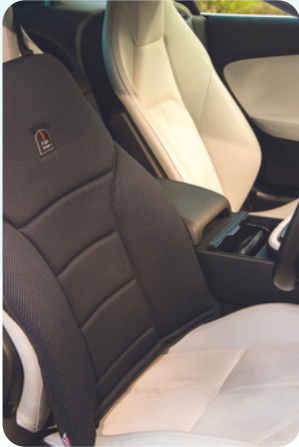
Now buckle up and enjoy your drive! Be careful to place the seatbelt over the bony parts: clavicle & sternum. They're much better placed to help than soft tissue should the seatbelt be really needed.

LUMBAR SUPPORT

Many cars now have adjustable lumbar support. However the adjustment tends to be limited to depth, and many will not be able to place it in the correct position for them. Lumbar is a very personal thing, you may find you don't need any extra here, some of us like a lot. Have a play and see if it helps you.

STILL NOT RIGHT

Sometimes it doesn't matter how hard you try, you just will not be able to get a particular seat right for you. As you might expect, there are numerous after market accessories, let's have a look at some of the more useful ones we've come across.



Ergodriver

This clever device straps to the back seat of most cars and allows the individual to tailor support to their own individual needs. A range of different inflatable supports can be placed exactly where they are needed.

<https://backworld.co.uk/shop/ergodriver/>



Superest

This nicely shaped memory foam cushion provides lumbar and lateral support.

<https://backworld.co.uk/shop/superest/>



Various supports and cushions

Wedges are a particularly common solution, but there's a range of supports for back and bottom, with foam and inflatable options.

<https://backworld.co.uk/products/accessories/posture-support/>

ABOUT US



Backworld has been providing healthy seating and desking solutions in Devon for over 30 years. Paul Skinner took over the business in 2018 and passionately believes that everyone should be able to work without pain.

Originally trading from a shop in Exeter, we now have a showroom in Marsh Barton Exeter which is open by appointment.

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

