

Checklist for sitting properly

Ask a friend or family member to help you work through these steps with you. Start by sitting in your sofa or chair with your back resting flat against the back support, and they can then check that you're sitting correctly.

- The spine needs to be supported in a good 'S'-shaped position rather than a 'C' shape. Your spine should be fully supported along its curves.
- There should be good support for the head and arms, and hips and knees need to be level with each other when your feet are resting on the floor. If they don't rest on the floor, you will find that you slide your bottom forward. Your spine then won't be supported, and will be in a 'C' shape.
- The seat of the chair should fit the length of your thigh, leaving a small gap of up to 2.5cm behind the knees. The gap helps you to move your feet back when getting ready to stand up. This also avoids pressure on the back of the legs, which may restrict circulation.
- You should be sitting on the bones under your bottom rather than in a slouched position, which would put pressure on the base of your spine.
- Your elbows should be able to rest on the arms of the chair without your shoulders being pushed up.
- Check that the sofa or chair is in a good, stable condition. Rickety frames and saggy springs won't help you maintain a good sitting position. Check both the cushion and the base that the cushion sits on.

If the chair is too low

Use equipment to raise it as much as you need. Chair raisers are the best way to go. These are moulded plastic or metal shapes designed to fit under a chair's legs or castors to increase the height. They are available as:

- cones or sleeves, which will only raise a chair by a fixed amount
- linked raisers, which can raise the chair to meet the needs of the person sitting in it.

Linked raisers are more costly, but are generally considered to be safer. Raisers that attach to the legs or castors (as opposed to fitting unsecured around the legs) are also more secure.

Only raise the chair as much as is required to suit you. Measure your lower leg length and raise the chair to a similar height. Raising a chair any higher is likely to prevent you from getting comfortable.

Don't raise an armchair that reclines. Also, don't add extra cushions above or below the seat base if this means the arm rests become too low. It could then be harder for you to push down on the arm rests to get into a standing position.

If the chair is too high

If you're seated in a chair that's too high, you may be tempted to slide forward in order to put your feet on the floor, resulting in a poor sitting position. A foot stool may be useful here.

If the chair is too deep

Adding a single cushion – one roughly the same length as your back – can be a comfortable way to bring the seat forward.