FREE PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

Desk Setup Checklist: The 4 Layers

Most desk setups get fixed in the wrong order — an accessory here, a cushion there — while the screen, the thing that sets your neck and shoulders for eight hours, stays exactly where it was. Work this checklist in order: screen, surface, feet, light. Tick a box only when it is true at the end of a full workday, not after five minutes. Skip any layer that does not apply to you — that is the checklist working, not failing.

Measure first (write your numbers down)

☐ Sitting eye height vs. the top of your screen: the target is top of screen at or just below eye level.

☐ Viewing distance, eyes to screen: _____ inches (target: 20–40 inches).

☐ Elbow height vs. your keyboard: the target is keyboard at or just below elbow height, shoulders relaxed.

Layer 1 — Screen (the only layer every desk needs)

Screen height drives neck and shoulder position all day, so this layer comes first — and it is two heights, not one.

☐ Top of the screen sits at or just below eye level.

☐ Screen sits 20–40 inches from my eyes — set deliberately, not wherever the desk happens to end.

☐ Keyboard sits at or just below elbow height, with shoulders relaxed.

☐ Laptop route: the laptop is raised on a stand AND an external keyboard and mouse sit on the desk — a raised laptop typed on directly just moves the strain.

☐ Monitor route: I checked the panel's weight without its stand against the arm's stated range, with headroom under the ceiling — and the VESA pattern matches.

Layer 2 — Surface

A desk mat does not fix posture. What it fixes is drift — it keeps the positions Layer 1 set staying set.

☐ One consistent surface runs under both keyboard and mouse — no crossing from mat to bare desk mid-task.

☐ The mat stays planted (non-slip base) and the keyboard does not creep during a workday.

☐ No desk edge digs into a wrist or forearm.

☐ The mat fits the desk's depth without overhang — on a small desk, depth is the fit that fails first.

Layer 3 — Feet (only if you stand)

This layer is conditional, and the condition is standing. Seated all day? Skip it entirely and spend nothing here.

☐ I stand for part of the day — if not, this whole layer is ticked by skipping it.

☐ There is support underfoot, not a bare hard floor.

☐ The surface gives my feet reasons to shift — micro-movement, a raised-foot position, a calf stretch — not just cushion.

☐ If the mat is a compact size, I checked the maker's own sizing guidance against my height and stance before relying on it.

Layer 4 — Light

The last layer fixes a different kind of strain: squinting. It fixes the desk, not your posture.

☐ Light lands on the desk, keyboard, and papers — not reflected off the screen.

☐ No main light source sits directly behind the screen glaring past it.

☐ I can read paper at the desk without squinting or leaning in.

☐ The desk stays evenly lit as the room's light changes from morning to evening — re-check at both ends of the day.

The foundation under all four layers

☐ My chair lets my elbows sit near desk height. Chair and desk height are the foundation these layers sit on — no layer above compensates for a chair that puts your elbows far from the desk.

When to stop

☐ Stop buying when the targets are met: screen at eye level, keyboard at elbow height, surface planted, feet supported if you stand, desk lit without glare. Anything past that is decoration, not ergonomics.

☐ Pain rule: if pain persists once the heights are genuinely right — or is sharp, new, or worsening — the next step is a medical professional, not a fifth layer in a shopping cart.

Go deeper, layer by layer (site pages only)

The full guide this checklist condenses — Ergonomic Desk Setup:
homeofficestack.com/work-tools/ergonomic-desk-setup.html

Layer 1 in depth — Best Laptop Stand for Posture:
homeofficestack.com/work-tools/best-laptop-stand-for-posture.html

Layer 1 fit test — Monitor Arm Compatibility Checker:
homeofficestack.com/work-tools/monitor-arm-checker.html

Stand or arm? — Laptop Stand vs Monitor Arm:
homeofficestack.com/work-tools/laptop-stand-vs-monitor-arm.html

How we research every pick — How We Research:
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