



An Extended Guide · No. 1963

The Right Chair & Desk Height

A comfortable computer
corner — simple, cheap fixes

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. Comfort at a computer isn't about an expensive chair — it's about a few simple heights lining up. Most of the fixes here cost little or nothing.

Let's make your computer corner comfortable

An achy back, a stiff neck, or sore wrists after time at the computer usually come down to a chair or desk at the wrong height. The good news: the fixes are simple, and many are free.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping folks get comfortable with the gear in their homes, patiently and in plain language. Think of this as me sitting at your kitchen table, helping you set things up one step at a time.

This is general, common-sense comfort advice — not medical advice. I'll show you the simple rules of thumb the comfortable setups all share, and the cheap fixes that get you there. For any ongoing pain, I'll always point you to a doctor or therapist, who can look at you in person.

★ No special furniture required

You may not need to buy a thing. A cushion, a sturdy box, and a few minutes of adjusting often do the trick. If you'd like a hand getting it right, call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — that's what I'm here for.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, your computer corner will already be far kinder to your body.

- ❑ Feet flat and supported on the floor — or on a footrest if they dangle.
- ❑ Thighs roughly level, with your knees about the same height as your hips or a touch lower.
- ❑ Forearms roughly level with the desk, elbows near your sides, so your shoulders stay relaxed.
- ❑ Wrists straight and neutral as you type, not bent up, down, or sideways.
- ❑ The screen top near eye level and about an arm's length away, so your neck stays easy.
- ❑ Cheap fixes work wonders: a cushion to raise you, a box as a footrest, a keyboard tray to lower your hands.

✓ One idea to hold onto

Set your chair first by your feet and forearms, then bring everything else — footrest, keyboard, screen — to meet you. You are the fixed point; the furniture adjusts to you.

Why a few inches make such a difference

Small mismatches add up over an afternoon at the computer. Understanding why helps you spot what to fix.

When a chair is too high, your feet dangle and the edge of the seat presses the backs of your thighs. When it's too low, your knees rise and your back rounds. When a desk is too high, your shoulders creep up toward your ears; too low, and you hunch forward. None of these hurt in the first five minutes — they hurt after an hour.

Your body is happiest in relaxed, neutral positions: feet supported, joints roughly square, nothing reaching or straining. Get the heights lined up and your muscles stop quietly working overtime to hold you in an awkward pose.

✓ Listen to where it aches

Sore wrists often mean the keyboard is too high. A stiff neck often means the screen is too low. An achy low back often means the chair or feet aren't supported. The ache points to the fix.

Start with the chair: feet and thighs

The chair is the foundation. Set it by two simple checks and the rest of the setup falls into place.

Check one: your feet

Sit back in the chair. Your feet should rest flat and comfortably — on the floor if you can, or on a footrest if they dangle. Dangling feet put all your weight on the backs of your thighs, which gets sore and can affect circulation.

Check two: your thighs

With your feet supported, your thighs should be roughly level, knees about even with your hips or slightly lower. If your knees are higher than your hips, the seat is too low; if the seat edge digs into the backs of your thighs, it's too high.

✓ Can't lower the chair enough?

If the chair won't go low enough for your feet to reach, don't drop your whole setup — just add a footrest so your feet are supported at the height that keeps your thighs level. More on footrests in a moment.

Now the desk: forearms and wrists

With the chair set, the desk (really, where your hands rest to type) is the next piece. Two more simple checks.

Forearms roughly level

Sit tall with your shoulders relaxed and your elbows near your sides. Your forearms should be about level with the keyboard, so you're not reaching up to the keys or dropping your hands down to them. If your shoulders hunch up, the desk is too high; if you slump down, it's too low.

Wrists straight

As your fingers rest on the keys, your wrists should be straight and neutral — not bent upward, downward, or off to the sides. A wrist held bent for a long stretch is a common source of soreness and tingling.

✓ Most desks are a little too high

Standard desks are built for an average, and many run a touch high for comfortable typing. If your shoulders creep up, a keyboard tray that lowers the keys — or raising your chair and adding a footrest — usually fixes it.

The humble footrest: a quiet hero

If there's one piece people skip and shouldn't, it's a footrest. It solves the most common mismatch of all.

Here's the puzzle a footrest solves. On many desks, the comfortable forearm height means raising your chair — but then your feet dangle. Rather than choose between sore wrists and dangling feet, you raise the chair for your forearms and add a footrest for your feet. Now both are happy at once.

A footrest doesn't have to be bought. A sturdy box, a thick book, a small step stool, or a firm cushion all work, as long as they're stable and the right height to keep your thighs level. A store-bought one that tilts slightly is a nice comfort, but it isn't required.

✓ The two-problem fix

A footrest is how you get comfortable forearms and supported feet at the same time, on a desk you can't lower. It's the cheapest, most useful change most people never make.

The screen: keep your neck easy

Once you're sitting well, the screen should come to your eyes, not the other way around. A sore neck is nearly always a screen-height problem.

As a rule of thumb, the top of the screen sits about at eye level, and the screen is roughly an arm's length away, tilted back just a little. Your gaze then falls slightly downward and your neck stays relaxed. A screen too low makes you bow your head; too high makes you tip it back.

If your screen sits too low on its stand, raise it on a sturdy riser or a monitor arm — our guide to sit-stand desks and monitor arms covers those. For the finer points of screen height, distance, and cutting glare, see our guide on screen height, distance, and glare.

✓ Bifocals change the math

If you wear bifocals or progressive lenses, you likely read through the lower part of the lens, so the screen often wants to sit a little lower, not higher, to spare your neck. Set it where your eyes relax, and tell your eye doctor you use a computer.

Cheap fixes that really work

You can get almost all the way to a comfortable corner with things you already have around the house.

- **A firm cushion** on the seat raises you so your forearms meet the desk — the quickest fix for a desk that's a bit too high.
- **A sturdy box or step stool** under your feet becomes a footrest so they're supported once you've raised the chair.
- **A rolled towel or small pillow** at your low back adds support if the chair doesn't hug your spine.
- **A keyboard tray** (one add-on worth buying) slides the keys lower than the desktop, dropping your hands to a neutral height.
- **A few books** under a too-low monitor raise the screen toward eye level in a pinch.

✓ Try before you buy

Prove the fix with free stuff first. If a cushion and a box make you comfortable, you've learned exactly what height you need — and whether a proper footrest or tray is worth buying later.

Putting it together, in order

Adjust in this order and each step makes the next one obvious. Give yourself ten unhurried minutes.

- **1. Set the chair** so your forearms are level with the keyboard and your shoulders are relaxed. This height comes first.
- **2. Support your feet** — flat on the floor, or on a footrest if they now dangle after raising the chair.
- **3. Check your wrists** are straight as you type; add a keyboard tray or lower the keys if they bend up.
- **4. Raise the screen** so its top is near eye level, about an arm's length away, tilted back a touch.
- **5. Sit for a few minutes** and notice any strain, then nudge the piece that's causing it.

★ I'll dial it in with you

Getting these heights right the first time is quick with a second pair of eyes. I'm glad to set up your whole corner on a visit so it's comfortable from day one. Call (330) 200-8042.

Two ways people come to this

A comfortable computer corner gets set up two ways: by the person who'll sit in it, and by an adult child or helper arranging it for a parent. The rules are the same; the approach differs a little.

If you're setting this up for yourself

You can feel what aches and what eases — that's your best guide. Adjust one thing at a time and notice the difference it makes.

- Set your chair by your forearms first, then support your feet.
- Add a cushion or footrest from around the house before buying anything.
- Raise the screen to eye level so your neck stops working so hard.
- If an ache lingers for weeks, tell your doctor — don't just tough it out.

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

You're arranging the corner for Mom or Dad and want it comfortable and obvious, maybe on a visit. Aim for 'supported and simple,' and watch them actually sit in it.

- Have them sit normally first, then adjust the chair to their forearms.
- Supply a stable footrest — a box or stool is fine — so feet are supported.
- Raise a too-low screen on books, a riser, or an arm to spare their neck.
- If they mention ongoing pain, gently encourage a visit to their doctor or a therapist.

★ Setting up a corner for a parent?

I'm happy to help you get the heights right so it's comfortable and safe for them, whether I'm there in person or guiding you on the phone. Call (330) 200-8042.

Choosing or improving the chair

You don't need an expensive chair to be comfortable. You need one that supports you and adjusts to the heights we've talked about.

- **Height adjustment** is the single most useful feature, so your forearms can meet the desk and your feet can be supported.
- **Low-back (lumbar) support** that fills the curve of your spine keeps you from slumping. A rolled towel adds it to any chair.
- **A seat that isn't too deep**, so you can sit back fully with a small gap behind your knees.
- **Armrests that let your shoulders relax** — or that move out of the way if they stop you getting close enough to the desk.

✓ A good chair you have beats a fancy one you don't

Before buying, see how far a cushion, a lumbar roll, and a footrest take your current chair. Often that's all it needs. If you do buy, spend on adjustability and support, not on a famous name.

Keyboard and mouse placement

Where your hands land matters as much as the desk height. A few small placements keep your wrists and shoulders easy.

Keep the keyboard directly in front of you, close enough that your elbows stay near your sides — not pushed forward across the desk. The mouse belongs right beside the keyboard at the same height, so you're not reaching up or out for it.

Let your wrists float or rest lightly, straight and neutral, rather than planted and bent. A soft wrist rest can help you keep them level, but it shouldn't become a place to pivot a bent wrist against for hours.

✓ Reaching is the enemy

Most hand and shoulder aches come from reaching — for a mouse that's too far, or keys that are too high. Bring everything close and low enough that your elbows stay comfortably at your sides.

The best setup still needs breaks

No position, however perfect, is meant to be held for hours. Movement is part of comfort.

Even the best-arranged corner gets uncomfortable if you don't move. Every so often, stand up, stretch, roll your shoulders, and look at something far away to rest your eyes. A short break each half hour or so does more for comfort than any single piece of furniture.

If sitting too long is your real trouble, a sit-stand desk lets you switch between sitting and standing through the day — our guide to sit-stand desks and monitor arms covers choosing one.

✓ Let something remind you

A gentle timer, or simply standing up whenever you finish a task or a phone call, builds the break habit. Your back and eyes will thank you.

Common mistakes people make

A few avoidable habits cause most computer-corner aches. Now you'll spot them.

- **Letting the feet dangle** after raising the chair, instead of adding a footrest.
- **Typing with the shoulders hunched up** because the desk is too high — lower the keys or raise and footrest the chair.
- **A screen left too low**, so the neck bends down all day.
- **Reaching far for the mouse**, straining one shoulder over and over.
- **Sitting still for hours**, so even a good setup starts to ache.

! Don't just push through lasting pain

These tips are for everyday comfort, not for treating an injury. If pain lingers for weeks, or you feel numbness, tingling, or weakness in a hand or arm, that's a sign to see your doctor or a therapist. A proper exam beats any rule of thumb.

Comfort in a small or shared space

Not everyone has a dedicated office. You can still be comfortable at a kitchen table or a shared corner with a few tricks.

At a dining table, which is often a bit high, a firm cushion to raise you and a footrest for your feet get your forearms and feet right. A laptop sat flat on the table puts the screen too low and the keys too high at once; raising the laptop on a stand and adding a separate keyboard and mouse solves both.

If the spot is shared, keep a cushion and a footrest tucked nearby so you can set yourself up in a minute and clear it away after. Comfort doesn't require a permanent desk — just a repeatable routine.

✓ Laptops are a comfort trap

A laptop forces a choice: screen at a good height means keys too high, and the reverse. A stand plus a separate keyboard and mouse is the simple fix that lets both be right.

A quick comfort self-check

Run through this sitting where you usually work. Each 'no' points to an easy fix above.

- ☐ My feet are flat and supported, not dangling.
- ☐ My thighs are roughly level, knees about even with my hips.
- ☐ My forearms are about level with the keyboard, shoulders relaxed.
- ☐ My wrists are straight as I type, not bent.
- ☐ The top of my screen is near eye level, about an arm's length away.
- ☐ I can sit back with support for my low back.
- ☐ I get up and move at least every half hour or so.

✓ One change at a time

Don't try to fix everything at once. Pick the clearest 'no,' make that one change, and sit with it for a day. Comfort builds up one adjustment at a time.

What about standing to work?

Standing part of the time can ease a stiff back, but the same height rules apply — and standing all day is no cure-all.

If you try standing to work, the forearm and wrist rules don't change: forearms about level, wrists straight, screen top near eye level. The benefit comes from changing position through the day, not from standing for hours, which brings its own aches.

A cushioned anti-fatigue mat makes standing far kinder on the feet and back. If you think a desk that rises and lowers would suit you, our guide to sit-stand desks and monitor arms walks through choosing and setting one up safely.

✓ Alternate, don't marathon

Sit a while, stand a while. The win is in the switching. Whichever you're doing, keep the same comfortable heights for your forearms, wrists, and eyes.

When comfort tips aren't enough

Setting up your corner well prevents a lot of everyday aches. But some things call for a professional, and knowing which is important.

If you have pain that lasts for weeks, numbness or tingling in your hands or arms, weakness, or discomfort that a good setup doesn't ease, please see your doctor. They may refer you to a physical or occupational therapist, who can assess your body and your habits in person — something no guide can do.

There's no shame in asking, and catching these things early is far easier than letting them settle in. Think of a comfortable setup as prevention, and a professional as the right call when something's already hurting.

! This guide is comfort advice, not medical advice

Everything here is general, common-sense arrangement — not diagnosis or treatment. For ongoing or worsening pain, numbness, or weakness, your doctor or a therapist is the right person to see. Please don't rely on a tech guide for a medical question.

Questions to ask yourself (or me)

A handful of plain questions gets you to a corner that fits your body.

Q: Where do I ache after an hour at the computer?

Let the ache point to the fix: wrists mean the keys are too high, neck means the screen's too low, thighs or low back mean the chair or feet need support.

Q: Can I fix this with things I already own?

Usually, yes. A cushion, a sturdy box, a rolled towel, and a stack of books cover most adjustments before you buy anything.

Q: Is my chair the right height for my desk?

Set the chair so your forearms are level with the keyboard, then support your feet. If your feet dangle, add a footrest rather than lowering the chair.

Q: Should I see someone about this ache?

If it lasts for weeks, or brings numbness, tingling, or weakness, yes — see your doctor or a therapist. Comfort tips are for prevention, not treatment.

✓ There's no silly question

Getting comfortable at a computer is something anyone can learn, and asking is how you learn it. A plain question deserves a plain answer — from me or from anyone helping you.

Keeping it comfortable over time

Your comfortable setup isn't set in stone. A few habits keep it working as the seasons and your body change.

- **Revisit the heights** if you change chairs, shoes, or add a cushion — each one shifts where your forearms and feet land.
- **Keep the footrest and cushion handy** so the good setup is easy to recreate, especially in a shared space.
- **Notice new aches early** and adjust the matching piece before they settle in.
- **Keep moving** — the best furniture in the world still needs you to get up and stretch.

✓ Comfort can drift — let the setup follow

What felt right a year ago may not today. There's no harm in raising the screen, adding support, or changing the chair height whenever your body starts to grumble. The setup serves you, not the other way around.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks making their computer corner comfortable, answered plainly.

Q: My desk is too high and I can't lower it. What now?

Raise your chair until your forearms meet the keyboard, then add a footrest so your feet are supported. A keyboard tray that drops the keys below the desktop is another good fix.

Q: Do I really need a special footrest?

No. A sturdy box, a step stool, a thick book, or a firm cushion works fine, as long as it's stable and the right height to keep your thighs level. A bought one is a comfort, not a must.

Q: Is an expensive ergonomic chair worth it?

Not necessarily. What matters is height adjustment and good back support. A modest chair plus a lumbar roll and a footrest often beats a famous name you haven't set up right.

Q: My wrists ache when I type. Is something wrong?

Often it's just the keyboard sitting too high, bending your wrists up. Lower the keys or raise and footrest your chair. But if the ache lasts or you feel numbness or tingling, see your doctor.

★ Want a hand getting comfortable?

Setting up a kind, comfortable computer corner is just the sort of thing I love to help with — usually with things you already have. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

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 a comfortable chair and desk height 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

The Four Heights to Line Up

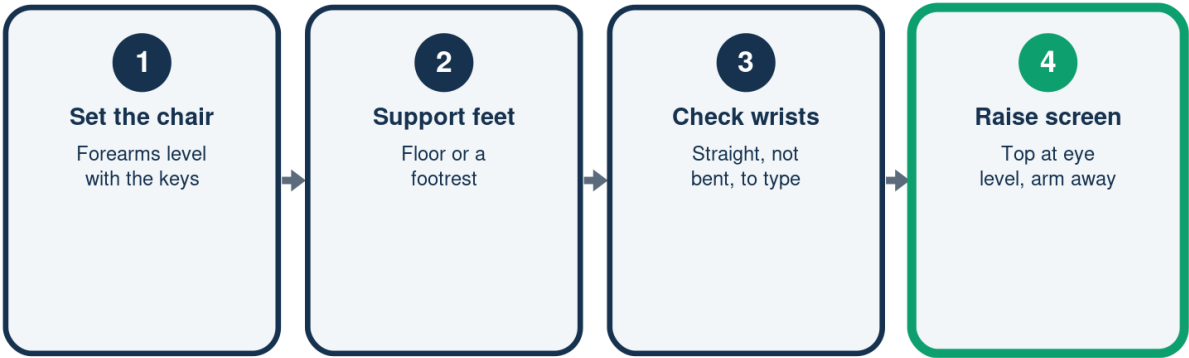
Comfort comes from these working together

	What to check	Gets it right
Feet	Flat, supported	Footrest if short
Thighs	Roughly level	Knees near hips
Forearms	Level with keys	Shoulders relaxed
Screen	Top at eye level	An arm's length

Set the chair by feet and forearms, then bring the rest to meet you.

Setting Up in Order

Each step makes the next one obvious



Then sit a few minutes and nudge whatever still strains.

Cheap Fixes for Common Aches

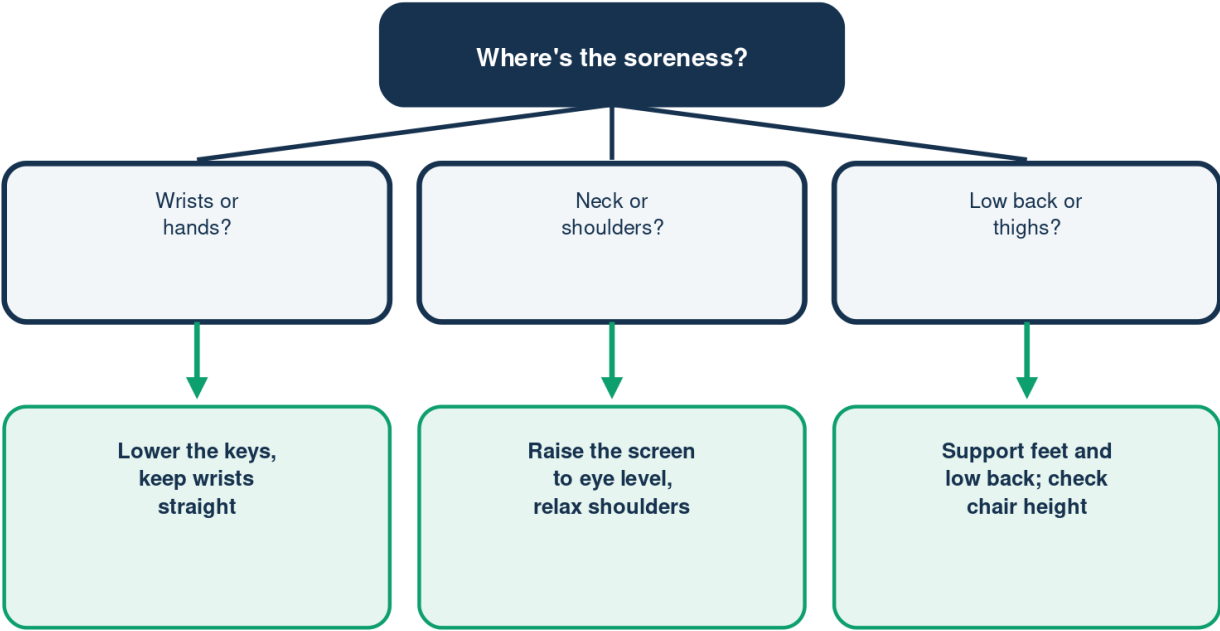
What to reach for, and what it cures

	Easy fix	Eases
Firm cushion	Raises you up	Sore shoulders
Box or stool	Footrest	Dangling feet
Towel roll	Low-back support	Achy low back
Keyboard tray	Lowers the keys	Bent wrists

Prove the fix with free stuff before you buy anything.

Where Does It Ache?

Let the ache point you to the fix



Pain that lasts weeks, or brings numbness, means see your doctor.

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



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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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