



BUYER'S GUIDE

Sit-Stand Desks

Your Complete Guide to Choosing the Right Height-Adjustable Desk

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Why Sit-Stand Desks Are Worth the Investment

The science on prolonged sitting is pretty clear at this point: sitting all day is hard on your body. Back pain, poor posture, reduced circulation, lower energy in the afternoon — these aren't minor inconveniences. They affect productivity, comfort, and long-term health.

Sit-stand desks give you the ability to alternate between sitting and standing throughout the day. And here's the important detail: it's not about standing all day (that has its own problems). It's about movement and variety. Switching positions every 30–90 minutes reduces the cumulative strain of fixed postures and keeps your body more engaged.

The ROI for companies is real too. Better ergonomics mean fewer workers' comp claims, fewer sick days related to musculoskeletal issues, and a workforce that's more comfortable and focused. That's why sit-stand desks have moved from "cool perk" to standard equipment in modern offices.

At FOF, we carry sit-stand desks across every budget tier — from budget-friendly manual options to fully-loaded electric models with programmable memory presets. This guide helps you find the right one.

Types of Sit-Stand Desks

Not all height-adjustable desks work the same way. Here's your breakdown:

Electric / Motorized Desks — Press a button, the desk moves. Single or dual motors raise and lower the frame to your preset height. The most popular type for commercial office use — effortless, consistent, and can be programmed to remember multiple height positions. Electric desks have become quite affordable. If you're buying for a real work environment where the desk will be used daily, electric is the smart choice.

Pneumatic / Gas Cylinder Desks — Use compressed gas cylinders (like an office chair's height adjustment mechanism) to raise and lower the work surface. Lift with a lever or paddle. Smooth, silent, and requires no power. The trade-off: usually limited height range and smaller desktop options. More common in home office or compact configurations. Not as widely available as electric.

Manual Crank Desks — You turn a crank handle to raise or lower the desk. Simple, reliable, no power required, and more affordable than electric. The downside: it takes real effort to crank, especially with a fully loaded desktop. Most people stop using manual cranks after a few weeks because it's inconvenient. Not our first recommendation for daily sit-stand users, but a legitimate option for lower budgets or occasional adjustments.

Desktop Converters / Risers — Not a full height-adjustable desk — this is a unit that sits on top of an existing desk and raises just the monitor and keyboard to standing height. Much less expensive than a new desk. Works fine if you can't replace your current desk. Downside: the ergonomics aren't as good as a full desk (you're standing in a narrower work area), and they look less professional. Still a practical entry point.

Height Ranges and User Height Compatibility

This is one of the most practical things to check before buying. If the desk's height range doesn't work for you, it doesn't work — period.

Seated Height: — For proper seated ergonomics, desk surface should be at approximately elbow height when you're seated with good posture. For most people, this is between 25"–30".

Standing Height: — When standing, the desktop should be at or slightly below elbow height — typically 38"–48" depending on your height.

Typical Height Ranges:

- Standard sit-stand desks: 23"–49" (fits roughly 5'0"–6'6")
- Compact models: 25"–45" (fits roughly 5'2"–6'2")
- Taller-user models: 25"–52"+ (fits users 6'2"+)

	User Height	Recommended Sit Height	Recommended Stand Height	
	5'0"	23"–25"	37"–39"	
	5'4"	25"–27"	39"–41"	
	5'8"	27"–29"	41"–43"	
	6'0"	28"–30"	43"–45"	
	6'4"	30"–32"	46"–48"	

If you're outfitting an office with multiple users sharing a desk (shifts, hot-desking), make sure the height range covers the full spectrum of your user heights. The programmable preset feature on electric desks is especially valuable here.

Motor Types and Noise

Not all electric sit-stand desk motors are equal. Here's what to know:

Single Motor — One motor drives both legs via a connecting rod or belt. Generally more affordable. Works well for lighter desktops and standard weight loads. Some single-motor models are slightly slower and can be less stable at full extension with heavy loads.

Dual Motor — Each leg has its own motor. Faster, stronger, more stable, and generally quieter operation. Can handle heavier weight loads. The better choice for desktops loaded with multiple monitors, heavy equipment, or for users who demand fast, smooth adjustment. Typically adds \$100–\$200 to the price over single-motor models.

Noise Level: — Good-quality sit-stand desk motors should be quiet — around 45–50 dB at full load. That's about the level of a quiet library. Cheap motors can be noticeably louder and potentially disruptive in open offices. If office noise is a concern, check reviews for noise level specifically.

Travel Speed: — Most electric desks move at about 1"–1.5" per second. At that rate, going from 28" (seated) to 44" (standing) takes about 10–15 seconds. Fine for most users. Some premium models hit 2"–2.5" per second.

Weight Capacity —Especially with Multiple Monitors

This is an often-overlooked spec. The weight capacity rating is the maximum load the desk can support while still adjusting reliably and maintaining stability.

Typical weight capacities:

- Budget single-motor: 150–200 lbs
- Standard dual-motor: 200–350 lbs
- Heavy-duty models: 350–500 lbs

What does your desktop actually weigh? More than you might think:

- Dual 27" monitors: ~20–30 lbs
- Laptop: 5–10 lbs
- Desktop PC tower: 20–30 lbs
- Monitor arm (2 arms): 5–10 lbs
- Keyboard, mouse, accessories: 3–8 lbs
- Documents, items on desk: varies

A typical well-equipped workstation runs 40–80 lbs. Most desks handle this easily. But if you're running three monitors, a tower PC, and heavy equipment, confirm the capacity before buying.

Stability matters too. — Some desks wobble noticeably at full standing height, especially with a heavy load. Look for frame designs with crossbars between the legs and check reviews specifically for stability comments at standing height.

Programmable Presets

This is one of the best features on electric sit-stand desks and one of the strongest reasons to go electric over manual.

How it works: — You set the desk to your perfect sitting height, press and hold a memory button to save it. Do the same for your standing height. From then on, one button press moves the desk to your exact preset — no fumbling with up/down controls or guessing when you hit your height.

Number of presets: — Most electric desks offer 3–4 memory positions. Single users typically use 2 (sitting and standing). Shared desks benefit from more presets for different users.

Anti-collision technology: — Better electric desks include sensors that detect resistance during movement (like a child's hands or a drawer that didn't close fully) and stop the motor automatically. This is a safety feature worth having, especially in offices with children or densely packed workspaces.

USB charging ports: — Some desks include USB charging ports built into the control panel. A nice convenience feature for charging devices while working.

Desktop Sizes

Sit-stand desk frames are available in a range of desktop sizes. Common options include:

48" x 24" — Compact. Fine for a laptop user or a single-monitor setup with minimal desktop items. Best for small spaces.

60" x 24" — The most popular size. Handles a dual-monitor setup comfortably. Balances workspace with footprint.

72" x 24" — Power user size. Three monitors, multiple devices, plenty of work surface. Works well for creative professionals and power users.

60" x 30" / 72" x 30" — Deeper desktop (30" instead of 24") gives you better ergonomic monitor distance. Particularly useful if you use large 27"+ monitors. The extra depth helps keep monitors at the proper 20"–28" eye distance.

L-Shaped Sit-Stand — L-shaped frame systems that adjust the height of both surfaces simultaneously. More expensive but provide a full L-shaped sit-stand experience. Less common but available.

Cable Management with Moving Desks

This deserves special attention because cable management on a height-adjustable desk is fundamentally different from a fixed desk. Your cables need to travel with the desk as it moves.

Cable tray / spine: — Most quality sit-stand desks include a cable management spine or tray that runs along the back of the desk and moves with it. This is where you bundle and route your cables. Don't skip this feature.

Flexible cable sleeves: — Use flexible cable sleeves or spiral wrap to bundle cables that need to stretch and compress as the desk moves. Rigid cable management doesn't work with moving desks.

Cable drop: — Make sure you have enough cable slack for the full travel range of the desk. The distance from your lowest sitting position to your highest standing position can be 20"–25". Your cables need to accommodate that extra length without pulling taut.

Anti-kink loops: — Build a small loop of extra cable at the desk end so cables can flex without stress. Simple and effective.

Wireless where possible: — Bluetooth keyboard and mouse eliminate two cables. A wireless charger on the desktop eliminates phone charging cables. The fewer cables, the simpler the management.

Health Benefits and Usage Tips

Buying the desk is step one. Using it correctly is step two.

The 30/30 rule: — Many ergonomic experts recommend alternating roughly 30 minutes sitting, 30 minutes standing. Or follow the 20-8-2 rule: 20 minutes sitting, 8 minutes standing, 2 minutes moving/stretching. The specific ratio matters less than the principle: vary your position regularly.

Don't stand all day: — Standing all day is as problematic as sitting all day. Fatigue, varicose veins, and lower back issues from prolonged standing are real. The key is movement and variety.

Anti-fatigue mat: — If you're standing for 30+ minute stretches, an anti-fatigue mat is a worthwhile investment. It reduces leg fatigue significantly and makes standing more sustainable.

Monitor position when standing: — When you switch to standing, confirm your monitor is still at eye level. If you're using a monitor arm, adjust it as needed. Hunching down to look at a monitor that's too low defeats the ergonomic benefit.

Set a reminder: — Without a reminder, most people forget to switch positions. Set a recurring calendar reminder or use a software tool that prompts you to change your desk height. Build the habit.

Budget Tiers

Under \$400 — Manual crank or basic single-motor electric with smaller desktops. Gets you into the sit-stand category affordably. Fine for casual use but may feel cumbersome for daily use.

\$400–\$700 — Quality single or dual-motor electric desks with standard desktop sizes (48"–60"). Programmable presets, decent weight capacity, good stability. This is where most individual buyers land and get real value.

\$700–\$1,200 — Premium dual-motor frames, wider desktops (up to 72"), better stability at full height, more finish options, anti-collision sensors, USB charging. The commercial office sweet spot.

\$1,200+ — Top-tier frames, large desktops, L-shaped configurations, premium finishes. Built for heavy-duty commercial environments and long lifecycles.

FOF's lowest price guarantee and free shipping on qualifying orders means you're getting the best total cost. Call 1.866.409.0202 for help finding the right sit-stand solution for your office.

Quick-Buy Checklist

Before you order, check these off:

- Type: Electric (best), pneumatic, manual crank, or converter?

- Height range: Does it accommodate all user heights in your office?
- Motor: Single or dual? (Dual for heavy loads and frequent adjustment)
- Weight capacity: Enough for your full desktop setup?
- Presets: Programmable memory positions?
- Desktop size: 48", 60", or 72"? 24" or 30" depth?
- Stability: Frame design with crossbar for reduced wobble?
- Cable management: Spine or tray included?
- Anti-collision: Obstacle detection for safety?
- Health plan: Anti-fatigue mat ordered? Reminder system ready?
- Budget: Which tier matches your daily use level?
- Warranty: FOF's free lifetime warranty — you're covered.