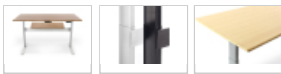




Important Specs

Adjustable:	Yes, electric
Programmable:	Yes, three height presets
Material:	Sustainable bamboo and aluminum
Height Range:	24 - 50.5 inches
Width Range:	63.5 or 79 inches



Homepage > Body, Computer Etc, Small Office

The Best Standing Desks

AUGUST 29, 2013

MARK LUKACH

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It's never been done before, but we tested all the major standing desks and the best full-sized standing desk is [Terra by NextDesk](#). It costs about \$1,600 with built-in power strip, which is a lot of money. But the desk is high-quality and it's an investment worth making if you're committed to standing while working for years and years. If you're not ready for a full-sized desk, there are many ways to stand while working, and we have recommendations to accommodate every possible approach.

What I've learned in a year of standing at desks

I first wrote about standing desks at this website about a year ago. When I started reporting that very long piece, I was fairly new to standing. The research kept piling up about the dangers of sitting, and I had become a believer. But I wasn't ready to actually spend money on my desk, since there are so many cheap ways to build your own. So, taking my own advice to create the cheapest standing workplace possible, I leaned against my conveniently tall kitchen counter, which though tall was not quite tall enough, and I worked that way for about a year.

And then, we did something at the Wirecutter that no one has done before. We ordered

as many standing desks as we could get our hands on, and we assembled them. And then we actually worked at them.

I built and worked at six different adjustable standing desks, the ones that are most commonly reviewed individually. There are a lot more than six standing desk companies, but I focused on the most popular and reputable ones.

I built and worked at six different adjustable standing desks, the ones that are most commonly reviewed individually.

We are updating that piece in light of our extensive and unique tests, and we are excited because we've found some new things.

Through all our testing of many adjustable standing desks, we have months of experience to explain not only which adjustable standing desk is best but also to suggest some alternatives to full-sized desks for people who are just getting into working on their feet.

We have a DIY recommendation. We still love the Kangaroo Pro Junior as the best way to turn your current desk into a standing desk. And we also still love the Safco Muv as a great, cheap option if you don't want to lay out the serious dough or don't have the room for a full-sized standing desk. (My editor, Brian Lam, uses these last two options.)

Why stand?

There is a staggering amount of convincing research about the perils of sitting. In the scientific world, it's almost become like how the community views global warming, smoking, and sugar consumption—overwhelming consensus. Sitting is bad for you. You are slowly killing yourself by sitting all day long.

Dr. James Levine of the Mayo Clinic is one of the earliest and most vocal critics of sitting. In sources as varied as [The New York Times](#), [Salon](#), and [Discovery News](#), Levine claims that “Excessive sitting is a lethal activity.” He is even credited with creating a name for what we're facing: “sitting disease.”

Sitting all day long is so bad that it can't even be outdone by exercise. There's a phrase for what most of us are: “active couch potatoes,” who make a point of exercising each day, but otherwise spend the rest of the time sitting in the car, on the couch, or at a desk. Olivia Judson, an evolutionary biologist and research fellow in biology at Imperial College London who writes on the “influence of science and biology on modern life” for [The New York Times](#), says,

“It doesn't matter if you go running every morning, or you're a regular at the gym. If you spend most of the rest of the day sitting — in your car, your office chair, on your sofa at home — you are putting yourself at increased risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, a variety of cancers and an early death. In other words, irrespective of whether you exercise vigorously, sitting for long periods is bad for you.”

Sitting all day long is so bad that it can't even be outdone by exercise.

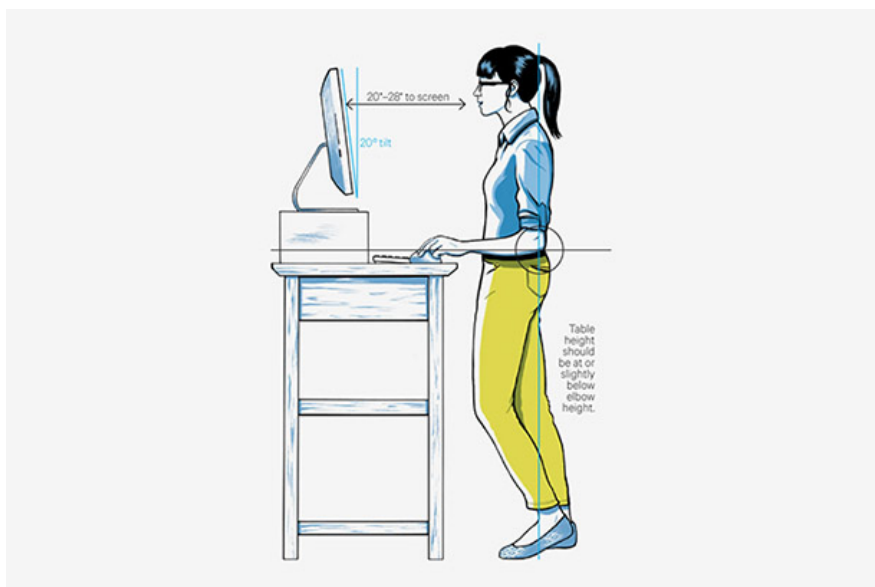
Sitting is bad because it's incredibly passive and barely burns any calories. But the passivity is not the only reason sitting is bad. Excessive sitting has tangible impacts on how your body functions. To quote [Judson](#) again:

“When you spend long periods sitting, your body actually does things that are bad for you. As an example, consider lipoprotein lipase. This is a molecule that plays a central

role in how the body processes fats; it's produced by many tissues, including muscles. Low levels of lipoprotein lipase are associated with a variety of health problems, including heart disease. Studies in rats show that leg muscles only produce this molecule when they are actively being flexed (for example, when the animal is standing up and ambling about). The implication is that when you sit, a crucial part of your metabolism slows down."

This is some of the most succinct, shocking and convincing research on the matter of sitting, but we have a lot more of it in [a blog post](#), which is worth a read. We also give you practical tips in how to make your day more upright in the blog post.

The single most important thing in picking your standing desk is to get the ergonomics down properly. Standing helps your health, but standing at your computer the wrong way can give you back pain, shoulder pain or neck pain. It's pointless to stand all day but make yourself feel worse by doing so. Get the right set-up.



[Image courtesy of Wired.](#)

[This graphic from Wired.com](#) helps a lot in explaining what you should be looking for: you want your monitor to be at eye level and your keyboard to be at the height of your hands when your forearms are parallel to the ground. That's pretty much it!

What do I do if I have a laptop?

By the way, the ergonomics of standing desks are a huge strike against the laptop if used on its own. If you work at a laptop, get a separate keyboard and mouse, or/and an external monitor so you can separate the screen from your interfaces. It's cheap and totally worth it to create the right setup. Otherwise you are putting the monitor and the keyboard at the same level, and you're going to end up with neck issues.

Another option: have your laptop open at hand level for typing/mousing and have a monitor at eye level. You keep most apps (and the menu bar) on the external monitor and keep secondary ones like twitter and iTunes on the laptop screen where they're easily accessed by the occasional downward glance.



It's not really about standing—it's about movement

While there is huge consensus on how bad sitting is, there is not a lot of advice in what's the best way to stand. Everyone agrees that anything is better than nothing, but no one has really looked into the optimal amount, or how often to take sitting breaks and how long they should be. I've searched far and wide to find studies that look at just how much standing is ideal, but I haven't found anything out there yet. However, I have spoken with dozens of experienced standers—specifically folks who work in the industry and journalists who adopted standing in their own lives, and the anecdotal experiences are pretty consistent.

For starters, don't sit all day long. Take standing breaks. If you can, stand more during the day than you sit. It's so much better for you.

However, don't stand all day either; standing all day is also bad for you. As the popularity of standing desks has risen, so have the skeptics who remind people to keep their standing in moderation. As Stephanie Smith wrote in [Men's Health](#), "Prolonged standing can lead to the development of musculoskeletal disorders, especially in the legs, knees and lower back." It's not as bad as sitting all day, but you'll definitely feel aches and pains if you are on your feet for too long.

There are two things to include in your standing. The first is movement as you stand. Don't just stand; walk away and take breaks, listen to music and dance (subtly, or not-at-all subtly), shift your weight—I've even seen people who do basic exercise while standing at their desk. All of that is fantastic. Movement is the best way to combat excessive sitting, no matter how small. [Lifehacker even has an article](#) on yoga

movements you can do at your standing desk! As Chris Kesser (author of *Personal Paleo Code*) wrote at [the Huffington Post](#), “These micro-movements can add up to a significant expenditure of calories throughout the day.”

And even the few skeptics of standing, like [Professor Alan Hedges at Cornell University](#), agree on the benefits of movement. While he thinks standing is often hard to incorporate into people’s behavior, and often doesn’t pan out as expected, he still encourages people to “build in a pattern of creating greater movement variety in the workplace

The other thing is to vary your standing with sitting. The most passionate standers I’ve come across stand for about 75% of the day, and then sit for 25%. [Men’s Health claims](#) that “most experts” recommend a 50-50 split (but don’t source the experts). It’s honestly whatever works for you. Work your way up to those numbers, but don’t think you’ll be doing yourself any favors if you go over them. In fact, you might be doing yourself harm.

Why not a fixed-height standing desk?

Oh, one more thing—at some point we were tempted to consider non-adjustable standing desks that one might be able to use with a stool. But the problem is that there aren’t many good stools (certainly not as many as [great chairs](#)) and the non-adjustable desks still cost a few hundred dollars—not that much less than our lower-end picks for adjustable desks. There are other factors to consider that favor an adjustable desk, which we address below. So we decided to focus on adjustable ones.

What to look for in a standing desk

Your desk is the foundation of your workplace, the nucleus of your work life. It is probably only second to your bed as the piece of furniture that you will use more than any other. It is not strictly a utilitarian object; it’s something you want to love, something to inspire you and keep you focused and motivated.

Fixed-height desks are cheaper than adjustable-height desks, and most folks tiptoe into standing at their desk with a cheap fix. That’s great. It’s best to start small and cheap rather than spend a lot of money on something you don’t like. Below, we have some ideas on how to best get into standing desks on the cheap.

However, as you get more committed to standing, it’s good to get serious about what is the best desk. I’ve worked for months at both fixed-height desks and adjustable-height desks, and I’ve become a big believer in adjustable heights for three major reasons.

First off, adjustable height desks are easier to convert from sitting to standing. Sorry for being Captain Obvious, but it needs to be said. When I was at a fixed-height desk, I did longer chunks of sitting, and longer chunks of standing, than I do at my adjustable desk, because it takes more time to switch things up. At a fixed height desk, I’d stand in the morning, then sit for lunch and a few hours after lunch, then punch in an hour or two of standing to end the day.

At my adjustable heights desks, when I feel tired, I bring my desk down and sit down. Simple enough. After a quick break, I get back on my feet again. I do this constantly throughout the day, which is the ideal way to do it. No experts recommend sitting and standing in big chunks. Everyone says to vary it up constantly. It’s a lot easier to do that with an adjustable desk.

A second benefit of adjustable heights is in improving standing itself. As David Kiehl of ErgoDepot told me, “the human body is incredibly dynamic and changes all of the

time. For example, we are slightly taller during the summer than during the winter.”

This might seem like a minor point, but it’s actually a huge one. Think about your work year. On some days, you’re in better shape than others. You’ll be more tired on some days. If you have a fixed-height desk, then you’re always working at the same height, regardless of what your energy levels are or how your body is holding up. Simply put, your desk is not always properly tuned to your body. With an adjustable height desk, not only can you easily move from sitting to standing, you can make constant tweaks to accommodate the dynamism of standing on your feet.

Lastly, it’s not easy to get the right chair for a fixed-height desk. If you’ve already got a chair, it’s probably not going to fit and you’ll need to sit at a different surface than your fixed-height desk. You could buy a chair, especially one of the unique “active sitting” chairs like the Muvman, but then you’re spending a lot of money and you close the price gap between a fixed-height desk and an adjustable-height desk. But the truth is, if you’ve got a stool or a tall chair that you can pull up to your fixed-height desk, it probably suffices but also probably isn’t a perfect fit. With an adjustable-height desk, you can mold the desk around the height of your chair.

All of these points to a much bigger argument about standing desks. You are buying one because you want to be healthier. You want to get rid of back, leg, neck and shoulder pain. You want to work happier. You also want something that will last for years, if not decades, if not your whole life.

You can get a solution that kind of works for cheap. It will certainly get you standing, but it won’t always fit your changing body. You can get a more moderate solution, something that looks good but isn’t adjustable, and that’s fine too and again will get you standing, but won’t accomplish everything you need it to.

Why electric desks?

There are three types of adjustable-height desks. The first are the hand-crankable desks. You turn a crank and the desk goes up and down. I did not spend time with any of these. They are only slightly less expensive than electronic desks, and the cranking system can be unreliable. I’ve read several user reviews, like [this one](#), that raise the very real concern of weight imbalance. According to the reviews, if the objects on your desk are arranged in a way where one side is heavier than the other, then the cranks have a very hard time of handling the weight discrepancy and keeping the desktop horizontal.

The second type are electronic adjustable-height desks. These are much more popular than the crankable desks, but cost more because they go up and down with the push of a button. The third type are outliers, ones who feature a unique method of adjustment that is neither electronic nor crankable, often involving a compression system.

Of the three, the best bet is electronic. They are the most reliable and popular desks. As you search online at the assortment of electronic desks, it’s hard to tell any clear differences between the different adjustable-height desks, but when you see them in person, it’s clear.

The biggest thing I’ve grown to realize is that adjustable-height desks are best, because the antidote to sitting is not standing, it’s moving; and adjustable-height desks encourage movement. So if you’re going to be starting from scratch to get a standing desk, get one that you can easily adjust.

The biggest thing I’ve grown to realize is that adjustable-height desks are best, because the antidote to sitting is not standing, it’s moving.

Nothing is easier than motorized desk legs—with the push of a button, the motor whirs into action and the desk goes up or down. Electronic desks are engineered to encourage you to vary between sitting and standing, which is the best way to use a standing desk.

They are expensive. The cheapest standing desk is around \$500; the most expensive can be over \$2,000. But non-adjustable desks of similar quality, like the tall version of our main pick, still cost over \$1,000 shipped. And to sit at one you have to get a stool, which is not going to be as nice as, say, a solid office chair. So, go adjustable.

The other thing I learned is that the motor speed and weight rating is marginally important. The question of whether it can bear 250 pounds or 300 pounds is not important, and how fast the desk is able to go up and down (1.7 inches per second? 1.4 inches per second?) is also useless.

How we picked

There are many adjustable standing desks. I did not see all of them in person, instead focusing on the brands that have been the most referenced in the media and recipients of the best user reviews.

Standing desks are all over the media these days. A typical article spells out the science of why sitting is bad for you, and then gives a brand or two worth checking out. For example, many of the articles that I referenced above when covering the science of sitting and standing, like these in [The New York Times](#), [Men's Health](#), [Forbes](#), [TechCrunch](#) and [TIME](#), all follow this format pretty closely. The main variety is in which brand the reviewer tested out and included in the article.

These five articles are only a sampling of the many news sources that have written about standing desks in the last 24 months, and I've kept a close eye on what other writers have found in my 18 months of researching and writing about standing desks.

With that in mind, here are the most referenced brands which I thought were worth checking out. The big brands I tested were:

-[NextDesk](#)

-[UpDesk](#)

-[GeekDesk](#)

-[New Heights](#)

-[Elevate Adjusta](#)

-[Vert Desk](#)

-[ErgoDepot](#)

As I unboxed and built one desk after the other, I kept noticing that the desks were not very nice-looking. This is not to say that they were ugly, but they weren't exactly beautiful. They got the job done, but not much more. It was clear that some desks were made of quality materials, and others were made of practical materials. Some of the desktops were like what you might see on a cafeteria table at school. The legs were structurally sound but something you'd probably want to hide under a blanket.

There was one notable exception: the NextDesk Terra. Last year I recommended this as the best desk to daydream about. Now I say that if you want an adjustable desk, get this

one. All of the others pale in comparison. And even though it costs more, it is actually a great value.

Before you buy it, try it (use a kitchen counter or this \$22 IKEA hack)

This all being said, I'm a big believer in starting cheap to get started. I worked at my kitchen counter for a year before actually buying anything. This is very common—lots of people stack boxes on their desk just to stand for the first time.

If you like it but still aren't ready to buy a whole or partial desk, let's not forget that it's pretty feasible to just stand at a kitchen counter. It'll be sturdy, but you'll have to clear out your work before you can cook dinner.

Alternately, you can make your own standing desk.

The best one comes from [Colin Nederkoorn](#), who came up with [his own IKEA hack](#) that costs only \$22. He calls it the Standesk 2000, and it's become a huge hit on the internet. Mat Honan, senior writer at Wired, built one at his office, and he loves it. "I think I may have been the first person at Wired to build one, and now there are 8 people at the office who have one, too," Mat told me.

[The New York Times loves the Standesk 2000](#). So does [Lifehacker](#). As Mat explained of the desk: "it's cheap and easy and it looks good."

While it's great to have such a cheap solution, don't forget that DIY standing desks are not adjustable. This isn't a dealbreaker, but it doesn't encourage you to vary between sitting and standing the way an adjustable desk does. I think that a cheap hack is a fantastic way to get started in standing, but as you get into your second and third year of it and realize that it's something you are likely to do for life, then it's worth spending the money and getting something that is better suited for variation.

Our pick (for a full-on standing desk)



The NextDesk Terra is the best adjustable standing desk. In a nutshell, it's beautiful. And when you see what other desks are like, you really appreciate beauty. Sure it starts at \$1,500, but it feels like it's worth every penny whereas competitors in the \$1,000 range don't quite feel like \$1,000 desks.

One of the main reasons we feel the NextDesk is

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worth the money is its spacious, solid bamboo tabletop, which can easily fit two computers with room to spare. The benefits of this are threefold: it looks fantastic, it's sustainable (NextDesk claims it's 2.5 times more so than oak) and, most importantly, it's super strong and sturdy. According to NextDesk, it's actually 40% harder than hardwood oak. NextDesk also wins even more brownie points for using a formaldehyde-free manufacturing process. Formaldehyde is a commonly-used resin that is pressed into many hardwood products like desktops and cupboards, but the [EPA identifies formaldehyde as a possible carcinogen](#). That said, it's very unlikely that your desk is giving you cancer. The formaldehyde in your desk is certainly slowly evaporating, but it's not concentrated enough to be a clear problem. However, it's still nice to know that by avoiding formaldehyde altogether, NextDesk holds itself to higher standards of toxicity than almost any other furniture company, certainly higher than other adjustable standing desks.

The frame is made of recycled aluminum, which I think looks much better than the black steel of most adjustable desks. Steel is cheaper than aluminum, but aluminum has the highest strength-to-weight ratio of any metal. Aluminum is also much more sustainable than steel, fitting given NextDesk's focus. As far as aesthetics go, the frame has a nice shiny polish and a simple elegance that really works.

Every adjustable desk needs to also somehow store a motor on it so that the thing can go up and down. All NextDesk desks store the motor inside the legs of the desk itself, so it's completely out of sight.

In fact, that's a consistent theme with the NextDesk Terra: get rid of the clutter. Their wire management system is the best I've seen, hands down. While most other desks have a flimsy plastic tray that you attach to the bottom of your desk, with the NextDesk you hide your wires down grommets in the desk into a retractable NextFlex cable management. It's incredibly easy to use, and the wires on your desk completely disappear.

Other desk makers put their motors inside the legs on their high-end models, but none have done a good job of hiding all the wires, and not only those within the desk itself.

Similarly, the desk comes with an optional power management system (\$100), which I definitely recommend getting. It attaches to the bottom of your desktop and has 12 outlets for your computer, speakers, modem and whatever else you might need. This is great because as you go up and down to sit and stand, your power source and your wires go with you. There's no worry of unplugging anything because your power source is on the ground, 10 feet away. It's right there, under the desk surface. Between the wire management and the power management, I don't even remember that I have wires when I use this desk.

There are other optional features—a monitor arm if you use a monitor (\$197 for single, \$327 for double), a keyboard tray (\$347), and a vanity cover (\$147). I think the power management is a must-buy for everyone; the others are all nice but aren't necessary and depend upon your setup.

As for the motor itself: it's great. It's very reliable. In three months of working at it, I've never had it fail to respond. It hums away at 1.7 inches per second, and has a nice cushioned start and stop to it, so that it doesn't jerk. No need to worry about spilling anything that might be on your desk. It also comes with the ability to set 3 programmable heights so that you can have presets for where you want the height to go to sit or stand.

worth the money is its
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It's a great motor, but it's not the motor that makes the desk. Several competitors, like GeekDesk and UpDesk, have excellent motors as well, just as quiet, smooth and reliable as the NextDesk. But those two desks are not as elegant as the Terra.

The big strike against the NextDesk is the price. It's expensive. If you get the Terra as it is, it costs \$1,497, while you can find cheap desks for \$700. (I look at cheap desks in a bit.) The power management is an extra \$99. We're talking a lot of money.

I don't part with that kind of money easily, but after seeing all the desks out there, I bought a NextDesk Terra. That's how much I liked it. My justification is consistent with how we look at all our products on the Wirecutter: I'm okay spending that much money because I use this desk every day for hours at a time.

This is not some novelty item here. You will log serious hours at your desk. I have been working at this desk for months and I still find it a gorgeous desk, one that I enjoy working at. I've found it's worth paying for the best.

I don't part with that kind of money easily, but after seeing all the desks out there, I bought a NextDesk Terra.



When you spend so much money, you want to make sure that you can protect your investment. The NextDesk Terra comes with a 3-year warranty on the frame, motors and desktop. Most standing desk companies offer a 2-year warranty on the motor and frame, so that extra year is nice to have.

I checked in with Dan Lee over at NextDesk about the warranty process, and it couldn't be easier. Almost all of the fixes involve replacing a part, so after you call the customer service and diagnose the issue, they send you the right part, and then walk you through replacing it over the phone. As Dan put it, it's "highly unlikely" that you'd need to send the whole desk back, and it's something they almost never deal with. So maintenance on the desk is pretty easy and you get a lot of support from the manufacturers.

Competition

Let's quickly look at the [UpDesk](#) (\$949), [GeekDesk](#) (\$949) and [New Heights](#) (\$1149), three popular brands that are significantly cheaper than the NextDesk Terra. To be fair, these are all good desks. Like I said, it's hard to notice a difference between them and the Terra in terms of their motors.

Terra has other things in its lineup, specifically a glass table and a fixed-height desk (you give them your dimensions); neither are anywhere near as popular as the Terra.

[GeekDesk](#) is your most basic desk. No frills, no accessories, just a tabletop and a frame. It's simple, it works well and it looks fine. But its lack of accessories makes it a bit difficult to fit it to your lifestyle. You're going to have to go elsewhere to get a monitor arm, or a cable management system, or a power source—which isn't the end of the world, but it means you're not necessarily getting products that are going to mesh well with the GeekDesk.

Its lack of features is what keeps the GeekDesk from being a great desk. You just don't get enough. Their v3 is probably going to work for most people, and it sells for \$750 (their main desk, the GeekDesk Max, is \$949), but you have to add \$125 for shipping so it's more like \$875. This is noticeably cheaper than the NextDesk Terra. And before I saw them, it felt like a no-brainer that the GeekDesk, as the cheaper desk with a comparable motor, was going to be the desk I chose.

But I did get to see them, right next to each other, and they aren't in the same category in aesthetics. GeekDesk is cheaper, and it looks cheaper. I saw the Beech Wood Veneer table top, and it wasn't that impressive. Sure, I'd work at it, because it's an adjustable desk, but I wouldn't love it. And let's not forget, it's still an expensive thing to be buying. If you get a Max, you're paying over \$1,000. Since you're buying something you'll likely use for life, I think it's worth getting the one that looks and feels the best if it only costs a few hundred dollars more.

There is something really cool about GeekDesk that I really like. As I keep saying, their motor is great, it's the other stuff that's not the best. There are many folks out there who have a desk that they love, and wish it could become adjustable. You can order only the frame from GeekDesk, and mount it onto your own, beloved desktop, if that's your preference. This is actually really awesome, because you can in fact turn your old desk into something adjustable. I think this option will work for a lot of people, but you have to call to get a specific inquiry into how much they'll charge you.

There is also [UpDesk](#), which has hand-crankable desks, but I saw the PowerUp, which goes up and down electronically with a button. It's repetitive, but once again you've got a good motor that matters less than the aesthetics. I like the UpDesk better than the GeekDesk because you can easily accessorize within the company itself. You can purchase a cable net, a mountable surge protector, a standing mat and other accessories right from UpDesk, so you know you're getting something that was meant to work with the desk.

But I found the UpDesk even less appealing than the GeekDesk. The tabletop looked cheap. It's sturdy and it's got a wood finish, but it's just not a great looking desk. And for \$1,000 (plus \$139 in shipping costs) I want something that looks great.

And finally, aesthetics hamper the [NewHeights](#). This one looks the cheapest of them all. Granted, it comes with free shipping, but that doesn't make up for the fact that there really doesn't seem to be much emphasis beyond function in the NewHeights, which was actually our top pick last time around because of the online specs.

The cheaper adjustable-height desk

There are cheaper desks. If you don't want to pay more than \$700, I get it. If I hadn't spent so much time demoing these desks, I probably wouldn't have spent that much either. And if you're trying to buy in bulk to maybe

Also Great

turn a whole office space for your company into a place where people can stand, \$1,000-\$1,500 per desk might be way out of your price range.

If you're looking for a cheaper adjustable heights desk, go with [ErgoDepot](#). While they have a wide range of standing desks, their cheapest desk is only \$559. It's the best cheap desk I saw.



\$559 on ErgoDepot

Budget-Friendly Pick

AD17

Cheaper and smaller than our top pick but still good looking with a decent motor.

There are two cheaper options that I looked at: ErgoDepot, and VertDesk. These are cheaper desks first and foremost because of the motors. The expensive desks hide their motors in the legs, they work quietly, and they become something you almost forget about. The cheaper desks instead hook a motor to a rod that attaches to the other leg on the desk, and as the motor runs, the rod turns. These are motors that you notice. They are noisier and clunkier. It's a more basic technology, so it's cheaper. That's how the desks can cost so much less.

But within these two, there's still a clear difference between ErgoDepot and VertDesk. ErgoDepot takes a beautiful design aesthetic and applies it to a cheaper motor, so you have a great looking desk at a manageable price point. NewHeights meanwhile has focused mostly on utility, and the desk looks and feels that way.

ErgoDepot is sort of like an all-inclusive place to shop for a more ergonomic work station. They sell their own, original desks, but they also have a wide array of standing desk accessories, from stools to keyboard trays to anti-fatigue mats. Coolest of all, ErgoDepot actually has a storefront, an actual store in San Francisco where you can go in and try out standing desks (and even a treadmill desk!) in person. Pretty awesome.

Also worth mentioning, similar to GeekDesk, ErgoDepot allows you to only purchase the adjustable frame without the desktop. The big difference is the sophistication of the motor; GeekDesk motors are much quieter and stronger than those in desks from ErgoDepot. With GeekDesk, I think it's worth it to buy just the frame; with ErgoDepot, the price is already so low, it's worth getting a complete desk so that your tabletop is a match for the frame, especially if it's a single-column frame.

Within their desks, there is a huge amount of variety. Basically, you have a choice between single column (the desktop rests on a single, supported leg), double column, and triple column for the really massive desks. Within each of those categories, you have differently shaped desktops for either rectangle, corner or rounded tops.

Their cheapest desk is the [AD17](#), a single column desk with a "heart" shaped top. It sells for \$559, including shipping, which is a pretty awesome price. I got to see it in person and it's a nice looking desk. It's not breathtaking but it's also not ugly. It's 1/3 the cost of the NextDesk Terra, and for that price, I'm impressed.

I actually got to meet David Kahl, the man behind ErgoDepot, at the San Francisco store front, and got to learn more about the thinking behind ErgoDepot. He works with manufacturers in Poland for the desktops, and Denmark for the frames, so it's good, quality design and workmanship. There are no preset heights for the desk, because as David puts it, "I'm a strong advocate of no preset heights because it goes against the entire concept of movement at your desk."

Of course, the AD17 is not the ideal desk for everyone, because it's small and single column. (The motor hides in the desk leg, by the way.) David said about 30% of ErgoDepot's sales go with single-column desks, and it's probably because they are so reliable, aesthetically pleasing and affordable. Besides the AD17, there are other single-column desks, and they average around \$650-\$700.

There is a drawback to a single-column desk. They become more wobbly as you raise the height. It's physics, nothing can be done to prevent it; but if you will be writing on the desk surface, you'll definitely notice it. If you're just typing, it's hardly a concern.

As you get into double-column and even triple-column desks at ErgoDepot, you'll find that there are even more options for weight capacity and height, and the price also goes up. No surprise there. There is a chart of options at the [ErgoDepot website](#) that helps decipher what might be the best fit for you. But realize, the closer you get to \$1,000, the more you should consider going whole hog and getting a NextDesk Terra.

The other cheap desk is the [VertDesk](#) by Beyond The Office Door. These are the same guys that make the NewHeights desk. The VertDesk is very much like ErgoDepot's AD17 in that it's affordable at \$689; it's different in that it is a noticeably cheap desk. I would not get this.

I worked at one and had many issues with the motor, which often stuttered as it worked, and had trouble holding a steady pace. In fact, the VertDesk was the only desk whose motor I did not trust. Also, of all the desks I saw, the VertDesk looked the cheapest. It's hard to quantify beauty, but this one was not beautiful with its laminated finish. I brought outsiders into our garages of desks and asked them which looked the nicest (universal consensus: NextDesk Terra) and which looked the cheapest, and everyone pointed to VertDesk for cheapest.

All of these desks function. You can pay \$559 for a functioning adjustable desk, or you can pay \$1,600. Every other review that I've read of adjustable standing desks are impressed with the functionality, because it's a novel concept and one that is hard to not like. But once you've seen more than one, you realize that functionality is not the only thing to consider; in fact, it's a baseline assumption that the desk will function, and instead, you want something that fits your taste. If your primary emphasis is function, then stick with ErgoDepot. The desks are reliable and they look pretty good, too, especially considering how affordable they are. But if you're looking for something beautiful, something that you can love and that will last you a lifetime, go with NextDesk Terra. They're both worth the cost in their own price ranges.

Desks I didn't test

One big brand I did not check out was the [Anthro Elevate Adjusta](#) (\$2,849). I'm sorry, but \$2,849 is a lot of money for a desk—and this is coming from a guy who is recommending you spend \$1,600. Based on their specs, the only different feature between the Elevate Adjusta and all other standing desks is that their keyboard tray (which almost everyone offers as a feature anyway) can be tilted. Sure, that's cool, but not \$3,000 cool. I didn't need to see it in person.

I also did not test the [Humanscale Float](#) or the [Steelcase Airtouch](#). These are unique desks because they are not actually electronic. They go up and down not with a crank, but by compressed levers that you lift.

I've read a lot about them, and think they are unique and interesting, but I'm skeptical of their big selling points. Take the Humanscale Float. Their promo video claims that the huge benefit of the Float over electronic desks is that you don't need electricity for

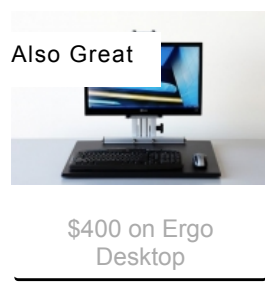
them to work, and electronic desks are expensive. This doesn't make too much sense to me, since you're almost definitely going to be using something electronic at your desk, like a computer, so what's the huge problem in being close to a power source? Also, the Float costs \$1,749 and the Airtouch costs \$1,259, so I don't know how they are claiming to be less expensive than electronic desks.

I tried to see the Humanscale Float in person, but it's more mysterious than the iPhone 6. I called a half-dozen certified Humanscale retailers in the Bay Area, and each of them replied, with much regret and longing, that they didn't have the Float in person. They're not really out for public consumption yet besides ordering from the website, so it's a bit of a gamble to go with a product before it's really hit the market.

They both seem like pretty beautiful desks that are well-designed, but I think the adjustable mechanism is a novelty, and I haven't read reviews that confirm that they last the test of time.

Transform your current desk into a standing desk: The Kangaroo Pro

If you already have a desk that you love and don't want to replace, consider the [Kangaroo Pro Junior](#). It is the best way to transform your sitting desk into one where you can stand and easily switch back and forth between the two.



If You Already Have a Desk

Kangaroo Pro Junior

The Kangaroo Pro is the best way to transform your current desk into a standing desk and easily switch between the two.

The Kangaroo Pro Junior comes fully assembled: you just take it out of the box and plop it down on your desk, and you're pretty much ready to go. It features a 24" x 18" platform that serves as the base (the regular model has a bigger platform, but you probably don't need it). The base level is for your keyboard. Then there's a second level, which is for your monitor (the regular Kangaroo Junior has a platform, for a laptop. The "Pro" actually replaces the top platform with a mount for a monitor, so if you have a monitor that you can mount, go with the Pro. These guys also have models that support larger monitors, as well. Check with them.) With your monitor and keyboard in place, you loosen a knob and then raise and lower each of the two platforms to your desired height, so they fit your height requirements. Best of all, you can easily slide the levels up and down throughout the day, so transitioning from sitting to standing is no problem.

My editor Brian Lam used one over long-term testing and loves it for all the reasons above. It's sturdy enough to put a good amount of weight on via your hands, which is the big difference with many others which merely try to support and hold a keyboard and mouse rather than create a small little elevated workspace as the Kangaroo does.

The adjustable steel rod is designed so that the platforms naturally elevate. This means that when you loosen them, they actually slide up. This is great because if you don't have to worry about your computer crashing to your tabletop once you loosen the level; in fact, it will do just the opposite and slide upwards, and you can push it down to whatever height you want. Throughout the day, you can stay at your desk and go from sitting to standing at free will. Though it's not a button press, it's still a piece of cake to adjust the Kangaroo Pro Junior.

For increased stability, each model comes with a stabilization leg, which you wedge in between the two platforms once you have them set to your standing height. This makes

the already sturdy Kangaroo Pro Junior even sturdier. Without the leg, it will unquestionably hold your monitor and keyboard, or even a laptop if you work at a laptop/monitor setup. (We tried this.) Once you slide the stabilizing leg into place, the desk is even stronger and you'll have no worries about how much weight it can carry. You can lean on it with a good 15 pounds of pressure or so, and it'll be fine.

I got to speak with Dan Sharkey, the creator of Ergo Desks (the parent company for the Kangaroo Pro Junior). I wanted to know why his desk attachments were free to slide around the desk, rather than clamp permanently into one place in your work station, like most of the competition. "We see that as an extreme advantage," he explained to me. "When you clamp something to your desk, you are a slave to that position. As you're standing and working, you might want to rest your weight on the right side, or turn your body, or lift your left leg, and with the Kangaroo, you can slide it around to accommodate your natural movement as you stand and work. Also, real estate on most people's desk is an important commodity. The prime real estate of your desk is right where you want to sit down. If you want to sit down and write, rather than work at your computer, you can just slide the Kangaroo out of the way, and the main area of your desk is still available to you."

This has nothing to do with the quality of the product, which speaks for itself, but the creation of Ergo Desks is one of the great recovery stories from the current economic recession. Dan worked for the same manufacturing company in Ohio for 35 years, and hurt his back in early 2009. Sitting all day at his office only made it worse, so he tinkered around with his desk to add something to it that would allow him to stand at times during the day. By his 20th model, he had finished the first Kangaroo. His friends and colleagues were curious, but he mostly just built them for himself—until he was laid off at his company due to downsizing at age 55, wondering what the hell he was going to do. At his wife's urging, he decided to take his standing desk hobby and make it his profession, and Ergo Desks was born. He now has 11 employees and is proud to still manufacture in the United States.

The [Kangaroo Pro Junior costs \\$349](#). Dan from Ergo Desktop uses a full-sized Kangaroo, which has a bigger platform and is more stable, and says he'll never be able to use anything smaller, but I think the Kangaroo Pro Junior will suffice for most users.

There are other desk-mount options, but the Kangaroo Pro Junior is the sleekest and the most functional. The most clear alternative is at [ErgoTron](#) (different from Ergo Desktop, which makes the Kangaroo), a company that makes a series of desk mounts that lock very sturdily to the front your desk. They are essentially adjustable monitor arms that can accommodate a wide variety of monitor setups—everything from a standard monitor & keyboard, to two monitors, to a monitor and a laptop and a keyboard. In fact, the options are a bit dizzying, but the closest alternative to the Kangaroo Pro Junior is the WorkFit-A, Single LD, which costs \$379. I've had the chance to see the WorkFit-A, as well as another model, and the sturdiness is clearly the main benefit. But beyond that, I'm not a huge fan. They are big and bulky and very metallic and kind of look like the Terminator's arm when he peels back his skin to prove that he's a robot. Worst of all, their keyboard trays are super flimsy. Which means that if you actually do the laptop & monitor setup (which I suspect is fairly prevalent), you're putting your valuable laptop on a very flimsy platform for typing. I've been told by people at ErgoTron that a more laptop-friendly model is in the works.

The simple, standalone standing desk

But if you work at home and don't already have a desk, the

Also Great

simple standing desk I would get is the [Safco Muv Stand-up Adjustable Height Workstation](#) because it's solid and inexpensive.

This is a great, cheap standing desk. Its only drawbacks are that it's not easily adjustable to sitting height, and it doesn't have much surface area. You'll want to use it alongside another desk if you have to deal with any amount of real paperwork.

Brian Lam, my editor, uses one of these to run the Wirecutter and the Sweethome. He has no complaints, except that the build quality is that of a cheap desk. But functionally, it works.

I was actually tipped off onto the Safco Muv model by [Shane Harris](#), an award-winning reporter for Washingtonian Magazine. He ventured into the world of standing desks for an article on them, and [his thoughts on desks and standing](#) are consistent with how we feel (like how you should transition slowly, make sure your desk fits your body and keep your schedule varied).

The best part of this desk is the height customization. It ranges from 35" to 49", with an option for every inch in between. This desk should work for most of the general population besides the really really short or the really really tall. But remember: it is not adjustable, so you're stuck with what you have unless you take stuff off the desk and manually adjust it.

It also comes with multiple layers. The Safco Muv has two separate platforms for keyboard and monitor, and two additional shelves below for things like your printer, computer base, books, paper, kittens and other stuff like that. This helps alleviate the lack of surface area on the desk, but the bottom layers are not working zones, so you'll be using them for storage.

The aesthetics of the desk are good enough, which is definitely a consideration. The combination of wood shelves on a steel frame gives it a simple, modern look that I think will work in almost every office. It comes in walnut, cherry and "grey" finishes, but no one would ever call this thing high-quality.

But it's affordable. This cannot be said for most of the standing desks on the market. [Amazon lists it at \\$245](#), which is a good deal considering you are buying a piece of furniture and that many standing desks cost over \$1,000.

The Safco Muv is a great standing desk, but it is not perfect. There are three strikes against it. Again, there is not a lot of surface area. Also, since it's pretty cheap to buy, it's also a pretty cheap product. But the biggest strike against the Safco Muv is that it cannot be easily adjusted from a standing to a sitting desk. Once it's built, it's static. There is no up-and-down unless you take things off of the desk and readjust it.

Wrapping it up

If you're serious about standing, then it's worth getting something that is adjustable. There are cheap ways that can support standing, but if you make this a permanent part of your work life, get something that will best suit your health by encouraging you to vary your sitting and standing. The best electronic adjustable-height desk is the

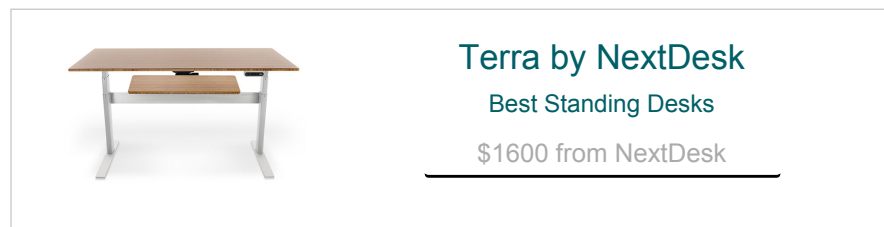


A Simple Option

Safco 1929CY

If you want something smaller and don't already have a desk, Safco is a solid and inexpensive option that works.

NextDesk Terra. The best way for you to transform your current, loved desk is with a Kangaroo Pro Junior. If you want to get a motorized frame but keep the same table top, go with a GeekDesk. And if you want something more affordable, get something from ErgoTron.



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