



# WORKSTATION DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT – STAFF INFORMATION LEAFLET



## The Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992

The main provisions apply to display screen equipment (DSE) users, defined as workers who habitually use a computer as a significant part of their normal work. This includes people who are regular users of DSE equipment, or rely on it as part of their job. This covers you if you use DSE for periods of an hour or more continuously, and/or you are making daily use of DSE. BrisDoc is required to:

- Make a risk assessment of workstation use by DSE users, and reduce the risks identified.
- Ensure DSE users take adequate breaks.
- Provide regular eyesight tests.
- Provide health and safety information and training.
- Provide adjustable furniture (desk, chair, etc.).
- Demonstrate that they have adequate procedures designed to reduce risks (such as 'repetitive strain injury') associated with DSE work.

## Some frequently asked questions

### How can I make my workstation safe to use?

This advice is based on the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations L26 (ISBN 0-7176-2582-6). Good practice includes:

- Adjust your chair height to a position that allows your arms to be parallel with the floor when you type. If you cannot now comfortably place your feet flat on the floor, you will either need a foot-rest, or a higher desk.
- Adjust the angle and height of your back-rest. It should support your lower back. Adjust the tilt of your seat so that your body is inclined slightly forwards. This encourages you to sit upright, and keep your back straight.
- Adjust your screen position, so that your eyes look down on it from an angle of around 15 to 20 degrees (slightly below eye level). Adjust the viewing angle of the screen to minimise reflections and glare. If this proves impossible you may need to address any problems with natural or artificial lighting e.g. fit blinds to windows or use a screen filter.
- Adjust your keyboard, so that your desk supports your wrists and forearms, and the angle feels comfortable during use. Arrange your desk and equipment to minimise the amount of bending, twisting and stretching. Keep the area around and underneath your desk clear to allow you enough room to change position regularly.
- If you spend a lot of time reading from source documents or copy typing, place a document holder beside the screen.
- Take regular breaks.
- Take exercise breaks after a prolonged spell of typing and using a mouse. Stretching aids blood flow, and helps break up the effects of static postures.

### Do I have the right to take a break?

Yes. The DSE Regulations say that employers '**should allow their employees time to take breaks away from the workstation and telephone, and the accompanying mental and physical stresses**'. Both the length of break times and their frequency are equally important. Breaks can range from doing other non-computer tasks to completely stopping work. The DSE Regulations do not define 'break time' in terms of minutes every hour. In general, short frequent breaks are better than one or two longer breaks. Take exercise breaks after a prolonged spell of typing and using a mouse. Stretching aids blood flow and helps break up the effects of static postures.



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## Am I entitled to a free eye test?

Yes, you can request a free eye test if you are classified as a user.

BrisDoc has a duty, under the Display Screen Equipment Regulations, to offer regular DSE users eyesight tests on request when they start DSE work with the organisation and follow-up tests at regular intervals, and to pay for the cost of basic corrective spectacles.

Your 'blink rate' drops the longer you use a computer. Your eyes are less well lubricated, and are likely to become dry and sore. It is important to remember to maintain a normal blink rate when using a computer. Frequent rest breaks, and work away from DSE equipment, gives eyes a chance to recover.

## What should my employer do to prevent Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)?

BrisDoc has a statutory duty to carry out a risk assessment of any hazardous task or equipment, and consult their workforce. This applies to your workstation, also known as display screen equipment (DSE). DSE work and poor ergonomics can increase the risk of Repetitive Strain Injury. BrisDoc must follow the advice set out in the Guidance on the regulations for the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations L26.

## I share a desk, what should I do?

Hot-desking is a common working practice in BrisDoc. If you share your desk, readjust your chair and desk before you start work. It is vital that at workstations where hot-desking is the norm that the equipment offers a wide range of adjustments to offer those using it to find a comfortable working position. If you normally work at the same desk, then you could install a DSE checklist on your screen or pin it up and follow it before you start work. You may spend time getting your desk set up properly in your working time, you are not expected to come in early to make it safe and comfortable.

## Do safety regulations apply when I work at home?

Yes. The risks of developing a work-related injury to hands, wrists, arms, neck and back through using ill-adjusted equipment at home are high. Your employer has a duty to apply the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations. Even if you work on your own behalf, you should still comply with them. When using a laptop always ensure it is used on a workstation at the correct height, use a comfortable adaptable chair and adopt good posture at all times. Laptops are primarily designed for short term use. Docking stations, separate keyboards and mice should be used if a laptop is to be used for frequent or prolonged use. This enables the laptop user to adjust the workstation in a manner most comfortable for them.

## Who is a user?

A DSE user is an employee who habitually uses display screen equipment and is reliant upon it in order to carry out his/her work activities. If most, or all, of the following apply the individual should be classified as a user:

- The individual is dependent upon the use of DSE in order to do the job as there are no alternative means readily available.
- The individual has no discretion as to whether or not to use the equipment
- Significant training or particular skills are required
- DSE is normally used continuously for at least one hour every day
- The job requires fast transfer of information between the user and the screen
- The job activity requires high levels of attention and concentration from the user

## What are the risks?

The health risks associated with the use of Display Screen Equipment are related to static sedentary postures and the extended lengths of time spent using such equipment. BrisDoc provides advice for DSE users on health risks, training, its responsibilities as the employer,



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and what users can do to help themselves. The types of health problems that may be experienced by users can be grouped as follows:

**Upper limb disorders:** Lack of support for the lower back; stooping, reaching or twisting; typing or use of the mouse with bent wrists can lead to anything from temporary fatigue, aches, pains and soreness to chronic soft tissue problems such as tendonitis, bursitis and muscle strain.

**Eyes and eyesight problems:** There is no reliable evidence that display screens cause damage to user's eyes and eyesight. However, prolonged use may make users aware of pre-existing defects. Users may, however, suffer symptoms of temporary visual fatigue which can be manifested as temporary impaired vision, red or sore eyes and headaches. This can be caused by focussing at a fixed distance for long periods of time; poor positioning of the display screen; poor legibility of characters on the screen; an unstable display; reflections and glare on the screen.

**Fatigue/Stress:** Poorly designed or inappropriate software can lead to frustration and stress as can lack of training in the use of required software. Daily work activities with insufficient breaks away from the DSE workstation can cause mental fatigue.

### What measures are in place to reduce these risks?

All members of staff classed as DSE 'users' should receive advice on the risks involved with improper use of DSE equipment, what the university's responsibilities are and what measures users can take to help themselves. This may be done by speaking to your Service H&S Lead or Line Manager.

## DSE Risk Assessment

All users must have their workstation risk assessed to highlight any potential problems and take remedial action to prevent the onset of any ill-health symptoms. The risk assessment will consider the workstation equipment (chair, desk, screen, keyboard, mouse etc.) as well as the environment (lighting, temperature, humidity etc.) and provision of information, instruction and training.

The risk assessment must be systematic, appropriate and comprehensive. BrisDoc operates a self-assessment approach following appropriate training. Staff may also wish to refer to the HSE's DSE checklist for guidance.

DSE risk assessments must be reviewed if there is any significant change to the software, hardware, furniture or increase in time spent at the screen. The risk assessment must also be reviewed if the user is relocated to another workstation, the lighting is modified or, in particular, if the user develops ill-health symptoms.

## Actions users can take to help themselves

**Posture:** ensure that your chair is correctly adjusted so that you are at the right height and the lumbar region of your back is supported. When typing and using the mouse you must keep your wrists straight and avoid resting on the desk. If, once the chair has been adjusted to the correct height, your feet do not reach the floor you may require a foot rest. Documents should be located either next to the screen (if you are a touch typist) or next to the keyboard to avoid excessive neck movements.



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**Eyes:** if there is glare or reflection on your screen use blinds or adjust, or reposition, your screen. Ensure that the screen is clean to maintain good contrast and brightness.

**Fatigue/Stress:** you should receive training on how to use your software. You can request attendance on these courses via your Line Manager.

**Breaks:** alternate your tasks so that you can take breaks away from the screen to rest your eyes, your back and your arms. Short frequent breaks are better than longer less frequent ones. Avoid taking refreshment breaks or lunch breaks whilst sitting at your workstation.

## Eyes, Eyesight Tests and DSE Glasses

Research has shown that in general only one in ten DSE “users” will require special corrective appliances for DSE work. However, if you are a user and you believe that you may have vision problems associated with using your DSE workstation you can ask your Line Manager for an eyesight test. You will need to obtain a Specsavers eyesight test voucher from him/her first and take this with you to your nearest Specsavers outlet. If the Specsavers optician believes that you require corrective appliances specifically for work with your DSE workstation, BrisDoc will contribute up to £50 towards the cost of a pair of basic frames and lenses.

## Training

BrisDoc’s training tool (DSE Training Presentation) is available on radar and from your Line Manager / H&S Lead. Basic training in DSE is also included in the H&S induction training undertaken by all BrisDoc staff.

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## For further information

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) <http://www.hse.gov.uk/hthdir/noframes/DSE.htm>

### HSE publications:

**Working With VDUs** - Offers basic advice for people who use VDUs at work. (ref. INDG36(rev2)) <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf>

**Work with Display Screen Equipment: Guidance on regulations** - Gives detailed legal guidance and includes the text of the regulations Ref. L26. ISBN 0-7176-2582-6.