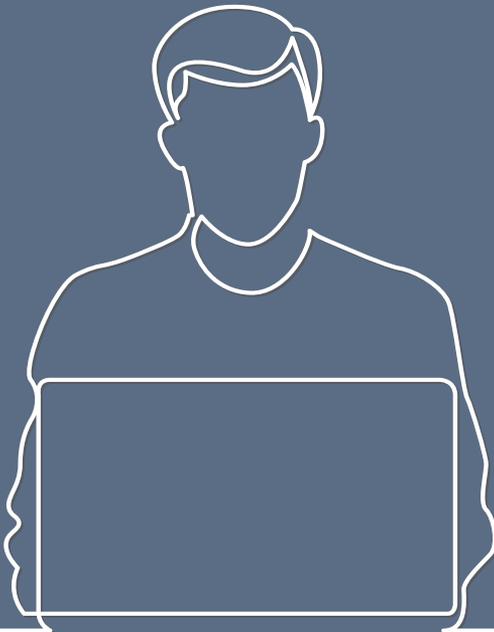


Employers' Handbook

Eye care in the workplace

Your guide to meeting Display Screen Equipment Legislation



EYEHEALTHUK vision *express*



did you know?

During the average working lifetime squared-eyed Brits spend an eye watering 128,780 hours sitting in front of a screen – That's nearly 15 whole years of their life¹!





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 'screen smart'
- A reminder of your legal responsibilities
- Tips on how you and your employees can be 'screen smart'
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Where to find more information

This guide has been developed by Eye Health UK and Vision Express after research commissioned by the charity found 90 per cent of British businesses are failing to meet their legal obligation to protect their employees sight in the workplace².

This is despite the penalties for failing to comply including improvement notices, prohibition orders, fines and even criminal prosecution.

Read on for advice on how office workers can be **Screen Smart** and reduce their risk of suffering poor eye health.





the importance of being screen smart

Eighty five 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.

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) (eg: computers, white boards, mobile phones and tablets etc) can also highlight any existing vision problem that a user may have – undiagnosed myopia (short-sight), for example.

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 report produced by Eye Health UK estimated British Industry loses on average £1.5 Billion every year as a result of screen fatigue.

Around 1 in 5 (18%) of employees have cited eye health issues as a reason for absenteeism².

Other health non-vision related health problems associated with prolonged and uncontrolled screen work 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 a number of key measures outlined below:

- 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;

for all employees who ‘habitually’ use Display Screen Equipment in their day-to-day work.

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

Download our checklists to help you assess whether your organisation currently complies with the DSE regulations and identify any areas that may require further attention.

**www.visionmatters.org.uk/
TheBigBlink**



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 (inc. 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 screen smart

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

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

Checklists available from www.visionmatters.org.uk/ **TheBigBlink** can be used to conduct formal workstation assessments, however, here are some tips for best practice in a typical office environment.

To create an eye-friendly 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 and

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.

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.



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Encourage anyone using a screen for prolonged periods to follow the 20-20-20 rule.

The 20-20-20 rule means looking up from the screen every 20 minutes and focusing on an object 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

The 20-20-20 rule is a highly effective tool for minimising screen fatigue.

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

Remind users to keep blinking!

Digital screens can decrease the eye's blink rate by 66% from an average of 18 blinks a minute, with a higher rate of incomplete blinks which are less functional^{3,4,5}

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. Eye Health UK recommends using a font size of 12pts or above when working in normal view.

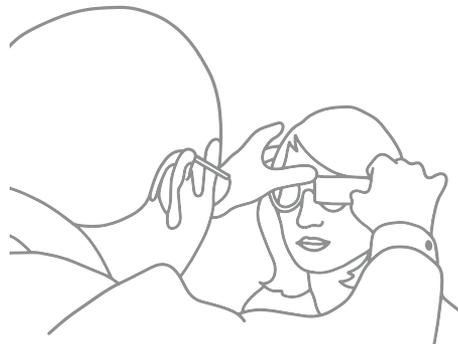
The screen display should be static and free from any distracting flickering.

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 vision defects and eye health issues that trigger visual trauma when working at a computer screen or other Display Screen Equipment.





frequently asked questions

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 that aren't 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; cash points and vehicle display equipment.

What does 'regular' or 'habitual' user mean?

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

Log-on to the Vision Matters website www.visionmatters.org.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.

What must I do to comply with the regulations?

There are six key steps that you must take to comply with the regulations. These apply to every employee who regularly uses a screen to carry out their day-to-day work.

1. analyse workstations to assess and reduce any risk to eye health;
2. ensure that workstations meet minimum ergonomic requirements;
3. provide employees with clear and accessible guidance on DSE regulations and how you, as an employer, comply with them;
4. facilitate work routines that allow adequate breaks from intensive DSE work;
5. pay for sight tests on request, and, a basic pair of spectacles, if required solely for VDU work;
6. provide relevant health and safety training.



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How do I analyse a workstation?

Download the compliance checklists from the vision matters website 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.

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.

I run a small business employing two part-time employees, surely I'm not required to pay for their sight tests?

If your employees regularly use DSE to carry out their work then yes you are required to pay for regular sight tests.

Are there any cost-effective ways to cover the cost of eye tests and any prescription eyewear that I may be liable to pay for?

Yes, there are a number of cost effective solutions that you could consider. These include subscribing to a corporate eye care plan. Visit visionexpress.com/corporate-eyecare for more information.

What are the penalties for not paying for employees eye care?

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

Who has responsibility for enforcing these regulations?

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

1. Eye Health UK ScreenSmart Report
2. Vision Matters survey of 250 employers conducted by Opinion Matters between 30.08.19 - 03.09.19
3. Gowrisankaran et al. Asthenopia and Blink Rate Under Visual and Cognitive Loads. Optometry and Vision Science, Vol. 89, No. 1, January 2012. pg 97-104
4. Tsubota K, Nakamori K. Dry eyes and video display terminals. N Engl J Med 1993;328:584
5. Effect of visual display unit use on blink rate and tear stability S.Patel, R.Henderson, L. Bradley, B.Galloway, L. Hunter Department of Optometry and Vision Space, Glasgow Polytechnic Vol 68, No 11, pp 888-892



**Guide produced by
Eye Health UK in partnership
with Vision Express.**

For more information about caring
for your employees' eye health visit:

www.visionmatters.org.uk

For more information about
cost effective corporate eyecare
plans that can be fully tailored to the
needs of your organisation visit:

www.visionexpress.com/corporate-eyecare/

To book a free eye test go to:

www.visionexpress.com

Information in this booklet is
intended as a guide only. For more
information about DSE legislation
visit:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/>

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