

Safety and Ethics

Workplace Safety

Workplace safety in the United States has continuously improved since the beginning of the 20th century. Gradually, injury, death, and illness related to working conditions have declined. This is due to a change in the type of work done today and in the safety precautions that have been put in place.

Accident Prevention

Falling hazards, lifting hazards, and material-storage hazards account for most of the workplace accidents that occur in offices. *Falling hazards* are sources of potential injuries from slipping or falling. Falls are the most common workplace accident in an office setting. Falls can result in broken bones, head injuries, and muscle strains. To prevent workplace falls:

- close drawers completely;
- do not stand on a chair or box to reach; and
- secure cords, rugs, and mats.

Lifting hazards are sources of potential injury from improperly lifting or carrying items. Most back injuries are caused by improper lifting. To avoid injuries resulting from lifting:

- make several small trips with items rather than one trip with an overly heavy load;
- use dollies or handcarts whenever possible;
- lift with the legs, not the back; and
- never carry an item that blocks vision.

Material-storage hazards are sources of potential injury that come from the improper storage of files, books, office equipment, or other items. A cluttered workplace is an unsafe workplace. Material stacked too high can fall on employees. Paper and files that are stored on the floor

or hall are a fire risk. To prevent injuries:

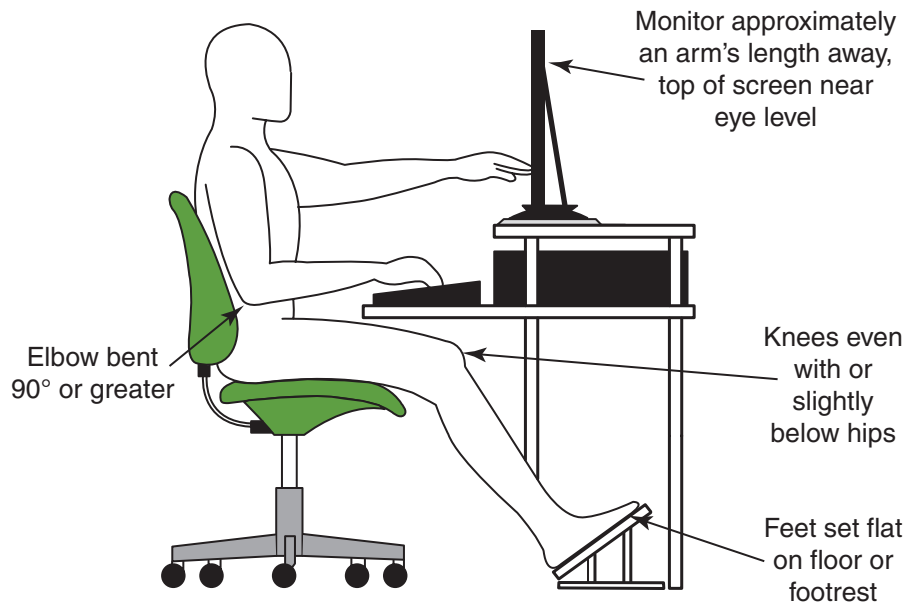
- do not stack boxes or papers on top of tall cabinets;
- store heavier objects on lower shelves; and
- keep aisles and hallways clear.

Maintaining a safe workplace is the joint responsibility of the employer and employee. The employer makes sure the facility and working conditions are such that accidents are unlikely to occur. The employee uses common sense and care while at the office.

Workplace Ergonomics

Ergonomics is the science concerned with designing and arranging things people use so that they can interact both efficiently and safely. In the workplace, it can include designing workstations to fit the unique needs of the worker and the equipment used. For example, many office workers spend long periods of time working on computers. They may be at risk for eyestrain, back discomfort, and hand and wrist problems. Applying ergonomic principles results in a comfortable, efficient, and safer working environment.

There are many types of ergonomic accessories that may improve a computer workstation, including wrist rests, specially designed chairs, and back supports. In addition, Figure A-1 identifies a few things that can be done to create a comfortable environment and help prevent injury or strain to the worker's body. Finally, cleanliness is an important part of the working environment. Keep papers, pens, files, reference books, and other materials organized. The work area should not be cluttered with unneeded items. Properly store items not in use. Also, always read and understand equipment safety manuals, follow safety instructions, and abide by safety requirements.



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Figure A-1

Eyes

Position the monitor to minimize glare from overhead lights, windows, and other light sources. Reduce light intensity by turning off some lights or closing blinds and shades. You should be able to see images clearly without glare.

Position the monitor so that it is 18" to 30" from your eyes. This is about an arm's length. To help reduce eyestrain, look away from the monitor every 15–20 minutes and focus on an object at least 20 feet away for 1–2 minutes.

Wrists and Arms

Forearms should be parallel to the floor. Periodically stretch your arms, wrists, and shoulders. Try using an ergonomic keyboard and mouse. The keyboard keeps the wrists in a normal body position and the mouse will fit your hand more comfortably.

Neck and Back

Adjust the monitor so that your head is level, not leaning forward or back. The top of the screen should be near your line of sight. Use a chair that is comfortable and provides good back support. The chair should be

adjustable and provide armrests. Sit up straight. This maintains good posture and reduces strain. Think about good posture until it becomes common practice. Try standing up, stretching, and walking every hour. This will also reduce strain.

Legs

Keep your thighs parallel to the ground. Rest your feet flat on the floor or use a footrest. When taking a break, walk around. This will stretch the muscles and promote circulation through your body.

Workplace Ethics

Ethics is a guiding set of moral values that helps people make decisions. For employees, *workplace etiquette* is a set of guidelines for appropriate behavior on the job. Employers typically have a handbook and code of conduct that outlines the manner in which employees should behave while at work. Companies may define specific issues as inappropriate as well as unethical or illegal. For example, employers have rules for avoiding computer threats, using company equipment, and downloading software.

Computer Threats

Viruses can be introduced by downloading infected programs from the Internet. Using the Internet at school or work without following guidelines can put the computer and the network at risk. *Software viruses* are computer programs that cause harm to computer systems. A virus may destroy customer data on the computer or collect information from the company's network and transmit it to some other location. They can also be contained in e-mail attachments or transmitted by visiting websites. In general, viruses can be file infections, boot-sector infections, worms, and Trojan horses.

Never open an e-mail attachment that you are not expecting. It is better to send an e-mail asking about the attachment before opening it than risk a virus infection. Avoid visiting questionable websites or downloading files from unknown sources.

Phishing, pronounced *fish-ing*, is the use of fraudulent e-mails and copies of valid websites to trick people into providing private and confidential personal data. The most common form of phishing is done by sending a fake e-mail to a group of people. The e-mail message looks like it is from a legitimate source, such as the person's bank. The e-mail asks for certain information, such as an account number and password, or it provides a link to a website. The linked website looks real, but it collects private information that is used to commit fraud.

Businesses can protect their customers or vendors from phishing e-mails by keeping that information secure. They can also warn customers or vendors if sensitive information has been stolen or if they know phishing e-mails are being sent pretending to be from the company. Everyone can protect himself or herself by using software filters on their e-mail accounts. Never enter personal information online; only thieves request confidential information via e-mail.

Company Equipment

Company equipment is meant for business-related functions, not personal use. Office equipment includes everything

from desktop computers and phones to the photocopy machine. All employees must be aware of appropriate use of office equipment. Many codes of conduct also have guidelines for visiting websites and rules for downloading to company computers. These rules protect the business' computer system and its private information. Some downloaded files and software contain computer viruses or other harmful *malware* designed to damage or disrupt a computer or network. Intentionally introducing a virus to a computer or network is against the law.

Hardware, such as computers and copiers, are provided to employees to improve efficiency. In many cases, it would be impossible for an employee to perform his or her job without this equipment. Be aware that a company can look at information stored on computers at any time.

Company-owned mobile devices, such as smartphones or tablets, are also company property. They should not be used for personal reasons without company approval. Additionally, follow the company policies for appropriate communication and workplace behavior.

Scanners are a common piece of equipment in many business and home offices. A scanner is used to create a digital version of printed material. Scanning something, however, does not make the content yours. Whether it is text, artwork, or a photograph, all rights of that material remain with the owners. Make sure to get the owner's permission to use scanned material legally.

Software Downloads

It is unethical, and illegal, for an employee to download software that has not been purchased and registered by the employer. When buying software, a license is purchased. A *license* is the legal permission to use a software program. All software has terms of use that explain how and when the software may be used.

Some software may only be lawfully used if it is purchased. These programs are known as *for-purchase software*. *Demo*,

or demonstration, software may be used without buying it. However, demos are either limited in functionality or time. If you decide to keep using the software, it must be purchased. **Piracy** is the illegal copying or downloading of software, files, or other protected material. This includes scanning or downloading images or music. Never engage in software piracy.

Other software, known as **freeware**, is fully functional and can be used forever without purchasing it. To be considered freeware, the software cannot be a demo or restricted version of software meant for purchase. **Shareware** is software that can be installed and used at no cost, but usually has a notice screen, time-delayed startup, or fewer features. Purchasing the software removes these restrictions. Figure A-2 identifies the differences between software types.

There are differences between a demo of for-purchase software and shareware. Typically, shareware can be used forever with some restrictions. Use of shareware is on the honor system. Those who continue to use the software, though, are expected to purchase it. Demos of for-purchase software, however, will stop working after a certain amount of time.

Public-domain software is similar to freeware in that it is free. However, freeware is copyrighted, while public-domain software either has no copyright or the copyright has expired. Some photographs, music, videos, and textual information are in the public domain.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property is something that comes from a person's mind—such as an idea, invention, or process. Any work

created by company employees on the job is owned by that company. In business, these ideas are considered *proprietary information* and must be protected from theft. Any use of intellectual property without permission is called *infringement*. A **copyright** acknowledges ownership of a work and specifies that only the owner has the right to sell the work, use it, or give permission for someone else to sell or use it.

The © symbol or the statement “copyright by” indicates copyrighted material. Lack of the symbol or statement does *not* affect a copyright, though. All original material is automatically copyrighted. A copyright can be registered with the US Copyright Office, which is part of the Library of Congress. However, original material is still legally protected whether or not the copyright is registered.

Patents and Trademarks

A **patent** gives the person or company the right to be the sole producer of a product for a defined period of time. Patents protect an invention that is functional or mechanical. The invention must be considered useful and inoffensive and it must be operational. This means that an idea may not be patented. A process can be patented under certain conditions. The process must be related to a particular machine or transform a substance or item into a different state or thing.

The inventor must file a patent application with the US Patent and Trademark Office. Once granted, a patent protects the inventor's intellectual property for between 14 and 20 years from the filing date.

Characteristics	Software Type		
	For-Purchase	Freeware	Shareware
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be purchased to use Demo may be available 	Never have to pay for it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free to try Pay to upgrade to full functionality
Features	Full functionality	Full functionality	Limited functionality without upgrade

Figure A-2

A **trademark** protects taglines, slogans, names, symbols, or any unique method to identify a product or company. A **service mark** is similar to a trademark, but it identifies a service rather than a product. Trademarks and service marks do not protect a work or product. They only protect the way in which the product is described. The term trademark is often used to refer to both trademarks and service marks. Trademarks never expire. **Graphic marks**, also called symbols, can be used without being formally registered, as shown in Figure A-3.

Correct Usage of Trademark Symbols	
TM	Trademark, not registered
SM	Service mark, not registered
®	Registered trademark

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Figure A-3

Legal Issues

A copyright lists the author or creator and the year the work was published. Copyrights are valid for the life of the author plus 70 years. The laws cover all original work, whether it is in print, on the Internet, or in any other form or media. You cannot claim work as your own or use it without permission. **Intellectual-property laws** protect a person or company's inventions, artistic works, and other intellectual property. Ownership of all intellectual property is implied. However, there are three ways to register the different forms of intellectual property to discourage infringement, as shown in Figure A-4.

Form of Protection	Intellectual Property
Copyright	Protects books, magazine articles, music, paintings, or other work of authorship for the life of the creator plus 70 years.
Patent	Gives inventor the sole right to produce and sell an invention for a specific time.
Trademark	Protects phrases, names, symbols, or any unique method of identifying a company or its product.

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Figure A-4

Unless the terms of use specifically state that you are free to copy and use any material provided on a website, the material is copyrighted. Copyright laws are in place to protect the creators of original work. You cannot reuse the material without permission. **Plagiarism** is claiming another person's material as your own, which is both unethical and illegal.

Netiquette

Netiquette refers to the accepted social and professional guidelines for Internet communications. Netiquette covers e-mails, social networking, blogs, texting, and chatting. For example, it is unprofessional to use texting language in a business environment. Also, always proofread and spell-check e-mails before sending them. If you are sending e-mail to a customer in response to a question, texting a coworker, blogging about a company product, or any other communication, it is important to follow the same common courtesy used in face-to-face discussions.

Internet access provided by the company should be used only for business purposes. Checking personal e-mail or shopping online is not acceptable. When using the Internet, you are a representative of the company. Proper netiquette should be followed. **Cyberbullying** is using the Internet to harass or threaten an individual. Cyberbullying includes using social media or e-mails to harass or scare people. Cyberbullying is unethical and can be prosecuted.

Confidential Information

Proprietary information may be called *trade secrets* because it is confidential information a company needs to keep private. Proprietary information can include many things, such as product formulas, customer lists, or manufacturing processes. All employees must understand the importance of keeping company information confidential. The code of conduct should explain that company information may only be shared with permission from human resources. Employees who share proprietary information with outsiders are unethical and, possibly, breaking the law.

Before hiring an employee, a company may require the person sign a confidentiality agreement, as shown in Figure A-5. A *confidentiality agreement* typically states that the employee will not share any company information with those outside the company. Confidentiality agreements can also prevent former employees from working for a competitor for a specified length of time.

Yours in Retro Confidentiality Agreement

THIS AGREEMENT made on _____, 20_____, between Yours in Retro, a place of business at 101 Main Street, Anytown, IL, and _____, an employee of Yours in Retro.

As an employee of Yours in Retro, we require nondisclosure of any proprietary information about our products, employees, or business plans. This confidential information may include, but is not limited to, patents, trademarks, research, market analyses, or any other information concerning Yours in Retro.

All work contributed by the employee as part of the employee's paid position remains the property of Yours in Retro.

The obligations of this agreement shall continue two (2) years after employee leaves Yours in Retro.

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Figure A-5