

A New Way of Thinking about Seating

Traditional Role of Seating

Effective support of posture is one of the key determinates of comfort while working at a computer workstation for long periods of time. In the past, the only “ergonomically correct” seated posture for computer-intensive work was thought to be upright with hips, knees and elbows bent at 90 degrees. This posture was considered to be the best for optimal worker comfort and performance.

Current Approach to Seating

Today’s ergonomic standards reflect an evolution of our understanding of both the physical requirements and job demands that necessitate support for a wider variety of postures. Most task seating is now designed to support variations of the upright posture such as the reclined, declined and even standing positions. Seating adjustability is provided through various knobs and levers that can be manipulated to change the seating features and support a given posture. This approach to adjustability is effective if the user has adequate training to properly adjust the seating and the desire to readjust the seating throughout the day to accommodate shifts in posture.

The Nature of Work Is Changing

In the 1990’s, most knowledge work was based on the individual interacting with computing equipment that was permanently located at the user’s desk. The purpose of task seating was to keep the worker in an effective posture in relation to the computing equipment for as long a period of time as possible. As we move into the future, the nature of knowledge work is shifting to a mobile, collaborative model and this is driving demand for flexibility and ease of use of office seating.

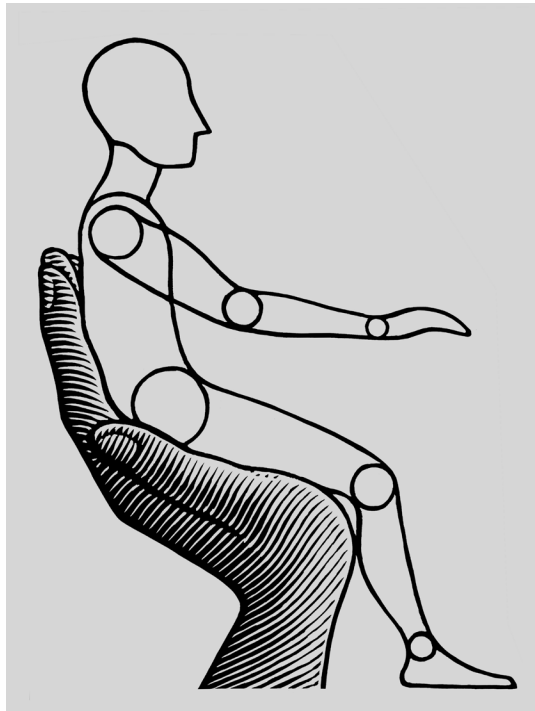
Flexibility and Ease of Use

For sustained individual task work, seating should permit unrestrained movement among reclined, upright, and forward

postures. Because work today is more collaborative and fluid, seating must also provide the flexibility to support a wide range of postures beyond the traditional positions used in task work – like from individual work to collaboration and back again.

The need for fluidity of motion and postures means that traditional methods of adjusting the seat (multiple levers and controls) are less effective because the user may not have the time or knowledge to make constant adjustments.

Thus, the features of the seating that provide adjustability should conform to the needs of the user as automatically, or intuitively, as possible.



Key Design Considerations

- ▶ Specify seating that is designed to make changing positions effortless; seating products should incorporate intuitive ease of adjustability into their design without the need for training.
- ▶ Seating should incorporate a high degree of flexibility to support a wide range of postures. People perform many activities in an average work day that go beyond what traditional task seating is designed to support: impromptu interactions with colleagues while seated, operating various mobile devices that lend themselves to casual postures, and other situations.

Knoll research initiatives focus on links between workspace design and human behavior, health and performance, and the quality of the users’ experience. We share and apply what we learn to inform product development and help our customers shape their work environments.

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