



## Height Adjustable Desks: Frequently Asked Questions

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## Purchasing Information

Please refer to the following documents:

- [Height Adjustable Desks](#): Purchasing Information
- [Height Adjustable Platforms](#): Purchasing Information

## Are Height Adjustable Desks Required?

Height adjustable workstations are recommended when financially viable, but they are not a basic requirement. Although they make it easier to make positional changes, height adjustable workstations are not the only option.

Nonetheless, when departments are purchasing new equipment such as during renovations or in new building designs, they are encouraged to consider purchasing height adjustable desks (see FAQ “what are the benefits of a height adjustable desk” for more information). If it is not possible to purchase height adjustable desks for each individual, consider purchasing at least one as a shared resource within the department.

For medical accommodations please see our [medical accommodation](#) process

## What are the benefits of a height adjustable desk?

Height adjustable desks that have a good height range (22.6” to 48.7”) offer many benefits:

- ✓ **Eliminates need for keyboard trays and footrests.** Height adjustable desks can be adjusted to the correct height when sitting thus eliminating the need for footrests and keyboard trays for nearly all users. Non-adjustable desks are above elbow height for users shorter than 6’4 which means that nearly all users require a footrest or keyboard tray at a standard desk.
- ✓ **Positional Change.** Height adjustable desks make it easy for users to change between sitting and standing posture thus allowing greater postural change and movement throughout the day.
- ✓ **Accommodations.** Height adjustable desks make it easier for departments to accommodate individuals returning to work or staying at work following an injury.
- ✓ **Shared workstations.** Height adjustable desks make it easier for users that share a workspace to individually adjust the desk to the right working height for them.
- ✓ **Easier when individuals move workstations.** People change jobs, departments shuffle and this can result in the added hassle of needing to arrange for facilities/building operations to move keyboards trays each time a person moves to a new workstation. With a height adjustable desk, each person can easily adjust their workstation to the right working height.



### If sitting is the new smoking, is standing at my computer workstation the cure?

Not necessarily, at present, there is not enough high quality evidence available to determine whether spending more time standing at work can repair the harms of a sedentary lifestyle....Standing instead of sitting hardly increases energy expenditure... (Cochrane Work Review Shrestha & Verbeek, 2016).

Static standing is also associated with negative health impacts such as back, knee and foot pain as well as an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Positional change is important and regardless of if you have a height adjustable desk, all computer users members are encouraged to get up once or twice per hour to incorporate movement throughout the day, as is appropriate for their personal, medical and work circumstances (e.g. getting up to get water throughout the day, taking brief micro standing breaks at your desk, going for a walk at lunch, taking the stairs, holding walking meetings, parking further away or walking to a further bus stop, etc.).

### How frequently should I rotate between sitting and standing

Positional change is the key. If you have a height adjustable desk, the general recommendation is to stand for up to 15 to 20 minutes at a time and to sit for up to 30 to 45 minutes at a time.

Even if you do not have a height adjustable desk, it is still recommended that you get up once or twice per hour to incorporate movement throughout the day, as is appropriate for your personal, medical and work circumstances (e.g. getting up to get water throughout the day, taking brief micro standing breaks at your desk, going for a walk at lunch, taking the stairs, holding walking meetings, parking further away or walking to a further bus stop, etc.).

### What is the difference between a height adjustable desk and a riser/platform?

- A height adjustable desk means that the whole desk goes up and down.
- A height adjustable-riser/platform is a device that sits on top of your existing desk



### Which is better; a height adjustable desk or a riser/platform?

Functionally, height adjustable desks are superior to height adjustable risers/platforms.

#### Height Adjustable Desks

##### Advantages:

- ✓ Can be set lower than standard desks thus reducing the need for keyboard trays and footrests
- ✓ Easy to access paper and telephone in both standing and seated positions
- ✓ Can position monitor where you want it
- ✓ A desk with a good height range (22.6" to 48.7") will fit nearly all users

##### Disadvantages:

- ✗ Slightly more expensive
- ✗ May need to remove an existing desk

#### Height Adjustable-Riser/Platform

##### Advantages:

- ✓ Slightly less expensive than desks
- ✓ No need to remove an existing desk

##### Disadvantages:

- ✗ Impact placement of paper and phone in both standing and seated positions
- ✗ Limited flexibility with placement of monitors; this is particularly true with dual monitors, you will not be able to center yourself with the primary monitor and have the secondary monitor off to the side
- ✗ Some models position the monitors too high when seated
- ✗ Some models position the monitors too close
- ✗ Some models are heavy/awkward to raise/lower
- ✗ Different users will tolerate different trade-offs; not all users will fit the same height adjustable-riser/platform
- ✗ Do not accommodate as big of a height range as a desk

See [height adjustable-risers/platforms](#) for a list of pros/cons of different models

### What is the difference in cost between a height adjustable desk and a riser/platform?

#### Height Adjustable Desks

Height adjustable desks vary in price from \$564 to \$1,200+ depending on the size and shape of the desk, finishes as well as the quantity of desks being purchased. Warranties are generally up to 10 years.

##### Notes:

- \$564 is based on a 30" deep X 48" wide electronic height adjustable desk with a height range of 22.6" to 48.7". This price does not include freight, delivery or installation. It is estimated that the final price will be approximately \$800 based on a single purchase and a simple installation (freight charges per unit drop with multiple purchases).
- You may be able to save costs if you are able to reuse your existing table top as it is possible to purchase just the height adjustable legs



- You may incur additional costs in the following situations:
  - If you currently have an L-shaped desk and are only changing one side to be height adjustable then, depending on how your L-shaped desk is connected, you may have a cost to stabilize the fixed height side.
  - There may be a cost associated with removing your existing desk

### **Height Adjustable Risers/Platforms**

Height adjustable risers/platforms vary in price from \$500 to \$1,200; price varies depending on the model. Warranties are generally up to 5 years or less depending on the model.

#### **Notes:**

- There are significant trade-offs between the different models; not all models fit all users equally as well and none fit as well as a height adjustable desk. See UBC's list of pros/cons for some of the different models.
- There are cheaper models on the market; however, users are cautioned to consider warranty, ease of use, weight distribution on the desk, the height range, and, how well the unit will fit users in both seated and standing postures. A cheaper upfront cost may not save the department money in the long run.

#### **Additional Resources:**

- [Workshops](#): the Ergonomics Program at UBC offers monthly, "Intro to Sit-Stand Desks" in the training room (Rm 604) at TEF3 (6190 Agronomy Rd)
- [Sit-Stand Demo Program](#). Loaner is equipment is available for a 1 to 3 month trial to assist you in determining if a height adjustable desk or riser/platform will work for you
- Adjusting your height adjustable desk to fit you. See our online guide for correct positioning when [standing](#) and when [sitting](#)
- [Medical Accommodations](#). Information for the medical accommodation process for sit-stand desks.