

DSE workstation assessment checklist

An employer must assess the workstation of every display screen equipment (DSE) user and reduce the risks it finds. The Health and Safety Executive describes DSE users as workers who use a screen daily, for continuous periods of an hour or more. That includes people who work at home long term or split their time between home and the office, and the assessment should cover both places. Users are also entitled to an eye test on request, paid for by the employer. The checklist below follows HSE's six areas: keyboards, mouse, display screens, software, furniture and environment.

Download the checklist ? PDF • one per person, per workstation

What does a DSE assessment cover? The checklist

Give this to each user for each place they work. Every "no" needs an action, an owner and a date. Answer for the way you actually sit and work, not the way the desk was set up on day one.

About this assessment

Name: [name]. Job title: [role]. Workstation assessed: [office desk / home / shared desk - location]. Date: [date]. Assessed by: [self, with name of trained assessor reviewing]. Reason: [new starter / new workstation / change to workstation or work / discomfort reported / routine review].

1. Keyboard

Is the keyboard separate from the screen? Can you tilt it and is there space in front to rest your hands when not typing? Can you type with your wrists straight and your forearms roughly level? Are the characters clear and readable? If you use a laptop for long periods, do you have a separate keyboard?

2. Mouse or trackpad

Is the device close enough to use with your upper arm relaxed, not stretched? Is there support for your wrist and forearm from the desk or the chair arm? Does it work smoothly at a speed that suits you? If you use a laptop for long periods, do you have a separate mouse?

3. Display screen

Is the text clear and a comfortable size? Is the image steady, without flicker? Can you adjust brightness and contrast? Does the screen swivel and tilt? Is the top of the screen roughly at eye level and about an arm's length away? Is it free from glare and reflections, and are there blinds or curtains to control daylight?

4. Software

Is the software suitable for the task and can you use it comfortably at the speed you need? Have you been shown how to use it, including zoom, text size and any accessibility settings you need?

5. Furniture

Is the work surface large enough for the equipment and papers you need, with the things you use most within easy reach? Is the chair stable, and can you adjust the seat height, the back height and the back tilt? Is your lower back supported? Are your forearms level with the desk and your feet flat on the floor, or on a footrest? Is there enough room under the desk to move your legs freely?

6. Environment

Is there enough room to change position and vary your movement? Is the lighting suitable, without bright lights or windows reflected in the screen? Is the temperature comfortable and the air neither too dry nor draughty? Is noise low enough to concentrate? Are cables tidy and out of walkways?

7. You and your work

Do you take short breaks from the screen or change activity regularly? Have you had any pain, discomfort, tingling, headaches or eye strain that you connect with this work? Do you know you can ask for an eye test? Is there anything else about this workstation that worries you?

Actions

Issue: [what the "no" was]. Action: [what will be done]. Owner: [name]. Due: [date]. Completed: [date]. Reviewed by: [assessor name and date]. Next review: [date, or on change].

Who counts as a DSE user?

The Regulations define a user as "an employee who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of his normal work". HSE's working description is narrower and easier to apply: the Regulations "apply to workers who use DSE daily, for continuous periods of an hour or more". The hour test is guidance, not statute, but it is the one an inspector will recognise.

The rules do not apply to people who use a screen only occasionally or for short periods.

When must an assessment be done?

HSE says employers must do an assessment when:

- a new workstation is set up
- a new user starts work
- a change is made to an existing workstation or the way it is used
- users complain of pain or discomfort

The Regulations add that an assessment must be reviewed if there is reason to suspect it is no longer valid, or there has been a significant change. Put it in the new starter checklist so it happens in week one.

Does it apply to home and hybrid workers?

Yes. HSE says the Regulations can apply to workers who "work at home on a permanent or long-term basis" or "routinely split their time between their workplace and home (sometimes called hybrid working)". Three points follow from its guidance:

- Assess both places. "Where workers use DSE in the home and office, the assessment should cover both situations."
- You do not normally have to visit. In most cases a self-assessment by a worker who has been trained to do one is enough.
- The worker does not pay. Where the assessment shows that action is needed, HSE says workers cannot be charged for it.

Say how this works in your hybrid working policy, and record any equipment sent home in the asset register.

What are the rules on eye tests, breaks and training?

- Duty - What it means - Source
- Eye and eyesight tests - Arrange and pay for a test when a user asks for one - DSE Regulations 1992, reg 5
- Glasses - Pay only where special glasses are needed for DSE work because normal ones cannot be used - reg 5; HSE
- Breaks - Plan work so that screen use is interrupted by breaks or changes of activity - reg 4
- Training and information - Train users in the safe use of their workstation and tell them about the risks and the measures taken - regs 6 and 7

On glasses, HSE's line is: "If an ordinary prescription is suitable, employers do not have to pay for glasses."

On breaks there is no fixed entitlement. HSE says: "There is no legal guidance about how long and how often breaks should be for DSE work." Its advice is to take short breaks often: "5 to 10 minutes every hour is better than 20 minutes every 2 hours." A break here means a break from the screen, not necessarily from work.

Do you have to keep a record?

The DSE Regulations themselves contain no record-keeping rule and no retention period. HSE's guidance is that in the simplest and most obvious cases an assessment need not be recorded, but that in most other cases assessments need to be recorded and kept readily accessible. Electronic records are fine.

In practice, keep each completed checklist with its actions until it is replaced by the next one, and for as long as you keep the person's other health and safety records. The health and safety handbook sets out the wider record periods.

A free template from CoDash - codash.co.uk/templates. Edit it to match how your company actually works, and take advice on anything unusual.