

PRODUCTIVITY ROAD TEST

Stand up for yourself

There's no need to slouch at your desk any longer, writes **Sue White**.

The first thing many notice when working from home (where no one is watching except the cat) is that many long-held beliefs about office protocol are worthy of being turned on their head. Pyjamas only for night-time? I think not. Talking to oneself a sign of madness? Not if nobody hears you. Desks are made for sitting at? Not necessarily.

My own traditional desk got the heave-ho in place of a stand-up desk some years ago. Disclaimer: the move unfolded not through innovation, or a desire to be ahead of the bell curve, but as a result of back pain. Standing encourages better posture than sitting, when, let's face it, I can slouch, slump and droop with alarming ease.

While stand-up desks are now favoured by some executives – most concerned by scary statistics about how detrimental sitting is for long periods – the fact that Thomas Jefferson favoured standing at his desk over sitting makes the habit more retro movement than burgeoning new trend.

It's clear to me that standing makes it easier to actively engage my core strength, a change that's fabulous if you too are trying to sort out a dodgy back. But standing also helps burn fat (goodbye gym membership?) and, more importantly, helps many of my body's systems stay alert and function more efficiently. It's a nice change from the hibernation mode I can easily tune in to when sitting for long periods.

So why not work standing up? It's harder, that's why. Try standing still for 10 minutes and, like me, you'll soon be desperately looking for somewhere to lean and loll. Be aware: you do still lean and loll against your stand-up desk, although I seem to realise what



I'm doing a little earlier than if I'm seated.

Because stand-up desks aren't cheap (expect to pay \$750-\$1500), I didn't leap into stand-up-desk world without some DIY experimentation. My first attempt involved fashioning my own makeshift tall desk. With two dozen of my least favourite books at the ready, I spent a crafty morning customising a wobbly, leaning tower of Pisa-like workstation that I was thoroughly impressed by.

Visitors were horrified, so I soon upgraded to the real thing: an adjustable desk that moves up and down at the press of a button.

Of course, even the most determined of us can't stand and work for eight hours straight. When you start, a 15-minute stint of

standing followed by 30 minutes of seated slumping – oops, work – will be plenty. In fact, week one is likely to be more shocking than rewarding.

But trust me, stick with the yo-yo of an up and down work surface and the rewards will come. Every day, I stand a little longer. My current workday involves a mix of elongated sitting and active standing. It still looks weird (especially teamed with those pyjamas), but as I tell myself in my private morning chats, only the cat is watching.

Sue White is a freelance writer who is interested in productivity, working sustainably and eliminating slouching from her workday. Follow her @suewhitewriter.