

Drafting Chairs & Stools

1 Always measure the work surface height before specifying any drafting chair. Seat height must equal work surface height minus 10-12 inches. A chair specified without knowing the surface height will be either too tall or too short — an expensive mistake that requires a return or replacement.

2 A footring is not optional — it is an ergonomic essential above 24 inches. Without a footring, feet dangle at drafting height, cutting off circulation at the back of the thighs. This causes fatigue, numbness, and lower back pain within 30 minutes. Every drafting chair used above 24 inches must include one.

3 Drafting chairs are the best companion for sit-stand desks. Standing continuously causes fatigue and back strain. A drafting chair lets users perch at semi-seated height, alternating between sitting, perching, and standing — the healthiest work posture according to NIOSH guidelines.

4 Specify caster type based on floor surface — this is not a minor detail. Carpet casters on hard floors will scratch and slide unpredictably. Hard-floor casters on carpet won't roll. For lab or clinical settings where rolling is unsafe, specify a fixed base with glides instead of casters.

5 Full-back drafting chairs are required for sessions over 2 hours. A backless stool or mid-back chair is fine for short-duration perching. For extended CAD work, drafting, or reception desk shifts, lumbar support and a full back are necessary to prevent chronic back strain.

6 Confirm the chair height range covers all the user's work surfaces. If a user works at both a standard 29-inch desk and a 40-inch drafting table, the chair must adjust from approximately 17 inches all the way to 30 inches. Some drafting chairs do not lower enough for standard desk work — always check the full range.

7 Active balance stools are a supplement — not a replacement for a drafting chair. Balance stools increase core engagement and reduce static fatigue for 30-90 minute periods. They are not designed for all-day use. Offer them alongside a conventional drafting chair so the user can alternate.

8 Adjustable footring height is essential in multi-user environments. A fixed-height footring fits one average-height user. In shared workstations, labs, or reception counters used by multiple people, the footring must be adjustable to accommodate different leg lengths.

9 Armrests may need to be removable for work near elevated surfaces. If the work surface edge is at or near the armrest height, arms prevent close approach to the surface. In these cases, specify a model with removable or flip-up armrests rather than fixed arms.

10 BIFMA X5.1 certification is the minimum standard for commercial drafting chairs. BIFMA certification confirms weight capacity, cylinder integrity, base stability, and structural strength under load. Uncertified chairs from residential suppliers are not rated for commercial use and fail faster.