

Stand Up and Write

by Vanessa Kier

There have been several reports in the media this year, such as this one from the [Washington Post](#), about the health hazards of sitting, beyond the usual bad posture effect. This is bad news for writers who spend hours sitting in front of a computer.

One alternative is to switch to using a desk where you stand up to work. These desks range from thousand dollar treadmill desks to cheap DIY setups. I bought the relatively inexpensive [Luxor adjustable height mobile computer workstation](#) that has a separate keyboard shelf.

Here are some things to consider before you make the switch.

1. Your current level of health

Because standing takes pressure off the spine, using the mobile cart has alleviated my back and neck pain. However, standing for long periods of time comes with its own risk. For example, I've experienced swollen ankles and calves when I stand for hours without taking breaks. My knees sometimes get sore because I have a tendency to lock them while standing. I suggest checking with your doctor to confirm that using a standing desk will be safe for you.

2. Ergonomics and comfort

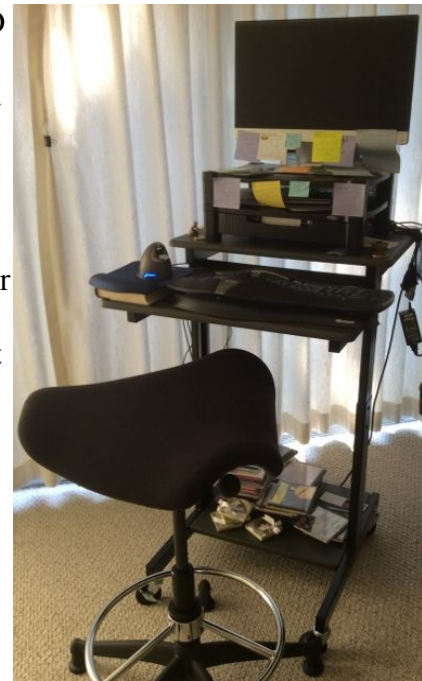
As with a standard desk and chair, when using a standing desk you want to make certain that your body is in an ergonomically beneficial position. You can find the suggested neck and arm positions at the OSHA [website](#). Scroll down to find a graphic of the standing desk position.

In order to create my optimal viewing setup, I bought a large LCD monitor and a monitor stand to go on top of the cart. My ergonomic setup also includes a split (aka natural) keyboard and a vertical mouse.

I also recommend finding a comfortable, supportive pair of shoes. After much trial and error, I discovered that walking sneakers, hiking boots, and supportive street shoes weren't comfortable after hours of standing. I ended up choosing a pair of Dansko Professional clogs to work in. These clogs are designed to support the foot while standing. I also have a thick chef's mat that I stand on if I'm wearing a less supportive pair of shoes, or if I'm barefoot.

3. Ease your way into it

As with any new endeavor, your body may need time to adjust to standing as you type. Try it for ten or fifteen minutes at a time. See if it feels comfortable. If you're finding it difficult to concentrate while writing, start with checking



Stand Up and Write

by Vanessa Kier

and responding to emails and then ease your way back to your manuscript.

4. Take breaks

This loops back to #1. Because standing stationery for long periods is also hard on the body, I try to alternate standing with sitting. I bought a special stool that raises to the level of my standing desk's keyboard tray. This allows me to keep my computer and monitor in place while I switch between standing and sitting. I also periodically step to the side, step back, put one foot on a footrest or on the bottom beam of my standing desk—anything to alter my position. When I get stuck on a scene, I pace back and forth near my desk.

5. Space

Do you have the room for a standing desk? My mobile cart is relatively small, plus it's on wheels, which means that I can roll it into the center of the living room when I'm ready to work and put it back against the wall when I'm done. I've seen other setups where people stack milk crates and a laptop stand on their regular desk in order to create a makeshift standing desk. You can buy a cheap desk or table at a store like Ikea and adjust it to your needs. Just make certain that whatever configuration you end up with allows you to work in an ergonomically safe position.

I love working at my standing desk. Not only has it reduced my pain, but I feel that I'm more creative. Plus, I'm automatically getting a bit of a core workout as I stand in the proper position and my posture has improved. In fact, I'm so addicted to standing, that I create temporary standing desks even when I'm in a hotel room. I can't work very long in these situations, but they're usually more comfortable for me than sitting.

One side effect of working while standing? Now that I've been using my standing desk daily for over a year, I find that I have less tolerance for sitting. Which is why you'll often see me standing in the back during a workshop.

What do you think? Is a standing desk in your future?



This article first appeared on September 22, 2014 on the blog of the Fantasy, Futuristic, and Paranormal chapter of RWA.