Working from home or in a remote environment might make for a great commute these days. However, you might also find yourself confronted with challenges you wouldn’t experience in the office. Whether you find yourself working remotely as a temporary and occasional situation, or as your everyday workplace, there are tips you can keep in mind to ensure you are working comfortably and safely.

**Create the Right Environment**

We value our mental output, communication, and collaboration with students and colleagues. However, it’s easy to lose track of the simple things, such as creating an environment that supports your body and helps you focus. You will have the stamina to make a difference when you practice the following:

- Find a dedicated workspace to set up your computer. This should be a low-traffic area with minimal distractions.
- Set up your workspace so the surface is at sitting elbow height. If your shoulders are scrunched or too high, the surface is too high; you will experience discomfort.
- Look for a comfortable chair because you will need to focus for a while. Avoid working from informal spaces like the couch, a recliner or the bed. These spaces do not provide adequate support for your body.
- Challenge 1: Minimize distractions from “chaotic intersections” around the house; “coworking” with our families, roommates, or pets; and social media.
- Challenge 2: Avoid “hyper-focused” work activities. Don’t stay in one position too long and be sure to stretch often. Set up a recurring reminder to stretch every 30 minutes, take a quick walk outside, pay attention to your pet, or get some sunshine by the window.

**Proper Workspace Setup**

Review the following key tips for working ergonomically.

- The first step towards making a solid and comfortable work environment is working at elbow height.
- If your elbows are not at the level of the work surface, raise your chair (if it is height adjustable) or raise your body by sitting on a blanket or cushion.
- Keep your elbows close to the body when you are working.
- Remember: posture follows vision! Arrange working documents at eye level. You can use reams of paper or a laptop stand to raise the screen to eye level.
- Place your primary monitor directly in front of you.
- Follow the 20/20/20 rule for resting your eyes: every twenty minutes take a break to look at something approximately 20 feet away, for twenty seconds.
- Use a comfortable chair that lets you work at elbow height when seated. Support your spine so that the rounded portion of the backrest is right against your belt-line. Be sure to work with your feet flat on the floor or a footrest.
- Many of us that use laptops realize the keyboard on a laptop is smaller than an external keyboard. This creates for a lot of stress and strain. A long-term solution is to use an external keyboard and an external mouse.
Mobile Devices
Devices include your phone, e-readers, tablets, gaming consoles, all of which require heavy hand gripping, finger dexterity and repetitive usage, which can cause fatigue over long periods of time. We often use these devices in our so called “free time,” after our work duties are completed. However, our bodies continue to function as if we were continuing the workday when we use these devices long into the evening.

- The problem lies with imbalance: repetitive motion, poor posture, atrophy, and mental fatigue.
- The best method is to not hold the device at all. Instead use a pillow or support
- If you need to hold the device, another tip is to keep your wrists as straight as possible, rather than holding the device at an angle, or with a bent wrist. One way to do this is to use a pop socket on the back of your phone.
- Use the devices at eye level, and tuck your elbows by your side to reduce neck and shoulder tension.
- If you use talk to text be sure to always proof your messages before sending.
- Stop all device use 30 minutes before bed to ensure you are well rested.

Additional Resources
- Cal/OSHA “Easy Ergonomics for Desktop Computer Users”
- Keenan Knowledge Center – Working Remotely
- Keenan SafeColleges “Office Ergonomics”
- Keenan SafeColleges “Injury Prevention Through Physical Conditioning”: ab exercises, healthy back, lower body, upper body & wellness