

SOME PRACTICAL POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN USING PORTABLE COMPUTERS

1. Workstation

- (a) Use an external mouse and keyboard wherever possible.
- (b) Keep the mouse and keyboard at the edge of your desk.
- (c) For applications requiring use of a non-keyboard input device, opt for a portable with a touch pad, rollerball or external mouse rather than a 'nipple' trackpoint or isometric joystick device.
- (d) If possible, look for tilt-adjustable keyboards on laptops.
- (e) Choose as large and clear a screen as possible that can be used comfortably for the task to be done.
- (f) Raise the laptop, using a suitable laptop stand, so the top of the screen is at eye level. Alternatively, use a 'docking station' and opt for a detachable or height-adjustable screen.
- (g) Use an appropriate desk rather than a bench or lap.
- (h) Many users find it more comfortable to use portables whose casing incorporates a space (wrist pad) between the keyboard and front edge.
- (i) Check that the portable has friction pads underneath to prevent it sliding across work surfaces when in use.
- (j) Adjust your chair so your desk allows your arms to work comfortably at the keyboard.

2. Equipment

- (a) Avoid prolonged carrying of laptops. If the laptop must be carried regularly over distance e.g. to another building on a weekly basis, use a lightweight carrying case with handle and shoulder straps.
- (b) Look for as low a weight as possible (for example 3 kg or less) for the portable computer, and keep accessories as few and as light as possible.
- (c) Specify as long a battery life as possible. Where practicable, obtain extra transformer/cable sets for each main location where you will use the portable, so only the computer is carried to reduce weight.
- (d) To cut working time and user stress, ensure the portable has sufficient memory and speed for the applications to be used.

- (e) For some tasks it may also be desirable to provide add-ons that improve usability and reduce maintenance time, such as (removable) CD-ROM drives and additional memory – but consider the weight penalty when deciding if this is appropriate.

3. **Security**

- (a) Security of individuals and the data held on laptop computers is also a concern. If possible, tasks should be avoided that involve lone users carrying or storing portable equipment in any area where theft is a possibility.
- (b) To reduce risk of theft or assault, avoid manufacturer-branded laptop cases, do not leave in parked cars and take care using the equipment in public places.