



Posture Perfect

Using good posture is important for everyday comfort. A neutral body position is the most comfortable working posture. That's when your shoulders are down and relaxed, your arms are close to your sides, your elbows are bent, and your wrists and hands are straight. Teachers, especially those who teach young children, may spend a considerable amount of time bending down to work with their pupils. Another awkward posture for teachers is prolonged writing on the board. When you work with your hand(s) above the head, or the elbow(s) above the shoulders you put stress on your shoulders and lower back.

Teachers need to be aware of their posture and adopt a comfortable stance. For example, if you are helping a student who is seated at his/her desk you may need to squat or kneel down to that level. Be careful though - squatting and kneeling for too long can be uncomfortable. Consider the use of a short portable stool. For work on the board, consider using an overhead projector and erase the board with your non-writing hand. Here are other tips to help keep you comfortable:

- * **Change your position** - Move around and change your position often. If you have been kneeling or bending, switch to something else to rest your back and knees. Standing in one position too long may also put stress on your back muscles.
- * **Be careful how you lift** – Think before you lift. Get help with heavy or awkward objects. Pivot, don't twist to move objects. Lift smoothly- don't jerk the object you are lifting. Push, don't pull heavy objects. When carrying a load, hold it as close to your body as possible and keep the weight evenly balanced.
- * **Watch your posture** - Pay attention to how you are standing and sitting!
 - Stand in a stable posture with you feet on a firm surface.
 - Sit and stand with your spine aligned; don't hunch over at your desk or stand in an awkward position.
 - Move your body, don't over stretch to reach items on your desk.
 - Try to minimize bending movements. If you must bend for objects that are in front of you try to bend at the knees rather than the back. For objects to the side, try changing your stance so that you are facing the object, and then bend down at the knees.
 - Avoid overreaching - if you must reach up to a high level, get something firm to stand on, such as a step stool.
- * **Take breaks and stretch** - Frequent brief rest breaks help to reduce fatigue and musculoskeletal discomfort. Gentle stretching will help to ease muscle tension and improve circulation.