

Portable Computer Devices - Guidance Leaflet for Safer Use



This guidance is to provide advice to those members of staff who use Portable Computer Devices (PCD) e.g. Laptops/Tablets as part of their work. Technical queries should be directed to the IT Service Desk. Portable Computer Devices are covered under the Display Screen Equipment Regulations 2002 (as amended) and as such are given the same consideration as a workstation

Laptops and tablet computers are designed to be portable, compact and lightweight in order to be easier to carry. This results in compromised design features like smaller keyboards, the lack of a numerical keypad and touchpads. Prolonged use of these can lead to discomfort and pain in the neck back and wrists etc. so steps must be taken to avoid problems from developing. Many staff who work in multiple locations or from home may have a laptop as their primary computer and in these cases the laptop should be used in conjunction with a docking station. When the laptop is docked, the laptop user's workstation should resemble that of a standard desktop user; with a keyboard, mouse and flat panel screen at the correct height and distance.

For desktop users who may be using a laptop as a secondary device, advice should be given in order to minimise risks. This should include sitting comfortably with adequate lumbar support, angling the screen so it can be seen clearly with minimal reflections and taking frequent breaks during prolonged work periods. Eye strain may also be a hazard if the laptop is not set to the appropriate brightness level or resolution. Wherever possible, laptops should be placed on a firm surface at the appropriate height for typing.

Where tablet devices are in use users should be aware of similar issues of prolonged use. When using a tablet the user's posture and neck position should be comfortable and a stand or case that can hold the tablet at a suitable angle should be used with the tablet on a firm stable surface with routine breaks taken every 10 – 20 minutes.

The angle of the tablet will be dictated by the task being undertaken. Tablet computers should generally be set at an angle which is comfortable for the user, this may be more vertical for reading and flat when typing

Tablet PCs are designed to be lightweight and carried in one hand. They are thus easier to use and handle than a laptop which normally requires a surface to set the computer down while in use.

Tablets with a display screen of less than 15 inches (diagonally) should not be used for detailed graphical work (i.e. drawings, mapping), unless the software package allows for magnification.

Sitting

Adopt a good sitting position in order to avoid straining your arms and back;

Try not to slouch. Do not sit forward and crouch over the Tablet;

When reading from a hard copy, keep it as close to the Tablet as possible.

Correct Pen Usage

Hold as for a normal pen applying light pressure;

Experiment with using the pen in different applications and take time to get used to how the pen works so that you are able to make the most of your Tablet PC and improve productivity;

Do not 'stab' at the screen as this may damage the screen (or if a screen protector is in use), will cause damage to the protector and may require its replacement.

Reading the Screen

Avoid glare. Glare and reflected light can affect screen clarity when using Tablets;

Position the screen directly in front of you;

Do not work with the screen at any angle other than at right angles to your line of sight;

If glare occurs, adjust your screen – either by means of programmed menu controls or to another position within the room – in order to reduce reflections;

Do not sit with your back towards a window;

Regularly clean your screen protector, or replace it as necessary (see handbook);

Adjust screen brightness to suit surrounding light levels (see handbook).

Working with a Tablet PC in Cars

Tablet PCs should not be used in cars. However, on occasions this may be unavoidable in which case:

Never use your Tablet when driving;

Do not use a Tablet whilst sitting in the driver's seat with the Tablet positioned on the passenger seat;
For short durations only, the Tablet can be rested on the steering wheel using the pen;
It is preferable to sit in the passenger seat if you have to use it, adjusting the seat to provide legroom;
Remain aware of the immediate area around your car and lock the doors for security.

Working with a Laptop/Tablet in a Clients Home

When meeting clients in their own homes find a flat surface, where possible sitting at a table if this is not possible rest it on a flat surface, e.g. mantle piece, bookshelf. Tablets can be used whilst standing but this must be avoided wherever possible

If using a Tablet whilst sitting on a sofa or easy chair, place a cushion on your lap to act as a platform;

If handing to the client to gain their signature or show them relevant information, again use a cushion on their lap to protect their skin from any potential bruising;

If held in the hand, work with the Tablet close to your body with an upright posture to avoid neck strain;

If available, use a neck strap and holder for longer periods of use whilst standing.

Working with a Tablet on Trains

Avoid working in seats with tables attached to the rear of seats in front of you;

Try to book and use the more spacious communal tables when travelling, with the PC in the Laptop configuration (if convertible);

Be aware of sensitive confidential information and safeguard it from prying eyes.

Personal Safety

Always be conscious of your personal safety when carrying or using your Tablet. Take sensible precautions such as: -

Plan your tasks to avoid situations where you are likely to be lone working in circumstances where theft is likely;

Take extra care in public places, or in other situations (or at times) where ether risk of theft may be greater;

If possible, do not carry the Tablet in luggage with a computer manufacture's branding;

Always be conscious of vehicle security when transporting your Tablet between venues e.g. never leave it on view in an unattended vehicle; and never leave it overnight in an unattended vehicle.

Manual Handling

Tablets vary in size and weight but are generally smaller than laptops – typically 2Kg.

In many instances these are accompanied by the use of peripherals such as portable printers, spare batteries etc. Whilst the Tablet and any associated items will usually have a carrying case of some description, the overall weight and methods of transportation need to be considered.

Carrying cases of the type with single shoulder straps can put strain on the back and neck muscles if equipment is carried for any distance or for any long period of time. If a briefcase is also carried then the overall weight plus the awkwardness of the resulting load can be a problem, even though you appear to be balancing the load.



The use of a backpack is more advantageous to cut down strain on your arms and distribute loads evenly across the body. This is also more effective for personal safety reasons. If used alone an alternative lightweight shoulder bag could be used.

Always try to reduce the amount of weight you intend to carry by:

- not carrying equipment unless it is likely to be needed;
- minimizing hard copy documents you take. Store them electronically on the tablet or on an encrypted memory stick, or consider sending them in advance (by post or e-mail) to your destination;
- Regularly checking your batteries and following the recharging instructions in order to avoid carrying extra batteries (e.g. most tablet PC batteries will only last for approx. 3 hours, however newer generation tablet PC's may last up to 5 hours, depending on settings and usage).

Information Governance

Users of any Mobile Device should refer to the set of Information Governance Policies, including the Information Security Policy and Best Practice for Mobile Devices, available on the Trust website.

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