



An Extended Guide · No. 1951

Monitor Height, Distance & Glare

A neck-friendly setup,
in plain English

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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★ Read this first — you really can't break anything

Before we start, a promise: you cannot break anything just by reading, looking, or trying a setting. Screens, keyboards, and cables are made to be plugged and unplugged, and almost anything you change can be changed right back. Go at your own pace, skip to the page you need, and if you ever feel stuck, that is exactly what I am here for — there is no such thing as a silly question. Where you put the screen matters as much as which screen you buy. A few easy adjustments can turn a sore neck and tired eyes into a comfortable spot you can sit at for hours.

Let's set your screen up to be kind to your neck and eyes

Most aches and squints at a computer come not from the screen itself but from where it sits — too low, too close, or lit up with glare. This guide walks through height, distance, tilt, and glare in plain English, with no special tools.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30+ years of helping folks with their home setups, I've seen how often a two-minute nudge of the screen fixes a complaint someone has lived with for months. It's some of the most satisfying help I give.

A quick, honest note: I'm a tech helper, not a doctor, and nothing here is medical advice. These are general comfort guidelines. If you have ongoing neck, back, or eye trouble, please see a professional — and do tell your eye doctor how much time you spend at a screen.

★ Comfort is the whole goal

You don't have to measure anything or get it perfect. We're after 'this feels good to sit at,' not a diagram on a wall. If you'd like a second set of eyes on your setup, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these, you'll have a setup that's far kinder to your neck and eyes.

- ❑ The top of the screen should sit at about eye level, so your gaze falls slightly downward and your neck stays relaxed.
- ❑ Sit about an arm's length back — reach out and your fingertips should roughly brush the screen.
- ❑ Tilt the screen up a touch so it faces your eyes squarely, not your chin or your forehead.
- ❑ Position the screen so windows and lamps are to the side, not behind it or behind you, to cut glare.
- ❑ If you wear bifocals or progressives, the screen often wants to sit a little lower so you're not tipping your head back.
- ❑ A laptop screen is almost always too low — raise it, and add a separate keyboard, to fix it.

✓ One idea to hold onto

Move the screen to meet your eyes, not your eyes to meet the screen. If you find yourself craning, leaning, or squinting, that's the screen asking to be moved.

How high should the screen be?

Height is the single biggest comfort fix, and the one most people have wrong. Here's the simple target.

As a general guide, the **top** of the screen should sit at about your eye level when you're sitting up comfortably. That way your eyes look slightly **downward** to the middle of the screen — the natural, restful angle — and your neck stays upright instead of tipped back.

A screen that's too low is the usual culprit behind a sore neck and upper back: you end up bowing your head forward to read it, hour after hour. Many stands leave the screen sitting too low out of the box, so this is worth checking even on a brand-new setup.

A quick way to check

Sit up straight, close your eyes, then open them looking straight ahead. Your gaze should land near the top third of the screen. If you're looking at the bottom of the screen or at the desk, it's too low; if you're looking at the ceiling or the top bezel, it's too high.

✓ Raising a screen that only tilts

If your stand won't go high enough, you don't need a new monitor. A sturdy riser, a couple of thick books, or a monitor arm can lift it to eye level. We cover risers and arms in the sit-stand and monitor-arm guide.

How far back should you sit?

Too close and your eyes work overtime and you swing your head to read the corners; too far and you lean in. There's a comfortable middle.

A good general target is **about an arm's length** away. Sit up, reach your arm straight out, and your fingertips should roughly reach the screen. For a larger screen, a little farther back is often more comfortable, so you can take in the whole thing with a relaxed gaze instead of turning your head.

If the text feels too small from that comfortable distance, the answer is not to scoot in close — it's to make the text bigger using the computer's text-size setting. We go into that in the guide on choosing a monitor for aging eyes. Sit at the distance that's easy on you, then size the text to match.

✓ Leaning in is a clue, not a habit

If you catch yourself drifting closer and closer through the day, that's usually a sign the text is too small or the screen is too dim — not that you need to sit nearer. Fix the text size and brightness instead.

Getting the tilt right

A small adjustment that makes a real difference: the angle the screen faces.

Once the height and distance are set, tip the screen so its face is roughly **square to your eyes** — usually that means tilting the top back a little so the screen looks up at you slightly. You want to feel like you're looking straight into it, not down at a surface or up at a billboard.

A screen tilted at an awkward angle also catches more glare from overhead lights, and can wash out or distort toward the edges. A square, slightly-upward-facing screen is both more comfortable to read and less prone to reflections.

✓ Tilt and glare go together

If you can't get rid of a reflection by moving a lamp, try a small change in tilt — sometimes tipping the screen a few degrees drops a bright reflection right out of your line of sight.

Bifocals, progressives, and reading glasses

If you wear glasses, they change the ideal screen position — sometimes a lot. Here's how to work with them, not against them.

With **bifocals or progressive lenses**, you read through the lower part of the lens. To see a screen through that reading zone, people often tip their head back and poke their chin forward — which is hard on the neck. The fix is usually to set the screen a little **lower** than the eye-level rule, so you look into it through the reading part of your lenses with your head level.

Single-vision reading glasses are set for a closer distance than a screen usually sits, so a monitor at arm's length can look a touch soft through them. Either setting is fine — the point is to notice how your own glasses want the screen placed, and oblige them.

✓ Tell your eye doctor you use a screen

The single most helpful thing you can do is mention to your eye doctor how far you sit from your screen and how long you're at it. There are lenses made for exactly that middle, screen distance — they can make an ordinary setup feel wonderful. We say more in the eye-strain guide.

Dealing with glare from windows

Daylight is lovely until it's bouncing off your screen or glaring straight into your eyes. A little rearranging usually solves it.

The worst spots are a window **directly behind the screen** (its brightness fights the screen and tires your eyes) and a window **directly behind you** (it reflects off the glass like a mirror). The comfortable arrangement is to have windows roughly **to the side** of the screen, so the light neither glares into your eyes nor bounces back at you.

You don't always have to move furniture. Turning the desk a quarter turn, closing a blind at the sunniest time of day, or sheer curtains that soften the light can all do the trick. A matte, anti-glare screen helps a great deal too, as we cover in the [monitor-for-aging-eyes](#) guide.

! Watch for the moving sun

A spot that's glare-free in the morning can be blinding by afternoon as the sun comes around. Check your screen at different times of day before you settle on an arrangement, so you're not fighting the light every afternoon.

Dealing with lamps and overhead lights

Indoor lights cause just as much glare as windows, and they're easier to move. Here's how to light the room kindly.

A ceiling light or a lamp placed above or behind the screen often casts a bright reflection right onto the glass. The gentler approach is softer, indirect light that doesn't shine directly at the screen or into your eyes — a lamp off to the side, or light bounced off a wall or ceiling, rather than a bare bulb in your sightline.

Aim for the room and the screen to be close in brightness. A bright screen in a dark room, or a dim screen in a bright room, both make your eyes work harder. Matching them is one of the easiest comforts there is — the eye-strain guide goes into lighting in more depth.

✓ The hand test for glare

Not sure where glare is coming from? Hold up your hand to shade the top of the screen, like a visor. If the picture suddenly looks clearer, an overhead light or window above the screen is your culprit — move it or block it.

The laptop problem (and its easy fix)

Laptops are wonderful, but they force a cruel choice: either the screen is too low or the keyboard is too high. Here's how to have both right.

Because the screen and keyboard are joined, a laptop on a desk puts the screen far below eye level — so you bow your head to see it. Looking down at a laptop for hours is one of the most common causes of neck ache I come across.

The fix is simple: **raise the laptop** on a stand or a sturdy stack until its screen top reaches eye level, then add a **separate keyboard and mouse** at a comfortable height for your hands. Now your eyes and your wrists are both happy. We cover keyboards and this kind of setup in the sit-stand and monitor-arm guide.

✓ Even a short raise helps

If a proper stand isn't handy, a thick book or two under the back of the laptop is far better than nothing. Just remember to add a separate keyboard so you're not reaching up to type.

Two ways people come to this

A comfortable setup gets arranged two ways: by the person who sits there, and by an adult child setting up a spot for a parent. The targets are the same; the attention differs.

If you're setting this up for yourself

You can feel what's comfortable moment to moment, so trust your own neck and eyes. Adjust, sit a while, and adjust again until nothing aches or strains.

- Set the screen top to about eye level and sit back about an arm's length.
- Tilt it square to your eyes, then hunt down and kill any glare.
- If you wear bifocals or progressives, try the screen a little lower.
- Give it a few days, and nudge things if an ache creeps in.

If you're setting it up for a parent or loved one

You may be arranging a desk for a parent who won't fuss with it or mention discomfort. Aim for a setup that's comfortable by default, so they never have to think about it.

- Raise the screen to their eye level while they sit normally — not yours.
- Ask about their glasses; set the screen lower if they wear progressives.
- Place the desk so daylight falls to the side, not behind the screen.
- If it's a laptop, add a stand plus a separate keyboard and mouse.

★ Setting up a comfortable spot for a parent?

Getting a parent's desk right the first time saves a lot of quiet aches they'd never mention. Tell me the room and the gear, and I'll help you arrange it well — in person for \$99, or often right on the screen for \$49. Call (330) 200-8042.

Raising a screen that sits too low

If your screen won't reach eye level on its own stand, you have several easy ways to lift it — no new monitor required.

- **A monitor riser or stand:** a simple shelf that lifts the whole screen a few inches; many double as a tidy spot for the keyboard underneath.
- **A sturdy stack:** a few solid books or a firm box will do in a pinch, as long as it's stable and won't slip.
- **A monitor arm:** clamps to the desk and lets you raise, lower, tilt, and swing the screen freely — the most flexible option.
- **A height-adjustable stand:** if you're buying a new screen, one with a stand that raises and lowers saves all this bother.

A monitor arm or a sturdy riser is the lasting fix, and it earns its keep every day in a comfortable neck. We go into choosing and mounting arms safely in the sit-stand and monitor-arm guide — including the all-important weight limits.

! Mind the weight limit on arms and risers

A monitor arm or riser is rated for a certain weight. A screen that's too heavy can sag, tip, or pull a clamp loose — a real pinch-and-drop hazard. Check the screen's weight against the arm's limit before you mount it, and make sure any clamp is tight on a solid desk edge.

If you use two screens

Two monitors are handy, but they can quietly twist your neck if they're arranged carelessly. A little thought keeps them comfortable.

Set both screens to the same height, with their tops at about eye level, so you're not looking up at one and down at the other. Bring them close together so there's no wide gap to swing your head across.

If you use one screen most of the time, put **that** one squarely in front of you and the second off to the side. If you use both equally, center the setup on the seam where they meet, angled gently inward like an open book, so neither one makes you turn far.

✓ Don't let the second screen pull you sideways

A common ache comes from a main screen shoved to one side to make room for a second. Put the screen you use most directly ahead of you; your neck will notice the difference.

The chair and desk are part of the picture

Screen position only works if you're sitting well. A few general comfort pointers round out the setup.

- **Feet supported:** flat on the floor, or on a footrest, so you're not perched or dangling.
- **Elbows about level with the desk:** so your shoulders stay relaxed and your wrists are neutral, not bent up or down.
- **Back supported:** sit back into the chair so it carries you, rather than hunching toward the screen.
- **Set the chair first, then the screen:** get comfortable in the chair, then move the screen to meet your settled eye level.

The order matters. If you set the screen and then adjust the chair, you'll end up moving the screen again. Settle into the chair at a good height first, then bring the screen up to your eyes.

✓ Your comfortable spot can drift

The right setup isn't a one-time thing. As the chair sags or your comfort changes, nudge the screen height and tilt again. There's no harm in re-checking it a few times a year.

A one-minute self-check

Run through this quick routine now and then. It catches the little drifts before they turn into aches.

- ☐ Sitting up straight, my gaze lands near the top third of the screen — not the desk, not the ceiling.
- ☐ With my arm out, my fingertips roughly reach the screen.
- ☐ The screen faces my eyes squarely, tilted up just a touch.
- ☐ No window or lamp is glaring on the glass or into my eyes.
- ☐ My feet are supported and my shoulders feel relaxed.
- ☐ If I wear progressives, I'm not tipping my head back to read the screen.

★ A quick visit can dial it all in

If you'd rather have someone set height, distance, and glare just right in one go, that's exactly the kind of thing I enjoy doing. A visit is \$99 flat, or often \$49 right on your screen for the computer-side settings. Call (330) 200-8042.

What if I stand to work?

Sit-stand desks are popular, and the same comfort rules apply — you just set them twice.

Whether you're sitting or standing, the targets don't change: the screen top near eye level, about an arm's length away, square to your eyes. The catch is that your eye level is higher when you stand, so the screen needs to rise with you. A screen on a fixed-height riser won't do that, which is where an adjustable arm or a proper sit-stand setup earns its keep.

Alternating between sitting and standing through the day is a pleasant way to keep from stiffening up. We cover sit-stand desks, arms, and how to set them safely in the sit-stand and monitor-arm guide.

✓ Change is the real benefit

The gain from a standing desk isn't standing all day — it's changing position now and then. Even shifting from sitting to standing a couple of times a day keeps you looser and more comfortable.

Give your eyes a rest, too

A perfect setup still asks a lot of your eyes if you never look away. A few easy habits round things out.

Eyes get tired from staring at one distance for a long stretch. The simple, widely recommended habit is to look at something far away every so often — out a window or across the room — to let your eyes relax. Blinking fully now and then helps keep them from going dry, especially when you're concentrating.

This guide is about where the screen sits; the companion guide on eye strain goes deeper into lighting, break habits, and the warm 'night' color modes that many people find restful in the evening.

✓ Pair good position with regular breaks

Comfort comes from both: a screen placed well, and eyes that get a rest from it. Stand up, stretch, and look into the distance now and then — your neck and eyes both benefit.

Common setup mistakes

A handful of easy-to-miss slip-ups account for most of the aches I see. Now you'll spot them in advance.

- **A screen left too low** on its stand, so the head bows forward all day — the most common one by far.
- **Using a laptop flat on the desk** for hours, with no stand and no separate keyboard.
- **A window right behind the screen** or behind you, fighting or reflecting all day.
- **Sitting too close** to read small text, instead of making the text bigger.
- **Ignoring progressives** — keeping the screen high and craning the head back to read through the lens bottom.

! Aches are a message, not a given

A sore neck, shoulders, or eyes at the end of a computer session is a sign the setup needs adjusting, not something to just put up with. If it keeps up after you've improved the setup, see a professional about it.

Keeping it comfortable over time

A good setup is worth revisiting now and then — comfort drifts, and so do the seasons and the light.

- **Re-check the height** if your chair changes or a new screen comes in; the eye-level target moves with them.
- **Watch the glare through the year**, as the sun's angle shifts with the seasons.
- **Adjust after a new eyeglass prescription**; new lenses can change where the screen wants to sit.
- **Nudge things the moment an ache appears**, rather than waiting for it to settle in.

None of this is fussy or expensive. A screen you can move, a sensible spot for the light, and a willingness to re-check now and then will keep you comfortable for years.

✓ Small nudges, big comfort

You don't need to overhaul anything. A screen raised an inch, a lamp moved a foot, a desk turned a quarter turn — small changes like these are what add up to a setup that never bothers you.

Questions worth asking as you set up

Run through these and you'll catch most of what matters for a comfortable screen.

Q: Where does my gaze land when I look straight ahead?

It should land near the top third of the screen. If it's lower, raise the screen; if you're looking up, lower it.

Q: Can I reach the screen with my arm out?

About an arm's length is the general target. Much closer and your eyes work harder; much farther and you'll lean in.

Q: Where is the light coming from?

Aim for windows and lamps to the side, not behind the screen or behind you. Check it at different times of day.

Q: Do my glasses want the screen somewhere different?

Progressives and bifocals usually want the screen a little lower. Notice how your lenses want it placed, and tell your eye doctor you use a screen.

✓ There's no silly question

If any of this leaves you unsure about your own setup, that's normal. A plain answer to a plain question is always worth asking for.

The short version, one more time

If you take nothing else away, take these. They cover the comfort of almost any screen setup.

Put the top of the screen at about eye level, sit back about an arm's length, and tilt it square to your eyes. Keep windows and lamps to the side so nothing glares. If you wear progressives, let the screen sit a little lower.

Raise a laptop and add a separate keyboard. Set the chair first, then the screen. And remember that a perfect position still wants regular breaks — look into the distance now and then, and tell your eye doctor how you use your screens.

★ Keep this page handy

Tuck this guide in a drawer with your other home papers, and glance at the self-check now and then. If you'd like a hand getting it just right, I'm a call away at (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about setting a screen up for comfort, answered plainly.

Q: How high should my monitor be?

As a general guide, the top of the screen at about eye level, so your eyes look slightly downward to the middle. A screen that's too low is the most common cause of a sore neck.

Q: How far away should I sit?

About an arm's length — reach out and your fingertips should roughly touch the screen. If text is too small from there, enlarge the text rather than scooting in.

Q: I wear progressives and my neck aches. What do I do?

Try lowering the screen a little so you read it through the bottom of your lenses without tipping your head back, and tell your eye doctor how far you sit from the screen — there are lenses made for it.

Q: How do I stop glare on my screen?

Put windows and lamps to the side rather than behind the screen or behind you, soften the light, and try a small change in tilt. A matte, anti-glare screen helps too.

★ Want it set up just right?

Getting height, distance, and glare dialed in is quick, satisfying work and it makes a daily difference. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll make your screen a comfortable place to sit.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made setting up your screen for comfort feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. For anything that calls for licensed electrical work, I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

A Neck-Friendly Setup

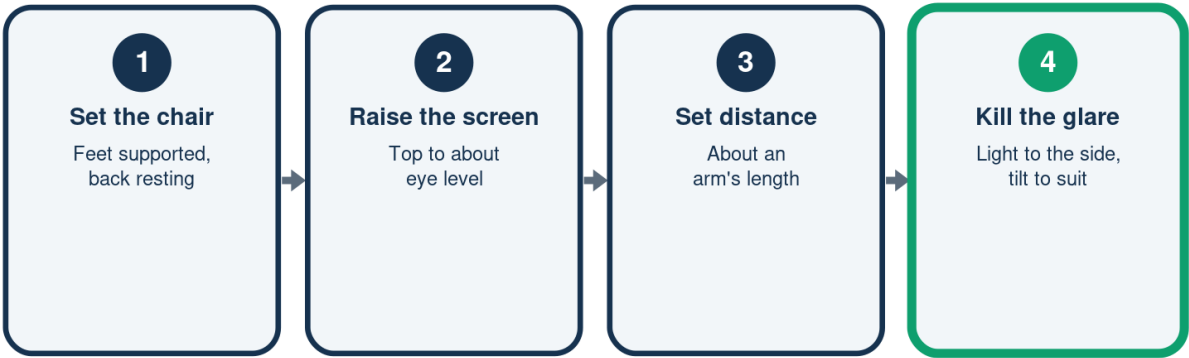
The three targets, in plain terms

	The target	Why it helps
Screen top	At eye level	Neck stays easy
Distance	An arm's length	Eyes relax
Tilt	Square to eyes	Less glare

Move the screen to meet your eyes -- not the other way around.

Setting Up for Comfort

The order that gets it right the first time



Chair first, then the screen -- so you don't set it twice.

Where to Put the Light

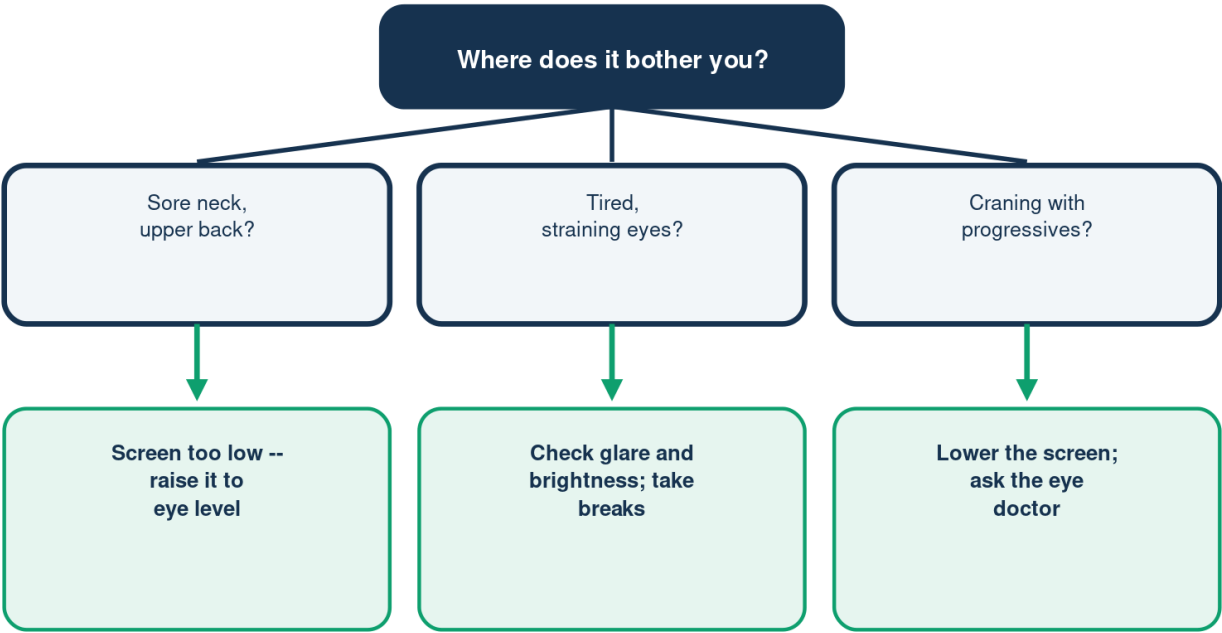
Taming glare from windows and lamps

	Bad spot	Better spot
A window	Behind screen	Off to the side
A lamp	Above the glass	Beside, indirect
You	Window behind	Window to side

Check at different times of day -- the sun moves around.

Something Aching?

Let the ache point to the fix



Ongoing neck, back, or eye trouble is worth a professional's look -- this is ~~general comfort advice.~~

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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