

# SIT-STAND WORKING

Sit-stand working acknowledges our need for movement and variety. It reduces postural strain and supports our creativity.

It makes sense.



WORKING SPACE

## INTRODUCTION

Sit-stand working is the most important development in workplace ergonomics in many years. It is relevant to anyone who sits for long periods while performing a task.

For a long time our work practices have been based on the assumption that it is necessary or simply inevitable that we sit for long periods in a relatively static context. Our experience in school and further education teaches us to adapt our bodies to non-adjustable furniture which doesn't meet our needs. We learn to ignore our discomfort.

The importance of appropriate working height is seldom understood. Most of us don't understand the damage we do to our bodies when we distort them to fit an arbitrary fixed working height.

A sit-stand work table is the ultimate height-adjustable workstation: it allows us to adjust our working height quickly and easily to suit our body and our task. It gives us the freedom to work seated or standing and to change between the two as often as we wish. Changing frequently between sitting and standing minimises tension and postural strain.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF SIT-STAND WORKING

Sit-stand working is not a new idea. At the end of the 19th century, clerks still worked at high, usually sloping surfaces, standing or sitting on high stools. We have met people who worked like this when they began their careers in City of London institutions in the 1950s.

The 20th century saw the introduction of machines into the office. With them came lower and flat desks and the beginning of a much more sedentary way of working. The significant exception to this was the drawing board used by architects, designers and draftsmen. The drawing board with easy and fast adjustment of height was probably the first sit-stand workstation.

In Denmark in the late 1970s, concern about the effects of poor ergonomic

provision in the workplace led to the introduction of regulations about the height of workstation furniture. Desks must be adjustable to suit the user and the task; shared desks must adjust easily to suit the different users.

The first Danish solutions had simple adjustment in the legs, effectively a choice of fixed height. These were followed by designs providing easy adjustment via crank-operated mechanical systems and by early experiments with hydraulic and electrical systems.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the first sit-stand desks appeared: early designs used gaslifts with simple systems designed to balance the weight of the

equipment on the worktop in order to provide fast adjustment without effort.

By 2001 the gaslift-based designs were superseded by electrical systems which were more reliable and much simpler to use.

2005: more than 90% of new desks installed in Danish offices are sit-stand designs.

## ERGONOMIC ESSENTIALS

We aren't designed for long periods of seated work. Nor is it desirable that we stand for long periods, though a standing position does at least allow more movement.

Change of position is important: it minimises our tendency to create fixed tension patterns and progressively higher levels of residual tension.

A working height which is too low or too high increases postural strain.

Computer work and paperwork tasks require significantly different working heights.

Changes in the effective height of computer keyboards create the need for changes in worksurface height.

Changes in shoe heel height require different working heights, whether sitting or standing.

There is no "standard person". Standard working height is a complete nonsense. Fixed-height tables are acceptable for meeting use. They are completely unsuitable for work use for more than a very short time.



# TECHNOLOGY

## Adjustment systems

Systems with electric adjustment are now more or less standard. They offer optimum ease of use and are more reliable than mechanical systems based on gaslifts. Mechanical systems based on crank adjustment are reliable, but the time and effort needed is an obstacle to frequent change of position and they are appropriate only in very specific circumstances.

## Control systems

Memory features were once standard on sit-stand tables. Users could programme preferred sitting and standing heights. The latest ergonomic thinking argues that it is better to provide simple height controls without memory features. This obliges users to think about correct working height every time they change

position. In doing so they also attend to the way they are using the body.

## Adjustment range

The first electrical systems provided an adjustment range of 50cm. The minimum height available with these systems was often too high for shorter people engaged in keyboard work. More recent systems provide a range of 60cm or more.

# BENEFITS

## Benefits for individual users

Reduced strain and stress; improved wellbeing, energy and effectiveness; improved morale.

A sense of choice and personal autonomy.

The freedom to move.

Standing encourages a more dynamic approach which carries over to seated working. Sitting posture is improved.

The opportunity to adjust working heights and change position encourages users to listen to their body, to attend to releasing tension.

## Benefits for employers

Sit-stand working is an important component of a comprehensive strategy for health and safety and liability issues. Employers can be confident that this part of their ergonomic provision reflects the highest modern standards.

## SOLUTIONS

The table illustrated below is a perfect example of an elegant modern work table. This one just happens to allow the user to adjust its height at the press of a button and to move between sitting and standing quickly and easily.

We have a number of sit-stand table solutions.



## OUR SERVICES

We provide ergonomic furniture solutions for work. This may involve an individual client working at a computer in a home office or multiple users in an orthodox office space. Our solutions are not confined to typical computer and paperwork tasks: our clients include sculptors and painters, jewellers and watchmakers, laboratory workers and others engaged in specialised tasks. We also have a special interest in solutions for all levels of education.

Here is a summary of the ways in which we serve our clients:

We provide consultancy services. We assess needs and advise on the creation of effective solutions.

We teach people to make the best use of high quality work chairs and adjustable work furniture.

We supply the hardware: high quality work chairs; adjustable work furniture; storage solutions.

We provide high quality solutions for reception, meeting and social contexts within the workplace and other public spaces.

We have a special interest in ergonomic solutions for every level of education, from kindergarten to university.

We provide solutions for individual clients and for projects which involve many users.

### Locations

Our office is now in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. We continue to provide services to clients in and around Oxford and throughout the UK.

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