

Office Ergonomics

Keyboard Trays

What to Look For in a Keyboard Tray

The purpose of a keyboard tray is to change the height and angle of the keyboard without interfering with how the user uses the keyboard and mouse. Therefore, the tray should be easy to adjust, have enough room for the keyboard and mouse and not prevent the user from typing with the keyboard at forearm length from the body.

Height

The tray should be height adjustable until the mouse and keyboard are at or slightly below elbow height. Avoid keyboard trays that require unscrewing a knob every time the height is adjusted. Knob-adjusted trays discourage users from making small adjustments in height and the knob, often located under the tray, may hit the user's knee and prevent them from sitting close enough to the keyboard and mouse to use them properly. Many newer trays have lever-less mechanisms, which allow users to adjust tray height by lifting the front edge and either pulling on or pushing down on the back edge.

Angle

The tray should be angle adjustable to align the forearm with the keyboard. Often this will require a negative tilt where the front of the keyboard is higher than the back. For some users, it may be necessary to adjust the angle of the mouse surface as well to prevent the mouse from rolling off the tray.

Mouse

The tray should have space for the mouse beside the keyboard at about the same height.

Wrist Rest

If the tray comes with a wrist rest, it should be soft foam or gel and be removable. Not all keyboards will fit on a standard keyboard tray with the wrist rest attached.

Setting Up the Keyboard Tray

Height

Sit upright in the chair and bend your elbow 90 deg. Hold your open palm down and raise the keyboard tray until the keyboard is just under your fingers. Keep the keyboard at this height or slightly lower as desired. Reach to the side and check to be sure the mouse is just under your hand as well. Some keyboard trays have mouse attachments that attach to the side and below the keyboard. If this places the mouse too low, put additional mouse pads under your mouse until it is at approximately the same height as the keyboard.

Office Ergonomics

Angle

Hold your hand, palm open, over the keyboard. Tilt the tray to align the angle of the keyboard with the angle of the forearm. If the keyboard is below elbow height, this will require a negative slope where the spacebar edge of the keyboard is higher than the back edge. In most cases, the keyboard will be either flat or tilted at a negative slope. Do not use the feet on the back of your keyboard or tilt the tray at a positive slope unless you are seated in a reclined position. Even when reclined, start with the keyboard flat before trying a positive tilt.

Mouse

Place the mouse beside the keyboard tray and at about the same height. On trays where there is room for the keyboard and mouse on the same tray, place the mouse beside the keyboard. On trays where there is a mouse attachment attached underneath the tray, check the mouse height in the same way as the keyboard height. Additional mouse pads are a good way to raise the mouse. Some trays have a mouse attachment above the keyboard. These attachments slide or pivot to cover the numeric keypad on the right hand side of the keyboard and reduce side reaching to use the mouse. Keep these trays pivoted over the numeric keypad when not using the keypad.