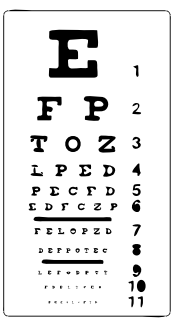
SIMPLE TIPS FOR REDUCING DIGITAL EYE STRAIN

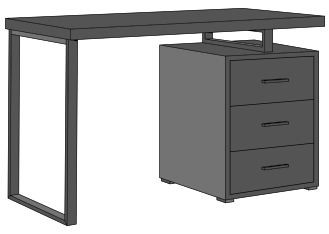
For most interpreters nowadays, sitting in front of the computer for hours every day is a reality, whether for research, emailing, or RSI.
Symptoms of digital eye strain (or 'computer vision') include dry or red eyes, headaches, blurred vision, eye twitching, and neck and shoulder pain.
Short of reducing your screen time, which is unrealistic, how can you best look after your eyes?

I've listed the best advice for reducing digital eye strain, with the most important tips at the top.



1 EYE EXAMINATION

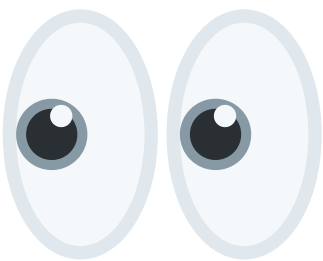
Book a routine eye examination with your optician to make sure your eyes are healthy. Discuss your symptoms. Customised computer glasses may be a good option.



2 OFFICE ERGONOMICS

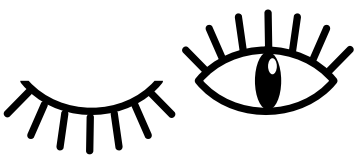
Rethink the ergonomics of your home office; many symptoms are caused by devices or chairs at the wrong height or distance.

- get a good adjustable chair.
- your computer screen should be at arm's length (roughly 20-25 inches from your eyes)
- Get a large monitor (>19 inches diagonal)
- the top of your screen should be at or just below eye level.
- if you need to consult documents, use a document holder to avoid turning your neck and head too much.



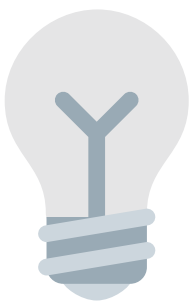
3 TAKE A BREAK

- To avoid your eyes being focused on the same distance for too long, follow the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, look away (at something that is 20 ft, i.e 7 metres or so distant) for 20 seconds.
- If you can, take longer breaks (e.g. 15 minutes every 2 hours). Ideally go outside, so you can focus your eyes over longer distances.



4 BLINK

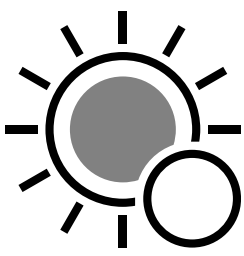
- When we use a computer, we blink less than half as much, causing dry, irritated eyes. Deliberately blink more often. Try blinking 10 times, slowly, every 20 minutes (to tie in with your 20-20-20 routine).
- Use eye drops (artificial tears) to keep your eyes lubricated - but not the ones that reduce redness.



5 IMPROVE THE LIGHTING

Lighting that is too bright or too harsh can worsen symptoms. Avoid too great a discrepancy between the brightness of the screen and the surroundings.

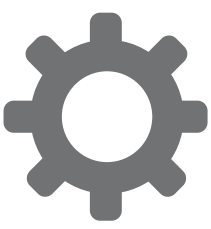
- If necessary, close curtains, shades, or blinds.
- Avoid harsh fluorescent lighting, and use 'soft white' LEDs where possible
- Avoid positioning screens in front of windows. Ideally, windows should be to the side.



6 MINIMISE GLARE

Repainting the room in matt, darker paint isn't very practical for most people. Instead, on top of checking the lighting in your office:

- Ensure your computer has a LED display with an anti-reflective surface. Use a matt screen filter if necessary.
- Consider anti-reflective spectacles.



7 CHECK YOUR SETTINGS

- Check the font size and contrast and adjust for comfort. Make sure the brightness matches your surroundings.
- Lower the colour temperature of your display to reduce blue light.
- Raise the device refresh rate to avoid flicker.

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