

# Are you Sitting Comfortably?



**iAM**  
**RoadSmart**

# About this Guide

We hope this guide will assist you with your seating position, when you are in the drivers seat of your vehicle.

A poor driving position will reduce the level of comfort, safety and can interfere with blood flow, nerve supply, in reducing driver responses in potentially dangerous situations.

Incorrect adjustment of the seat and the associated vehicle controls also increases the risk of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD). The body spends lengthy periods set in positions that are not ergonomically suitable.

The main reason for this is the loss of lumbar curve while driving, together with any jolting and vibration which may occur depending on the vehicle.

By improving the general ergonomics and comfort of a driver, we hope to reduce the risk of MSD when behind the wheel of a vehicle and helping to ensure driver response times are not reduced.



# General Rules for Comfort

Try to remove coats, jackets and any bulky clothing which can crumple up and change the shape and support patterns of your seat.

Take a break every two hours and have a walk around. This helps with your circulation and will keep your mind fresh and alert, for the driving and the meeting at the end of the journey.



Keeping the most optimum temperature is important, a car that is too hot will make the occupants feel drowsy and slows down reaction times.

Keeping yourself fit and healthy will enhance your driving performance. Many drivers have a reduced level of fitness, poor diets, feel stressed and have decreasing exercise. This can all affect your ability to drive safely.

comfort

# Choosing a new vehicle

When assessing the ergonomics of a new vehicle consider the following factors:

Does it match your requirements for your body size and any physical limitations you may have?

Do the layout and ergonomic features of the vehicle (e.g. steering wheel, seat, pedals and other controls, displays) meet your needs?

How much time per day are you going to be spending in the vehicle?

Does the vehicle have features that assist in the kind of work you do e.g., an easy to load boot if you are a salesperson who takes samples to clients?

Does the open door provide enough space to get in and out easily (without stooping or banging your head on the door frame; and without bumping your knees on the bottom of the dashboard / instrument panel and steering column?)

Remember you may have the vehicle for a long time so you need to make the right choice first time!



# Back Pain while Driving

For most people, good posture just isn't something they think about when driving.

Many people slouch, and have bad posture. The majority of people put their spine in a position that can cause problems, especially since most people are holding this position for over an hour and a half each day!

One of the largest causes of back pain is due to the pressure placed on the lumbar curve. The lumbar curve consists of five vertebrae in the lower portion of the back. These vertebrae naturally curve towards the stomach. However, when driving for long periods of time, this curve tends to straighten, which puts excessive pressure on the discs.

On top of this pressure, the discs and vertebrae are being forced to endure the millions of vibrations from the car's suspension being used to the maximum on the roads of today. This can cause back pain, even after getting out of the car.

As most car seats are so low with a limited leg area, many people recline their seat too far. When the seat is reclined, the legs are straightened and the neck is flexed forward, in order to get into a position to properly see the road. This can put intolerable pressure on the nerves in the arms and legs, the pelvic area, lower back, and neck.

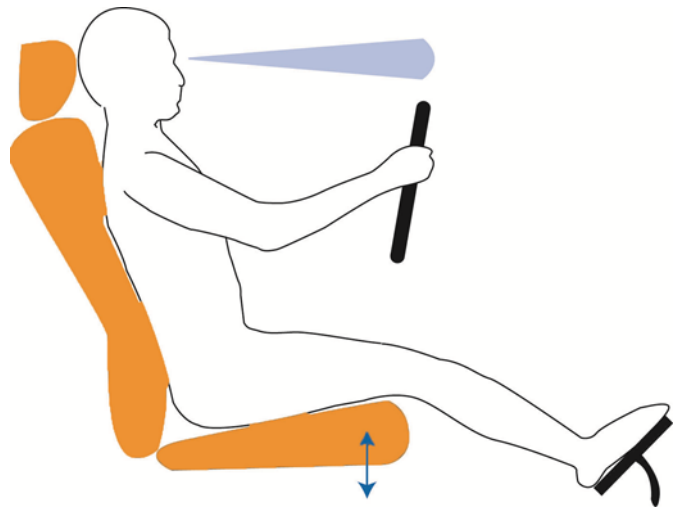
Most people have no idea that their comfortable driving position is negatively affecting so many areas of their body.

# Setting your Seat

## 1. Seat Height

Adjust the seat as high as is comfortable to improve your vision of the road.

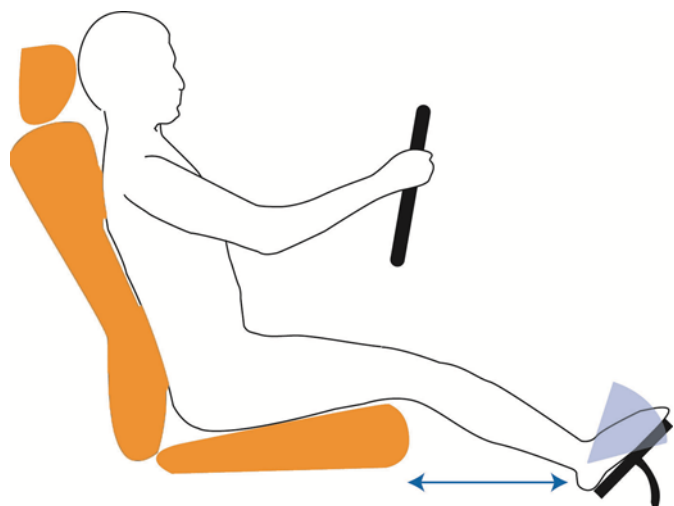
Make sure you have adequate clearance from the roof and ensure you have maximum possible vision of the road.



## 2. Seat Reach

Move the seat forwards until you can fully depress the clutch pedal leaving a slight bend at your knee.

Adjusting your seat distance from the pedals correctly may be further back than you think.

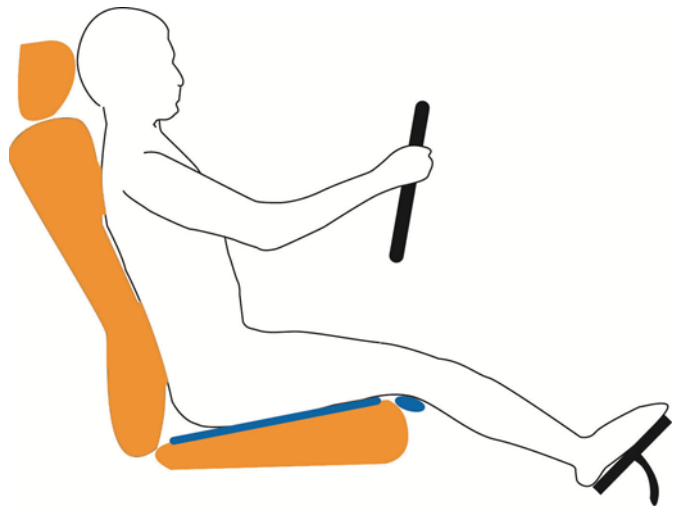


# Setting your Seat

## 3. Cushion tilt

Adjust cushion tilt angle so that your thighs are supported along the length of the cushion.

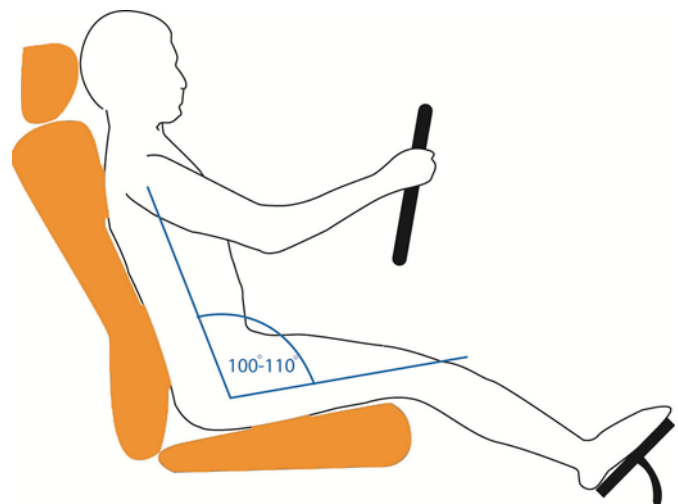
Try to avoid pressure behind the knees while at the same time supporting your legs.



## 4. Seat Rake

Recline the back of the seat to between 100-110 degrees, normally this means reclining the seat so that your shoulders are no longer in line with your hips instead they are just behind them.

Avoid reclining the seat too far as this can cause excessive forward bending of the head and neck and reduces your vision.



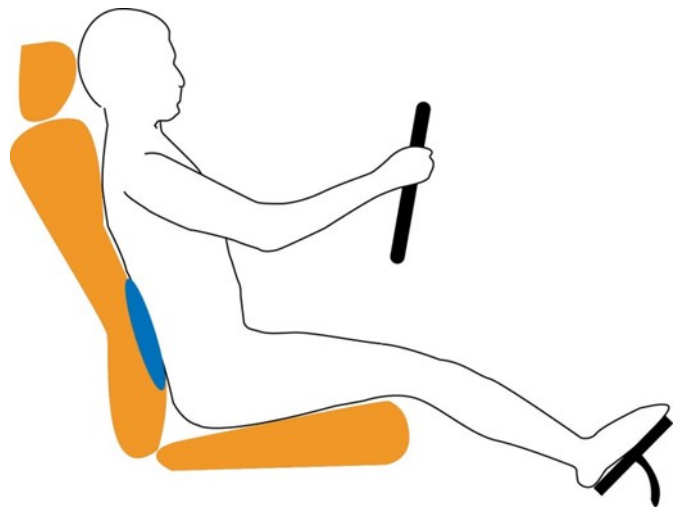


# Setting your Seat

## 5. Lumbar Support

The lumbar support is important to back comfort, If your car seat does not have an integrated lumbar support, you may wish to consider purchasing one.

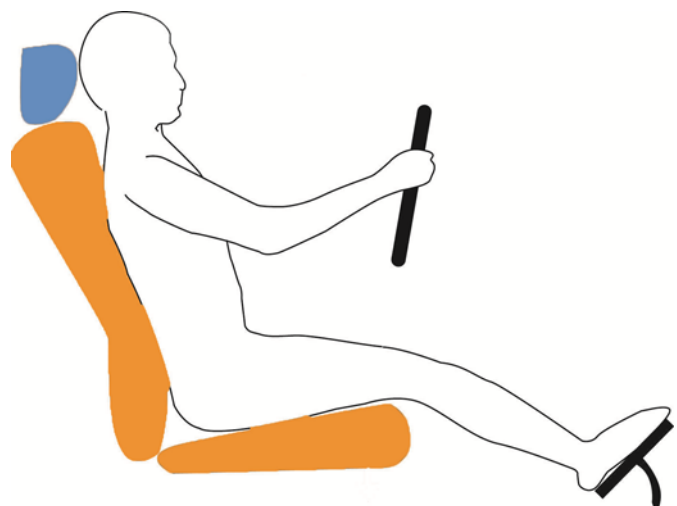
Adjust the lumbar support so the curve of your spine is evenly supported. Making sure you do not over do it. You don't want the curve being pushed out. Just a comfortable gentle, even support.



## 6. Head Restraint

The head restraint should be adjusted until it offers the optimum restraint for your head in the event of a crash.

The head restraint should be adjusted so the ridged part (usually the middle) of the restraint is level with your eyes or the top of your ears.



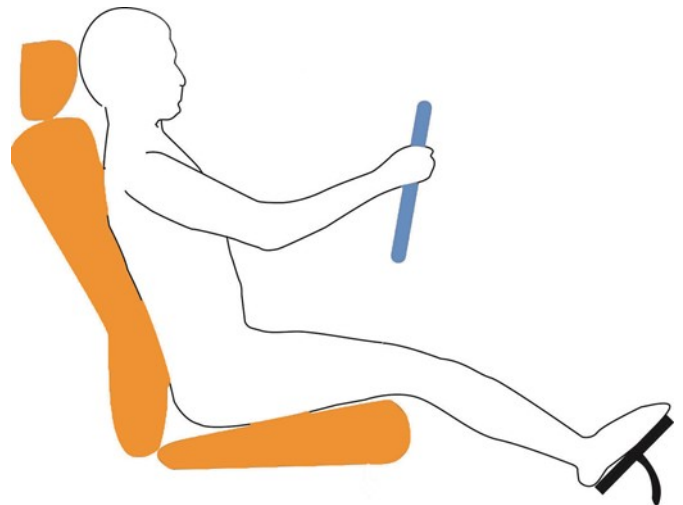


# Setting your Seat

## 7. Steering Wheel

Most steering columns are adjustable, and should be positioned in such a way, that when your hands are correctly placed they are a little lower than your shoulders.

Make sure the instrument panel is still clearly visible, moving your head to read them may cause discomfort.



Although you now have the knowledge of how to adjust the seat and steering wheel to give you the optimum position, it may feel a little strange at first, however your body will soon adjust to this new correct position.

The greater the number of adjustable features in your vehicle, the more likely you are to be able to adopt a comfortable posture.

Any drivers seating position should ideally allow for the need to change posture slightly.

# Is your car a mobile office?

If you use your car as a remote office and complete paperwork, make telephone calls, use a laptop or hand held device you need to think about your ergonomics while completing these activities.

When using a laptop in your car or completing paperwork – move to the passenger seat and place the laptop on a laptop pad. Avoid sitting in the driver's seat while resting the laptop or paperwork on the passenger seat. Try to avoid slouching, leaning forwards and twisting.

Try to place any luggage items in the areas especially designed to carry them. The primary storage area should always be the boot in a saloon car or hatchback. If you have an estate car or van you should ensure your vehicle is fitted with a load net or cage.

When packing your boot always try to keep the weight as low down as possible to help the stability of your vehicle.

The lower the weight the more stable your vehicle will be when cornering, thus reducing any adverse handling affects on the vehicle and improving the stability of the load.

Even a box of tissues on the parcel shelf can turn into a weapon when propelled by the forces involved in a crash or emergency stop.

# Want more information?

If you have any additional comments regarding ergonomics, any other service IAM RoadSmart offer, more information on joining IAM RoadSmart or wish to take an Advanced Driver Test, please book using the link below or contact us:

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Tel: 0300 303 1134

To book a course Online please visit:  
<https://www.iamroadsmart.com/courses>

