

employers' handbook



Be
ScreenSmart



simplyhealth



did you know?

During the average working lifetime goggle-eyed Brits spend an eye watering 128,780 hours sitting in front of a screen – that's nearly 15 whole years of their life!



This handy guide is designed to help you care for your employees' eye health and meet your legal obligation to comply with the Health and Safety Executive's Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations.

look inside for...

- The importance of being ScreenSmart
- A reminder of your legal responsibilities
- Tips on how you and your employees can be ScreenSmart
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Information about ScreenSmart training and communication resources
- Where to find more information

The ScreenSmart campaign has been developed by the Eyecare Trust and healthcare provider Simplyhealth after research commissioned by the charity found 89 per cent of British businesses are failing to meet their legal obligation to protect their employees' sight.

Just 11 per cent of businesses say they meet the six key measures outlined in the legislation despite penalties for failing to comply including improvement notices, prohibition orders, fines and even criminal prosecution.



the importance of being ScreenSmart

Ninety per cent of us say we experience screen fatigue – visual distress brought on as a result of spending prolonged periods staring at a screen.

Typical symptoms include: tired or irritated eyes, blurred vision, headaches, double vision, changes in colour perception, sensitivity to light and dry eyes.

Computer screens or Display Screen Equipment (DSE) can also highlight any existing vision problem that a user may have. For example, undiagnosed myopia (short-sight).

Although DSE won't permanently damage your sight, improper use can result in reduced productivity, lost work time, reduced job satisfaction and severe discomfort.

A recent report commissioned by the Eyecare Trust found British Industry loses an estimated £1.5 Billion every year as a result of screen fatigue.

Remember, it's not just computers that can trigger screen fatigue – screens used on PDAs (Personal Display Assistants), whiteboards and even micro-fiche are also covered by the regulations.

Other non-vision related health problems associated with prolonged screen use include upper limb disorders, backache and stress.



your legal responsibilities

Under Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations all employers are legally required to meet the following six key measures for all employees who 'habitually' use DSE in their day-to-day work.

- analyse workstations to assess and reduce any risk to eye health
- ensure workstations meet minimum ergonomic requirements
- provide employees with clear and accessible guidance on display screen regulations and how you, as an employer, comply with them
- facilitate work routines that allow adequate breaks from

intensive screen work

- pay for sight tests on request, and, a basic pair of spectacles, if required solely for working at a screen
- provide health and safety training

Making a few simple changes to your working environment can help significantly minimise your risk of suffering from screen fatigue.

Use the checklists on the accompanying CD to assess whether you currently comply with the Display Screen Equipment Regulations and identify any areas that may require further attention.

Some of your legal obligations extend to agency temps and self-employed contractors. See the table below for a summary of your obligations according to individual employee status.



	Direct employee (including homeworkers and part-time staff)	Agency temp or similar	Self-employed contractor
workstation assessment	✓	✓	✓
workstation to meet minimum ergonomic requirements	✓	✓	✓
provide DSE advice and information	✓	✓	✓
plan daily work routine and provide adequate breaks	✓	✓	✗
pay for sight test on request and a basic pair of spectacles if required solely for VDU work	✓	✗	✗
provide health and safety training	✓	✗	✗

how to be ScreenSmart

The design of a job, equipment and workplace can all influence a user's risk of suffering screen fatigue or visual distress.

By law the design of a workstation and its immediate environment must meet a number of standard requirements.

The checklist on the enclosed CD can be used to conduct formal workstation assessments, however, here are some tips for best practice in a typical office environment.

Users should arrange their desks so that they are seated a comfortable distance (about an arm's length) from the screen with good posture, relaxed shoulders and effortless hand control at the keyboard.

Chair height should be adjusted so that the user's eyes are about level with the top of their screen.

The office should be well lit with soft ambient lighting. Directional lights can be harsh and cast unhelpful shadows.

Blinds or screens should be fitted to external and internal windows to minimise glare or reflection from the sun or other reflective surfaces.





Users should manually adjust screen brightness and contrast levels according to their individual preference.

Humidity levels should also be controlled – dry air attracts dust and irritates the eyes. Plants can be effective humidifiers.

Copy documents should be positioned at roughly the same distance from your eyes as the screen to avoid having to continually re-focus.

However, employers do not necessarily have to supply special document holders.

Work should be organised so that users can take regular and frequent breaks from intensive screen work.

Vary tasks such as telephone work, face-to face meetings, filing etc.

If it is not possible for a DSE user to mix other tasks with intensive screen work than they should be given specific rest breaks away from their screen.

It's important that breaks from screen work are taken before eyes begin to get tired rather than simply giving them a chance to recover.

Users should give their eyes a rest every 20 minutes or so.

Remind users to keep blinking! When you concentrate on a screen for long periods your blink rate can slow by as much as 400 per cent.

To instantly refresh your eyes close them and roll your eyeball around behind the closed lid.

When typing or reading on screen users should select a style and



type of font (typeface) that is comfortable to read.

Serif fonts can work well as the 'little feet' help give visual clues that lead the reader onto the next character.

Ensure that the font size is clearly legible. The Trust recommends using a font size of 12pts or above when working in normal view.

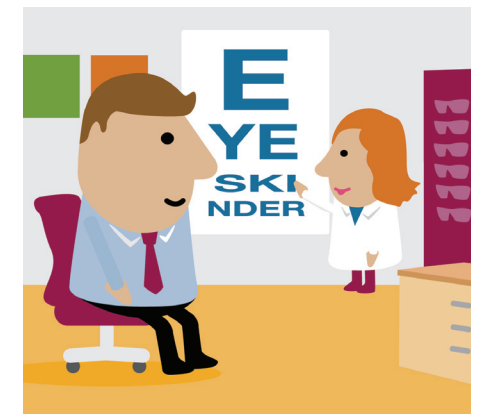
The screen display should be static and free from any distracting flickering.

The screen must also be a suitable size for the task in hand. For example, a small display screen may not be appropriate for artworking graphics or fine detail work.

Make sure the surface of the screen is kept clean and free from dirty finger marks, grease and dust.

You should also ensure there is sufficient space behind any screen for the user to look beyond it and rest their eyes.

Regular sight tests (once every two years, or more often if the user feels their sight has significantly deteriorated) are vital to detect any underlying sight defects and eye health issues that trigger visual trauma when working at a computer screen of other Display Screen Equipment.





frequently asked questions

What is a VDU?

Short for Visual Display Unit, VDU is a term used to describe a visual display device for a computer. Flat panel displays' monitors, whiteboards and projectors are all examples of VDUs.

Are laptops covered by these regulations?

Yes. Regular users of portable screens, laptop computers and hand-held devices are also covered by these regulations.

Are there any screens not covered by these regulations?

There are a number of screens that fall outside the scope of the law.

These include: calculators; some, but not all, point of sale equipment*, cashpoints, vehicle display screen equipment and window typewriters displaying a few lines of text.

What does 'regular' or 'habitual' use of a VDU mean?

The law does not quantify 'regular' or 'habitual' use. However, if an employee continuously uses a VDU for an hour or more on most workdays then they should be covered by the regulations.

Log-on to the ScreenSmart website www.screensmart.co.uk for more detailed information.

Who is covered by these regulations?

All full and part time employees who regularly use a VDU in their day-to-day work are covered by these regulations.

For more information about how the regulations apply to homeworkers, self employed, contractors and agency staff please see the chart on page four.

*If the POS equipment is used for purposes other than simply registering financial transactions ie: checking and revising seating plans then it should be covered.

What are the health risks associated with prolonged and uncontrolled VDU use?

Intensive screen use can trigger visual distress including blurred vision, photo sensitivity, headaches and sore, tired and irritated eyes.

Other non-vision related health problems associated with prolonged and uncontrolled screen use include upper limb disorders, backache and stress.

What must I do to comply with the regulations?

There are six key steps that you must take to comply with the regulations.

1. identify who is covered by the regulations – all employees continuously using a VDU for an hour or more on most workdays
2. conduct workstation assessments (Ensure assessor is suitably trained)
3. act on any issues highlighted by the assessment
4. provide employees with regular sight tests

5. make a contribution towards the cost of any vision correction required solely for VDU work

6. provide health and safety training on the risks associated with intensive screen work

How do I analyse a workstation?

Download the compliance checklists on the accompanying CD or log-on to www.screensmart.co.uk for further advice.

Can anyone conduct a workstation assessment?

Anyone can undertake an assessment however, they should be suitably trained to recognise poor and inefficient workstation layouts, environments and practices.

Assessments conducted by the user should be reviewed by a trained assessor prior to an action plan being agreed and implemented. See the accompanying CD for template action plans.

How often should I analyse a workstation?

Upon a user commencing work at the workstation and after any



material change to the station and / or its immediate environment.

What if a workstation is used by more than one individual?

A multi-user workstation should be analysed to ensure it works for every user.

How often should employees have their sight tested?

VDU users should have their sight tested when they commence work and at regular intervals thereafter – we recommend once every two years.

Users may also request a sight test paid for by their employer at any time if they are experiencing VDU related problems with their sight.

Where and when should employees have their eyesight tested?

You can decide what arrangements work best for you.

You may decide that employees can arrange their own sight tests and pass any bill onto you or you may prefer to refer all staff to one optician with whom you have a prior arrangement.

Alternatively, you can arrange for a domiciliary firm to provide eye examinations in the workplace.

Employees are entitled to time off during normal working hours to have their sight tested.

How much will it cost?

The cost of providing sight tests will vary depending on what arrangements you have in place. You may find that corporate health plans provide a cost effective solution.

How much should I contribute to the cost of a pair of spectacles required solely for VDU use?

You are only required to pay for a



basic pair of frames and lenses.

The cost of this will vary depending on what arrangements you have in place. Cash plans and eyecare vouchers can help keep costs down.

If an employee wants designer frames or tinted lenses then they must pay any additional costs over and above your basic contribution.

What if the user already wears spectacles?

If a user's normal glasses for other work are suitable for VDU work (a viewing distance of approx 60 cm) then you are not required to pay for the glasses.

What health and safety training am I required to provide?

You should provide employees with advice and information about the risks associated with prolonged screen work; how to minimise any associated health risks and their

entitlements to sight tests and vision correction paid for by you – their employer.

I own a small business and employ two part time staff surely these regulations don't apply to me?

These regulations apply to ALL employers, big and small.

Who has responsibility for enforcing these regulations?

The Health and Safety Executive's Factory Inspectorate and Local Authority Environmental Health Officers.

What are the penalties for failing to comply?

The full range of penalties associated with the Health and Safety at Work Act are available to inspectors including improvement notices, prohibition orders, fines and even, criminal prosecution.



ScreenSmart resources

Use the resources inside this pack to help you care for your employees' eye health and meet your legal obligation to comply with the Health and Safety Executive's Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations.

The **quick guide** provides employees with essential advice on how to create an eye-friendly working environment.

The **posters** highlight the risks associated with intensive screen work and the steps you can take to minimise any negative health effects.

The CD includes: user-friendly **compliance checklists** designed to make workstation assessments quick and easy. **Action plan templates** to help implement

any activity necessary in order to meet the required standards; an **animated step-by-step guide to setting up an ergonomic workstation** for use on intranet sites and health and safety training plus fun stuff, like our 'Gone to Lunch' **screensaver**.

Additional copies of the full resource pack, quick guide, posters and CD-ROM are available to purchase. Subject to availability.

Item	Unit cost
Full resource pack	£15
Set of 3 posters	£3
10 x quick guides	£10
CD	£5

Prices include P&P. Send your order together with a cheque made payable to the Eyecare Trust to ScreenSmart, c/o Eyecare Trust, PO Box 804, Aylesbury, BUCKS HP20 9DF



The Eyecare Trust is a registered charity that exists to promote awareness of ocular health and the importance of good eye care.

For more information visit www.eyecaretrust.org.uk



At Simplyhealth we offer easier access to many health services from dentistry and optical to alternative medicines and private healthcare. As a healthcare provider, we use our extensive range of health plans to help individuals, families and companies. These include cash plans, dental plans, private medical insurance and self funded health plans, which provide cover towards check-ups, treatment and emergencies, helping people budget for the costs of expected and unexpected healthcare. Our specialist Simplyhealth store also helps people get the most out of life through mobility aids and supports for daily living.

For more information visit www.simplyhealth.co.uk

**For further information about the
ScreenSmart campaign please...**

write to:

ScreenSmart
c/o Eyecare Trust
PO Box 804
Aylesbury
BUCKS
HP20 9DF

Telephone:

0845 129 5001

Email:

screensmart@eyecaretrust.org.uk

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