Sit-Stand Desks

Q1. What are the health benefits of sit-stand desks?

A: Research consistently shows that prolonged sitting increases risk of cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, and musculoskeletal problems. Sit-stand desks encourage movement throughout the day, reducing time in any one static posture. Benefits include reduced lower back pain, improved energy levels, better circulation, and increased calorie expenditure. The key is alternating between sitting and standing — not standing all day, which creates its own fatigue. Most ergonomists recommend a 1:1 to 2:1 sit-stand ratio, moving every 30-60 minutes.

Q2. What's the difference between electric and manual sit-stand desks?

A: Electric sit-stand desks use a motor (single or dual) to raise and lower the desk at the press of a button. They're effortless to adjust and encourage more frequent position changes. Manual desks use a hand crank or pneumatic lift mechanism — they're functional but require effort to adjust, which means people adjust less frequently. Electric desks also typically include height memory presets (saving your sit and stand heights). For regular use, electric is the right recommendation — the ease of adjustment is what makes people actually use the standing feature.

Q3. What height range do I need in an electric sit-stand desk?

A: Sitting height: most adults need 25-30" for comfortable seated work. Standing height: most adults need 38-48" for comfortable standing work. The range should accommodate both extremes in your workforce. A standard range of 24-50" covers most users. For very tall users (6'4"+) or very short users (5' and under), verify the specific height range matches their ergonomic needs. When in doubt, choose a desk with the widest height range available.

Q4. What's the difference between a single-motor and dual-motor sit-stand desk?

A: Single-motor desks have one motor driving the entire lifting mechanism — they're adequate for most standard-size desks and light-to-medium loads. Dual-motor desks have a motor in each leg column, providing more lifting power, better stability, and faster adjustment. For large desk surfaces (60"+ wide) or desks with heavy monitor setups and equipment, dual-motor is recommended. For standard-size desks with moderate loads, single-motor is sufficient and costs less.

Q5. How stable are sit-stand desks when fully extended?

A: Stability varies significantly by quality. Budget sit-stand desks often wobble noticeably at standing height, which is distracting and frustrating. Look for desks with a solid base width (wider cross-section at the floor = more stability), anti-collision sensors (stops the desk if it hits something while lowering), and a high-quality cross-beam design. Ask for wobble test data — reputable manufacturers publish stability test results. Stability at standing height is arguably the most important quality attribute to test before buying.

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Q6. What's the weight capacity I need?

A: Weight capacity is the maximum load the desk can carry while adjusting. Most commercial sit-stand desks are rated for 150-275 lbs. For a standard setup with a monitor or two, keyboard, and accessories, 150 lbs is usually sufficient. For heavy multi-monitor setups, heavy equipment, or large work surfaces with substantial items, go for 250+ lbs. Don't max out the capacity — staying at 70-80% of rated capacity is better for longevity.

Q7. Do sit-stand desks fit into standard benching or workstation systems?

A: Many major office furniture manufacturers offer sit-stand configurations within their benching systems. Some are purpose-built sit-stand benching with individual adjustment per station; others are fixed benches with height preset for all. Individual adjustment per station is the ergonomically correct approach — users have different height needs. When spec-ing sit-stand benching, confirm whether each station adjusts independently or whether all stations move together.

Q8. What accessories do I need with a sit-stand desk?

A: Essential accessories: anti-fatigue mat (standing is tiring without cushioning), monitor arm (allows independent screen height adjustment as the desk moves), cable management spine or tray (prevents cord tangle during height changes), and an under-desk CPU holder (keeps the computer off the floor and attached to the desk during movements). Nice-to-have: keyboard tray for proper ergonomic positioning, headphone hook, and a desk pad for surface protection. Price these in with the desk — they significantly affect the usability and total cost.

Q9. How long do the motors last?

A: Commercial-grade sit-stand desk motors are typically rated for 10,000-20,000 cycles. At 8 adjustments per day (4 up, 4 down), that's 3,600 cycles per year — so 3-6 years of heavy use before the motor could need service. Most premium desk manufacturers offer 5-year motor warranties. Budget desks with motors rated for only 2,000-3,000 cycles will fail within a year of active use. Always check the motor cycle rating and warranty before recommending.

Q10. What's the best way to implement a sit-stand desk program across an organization?

A: A successful rollout requires: employee training on proper sitting and standing ergonomics (most people stand too long initially and give up), anti-fatigue mat procurement alongside desks, an ergo assessment to confirm proper setup, and a simple height-memory setup for each user. Don't just swap out desks and walk away — users who don't know how to set their standing height correctly will find standing uncomfortable and revert to sitting. A brief 15-minute setup session per user dramatically improves long-term adoption.