

Slouching doesn't sit well with us: Can we discipline?

Q. “What can I do about a data entry employee who doesn’t sit upright? I don’t mean ordinary slouching; this guy practically lies down in his chair! I’ve offered him a new chair, but he says he’s fine. I’m in charge of safety and I’m trying to prevent an injury claim. Can we reprimand him?”— Tammy

Answers from the readers of [The HR Specialist Forum](#):

Train, solicit feedback, document. “Treat it the same way as any other unsafe work practice. Start with providing training materials that explain how hard this is on their backs. If they continue, document it with a note that says you have offered to provide a different chair. Give space on the documentation for the employee to write a response so you can show you solicited their feedback. If they continue, I would take them through the steps of your handbook and have it result in termination if they don’t comply.” — *Donna*

Focus on performance. “Is he disruptive? Is he not doing his job? How is his performance? Does he make errors? Perhaps he does his best work slouched over like that. ... Focus on any performance-related issues. Document that you talked to him. ‘Catch’ him when he is sitting upright as requested and compliment him to reinforce the positive behavior.” — *Dale*

Waive it away. “Can’t you just have him sign a waiver saying that any injuries resulting from his posture are his responsibility? Add that you’ve spoken with him about the safety issues and that you offered a new chair.” — *Sarah*

Let it slide. “I had a job once that allowed me to lie on a sofa while I worked. I was the No. 1 salesperson. I found I communicated better with customers in that relaxed position. If his posture was hurting his back, he wouldn’t sit that way in the first place. Get over it and worry about his performance.” — *John*

A public problem? “This boils down to whether the employee is in view of the public and whether his performance is up to standards. If he is not in public view and he is getting the job done, then share a preference for him to sit up but disciplining him is going to be difficult.” — *Jerry*