

Pain-Free Pressing Workbook



A guided workbook to ensure success when
creating your pain-free pressing station.

Welcome!

In this course, you will learn practical strategies, simple adjustments, and body-aware techniques. You will read the word ergonomics often today. Simply put, ergonomics means working in a way that is efficient, supportive, and comfortable for your body. And that's what this course is all about—helping you continue doing what you love, for as long as you want to do it.

A little about me: I'm a Home Economist, an Ergonomics Certified professional, and the founder of Max-it Forward. I'm also a Certified Personal Trainer and Older Adult Specialist, as well as a Registered Holistic Nutritionist. And at heart, I'm a passionate longarm quilter and sewing enthusiast—just like you.

I'm also an Author with CT Publishing. The illustrations in this course are from my book *Sew Healthy and Happy - Smart ergonomics, Stretches and more for Makers*.

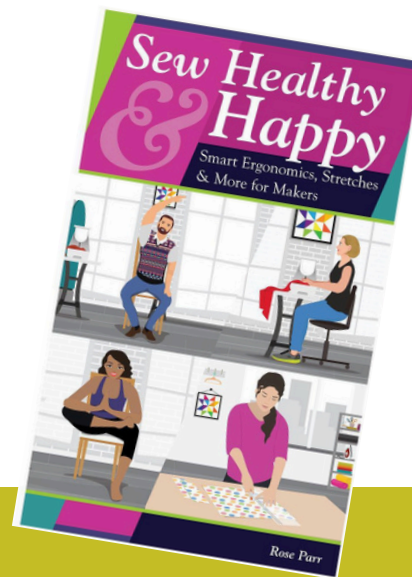
Let's get started.



Rosalie

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Studio Set-up

What is currently working well ?

Where is there room for improvement ?

Ergonomic tools you already own:

Items to consider adding:

Find your ergonomic baseline number.



- Stand naturally wearing your indoor shoes.
- Let your upper arm rest comfortably against your torso.
- Bend your elbow to 90° as if you're shaking hands with someone your height.
- Rotate your forearm so your palm faces down.
- Measure from either your elbow, or the flat of your palm down to the floor.

That measurement = your ideal working height baseline.

For example I'm 5 foot 3 and my baseline ergonomic angle is 39 inches

Once you have your "magic number," you can adjust for different activities:

Precision work like sewing or using a keyboard is right at elbow height.

- Light work (folding laundry, casual tasks): 1–2 inches below elbow
- Heavy work (kneading dough, cutting forcefully): 3–6 inches below elbow

This position keeps your joints in a neutral alignment, which reduces shoulder strain prevents wrist extension and minimizes long-term overuse injuries.

Comparing Ironing Board Heights



We want the motion to come from the 90 degree angle of the elbow , using a neutral wrist while holding the iron.
At first glance, the ironing board on the left looks to be set up correctly. But Look closer at the hand. The bend in the wrist is hard to see at first, but it's there.
That Board is a bit too high causing the wrist to bend and the shoulder to scrunch up.

How To Find Your Pain-Free Pressing Position

Your “pain-free pressing height” formula

Step 1: Find your baseline

Your ergonomic “magic number” (elbow height at 90°)

For example: 39 inches

Step 2: Measure your iron (the important detail)

Measure the depth of the iron:

from handle → soleplate when the iron is lying flat (not standing up)

Example: 6 inches

Step 3: Do the calculation

Baseline height – iron depth = ironing board height

For example: $39 - 6 = 33$ inches

So your ideal ironing board height = 33 inches

Real-world adjustment (this part matters)

Ironing boards don't give perfect increments, so:

If choosing between heights → go slightly LOWER

32.5" is better than 33.5"

Why?

Slightly low → shoulder stays relaxed

Slightly high → shoulder lifts + wrist bends



Pressing mats

Felt or wool mats can add ~0.5 inch or more which raises your working surface

So if you use one often → set your board slightly lower from the start

Our boards have a limited number of adjustment choices, so having your board an inch lower is better than higher if you can maintain good posture.

This is for informational purposes only. For medical advice consult your physician..

What's wrong with going low?

What's the big deal if my ironing board is too low?

When the board is too low, the body compensates by:

- Bending forward at the waist
- Dropping the head and neck
- Rounding the shoulders

This leads to:

- neck strain
- shoulder tension
- lower back fatigue

Do it long enough, and it starts to feel like the same posture stress behind “text neck”—just in a different task.

Why this adds up fast?

We already spend hours on our phones and computers with our head forward, eyes down and shoulders rounding. So ironing with a low board just adds more load to the same stressed areas.



We're not just talking about ironing - we're talking about caring for the most valuable piece of equipment in your sewing room.

The one with no lifetime guarantee.
The one that requires regular maintenance, attention, and care.
Your Body!

Posture and Pressing

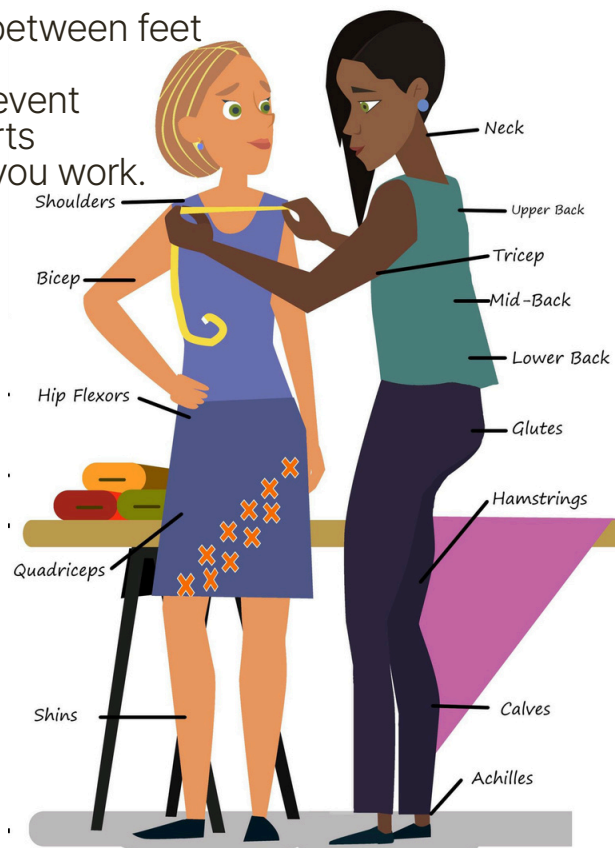
Before we get into setup, it's important to understand what happens when posture is off over time.

Prolonged standing—especially when you unconsciously shift your weight onto one leg—can create imbalances in the lower body. This can lead to discomfort, pain, and eventually begin to limit everyday activities.

Movement is important. If you naturally shift side to side, stretch, or even dance a little while ironing—that's perfectly fine and even beneficial.

However, when you are standing still aim to:
Keep your hips level
Distribute your weight evenly between feet

This balanced stance helps prevent unnecessary strain and supports better overall alignment while you work.



Prolonged standing and bearing more weight on one leg causing imbalances in the lower body resulting in pain and limiting daily activities. we do need to move, but when standing still, we need to keep hips level and weight balanced.

Why Your Height Matters

Your ironing board height matters because poor ergonomics force your body into unnatural positions, leading to physical strain and fatigue.

Yes, that painful experience is incredibly common in sewing rooms. When your board is too low or too high, your body compensates without you even realizing it.

Why Improper Height Causes Pain

The Hunched Shoulder: If the board is too high, you unconsciously hike one or both shoulders up to apply downward pressure with the iron. This constant muscle contraction cuts off circulation, causing that deep ache in your shoulders and neck.

Tension: Forward head tilt from looking down at a low board strains the suboccipital muscles at the base of your skull, directly triggering tension headaches.



The 90-Degree Test:

Rest your hand on the iron handle. Your elbow should be bent at a comfortable 90-degree angle, allowing your shoulder to remain completely dropped and relaxed.

Don't Lean in when you press.

Let the weight of the iron and the heat do the work. If you have to lean your body weight into it, your iron is not hot enough and/or your board is likely too low.

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Pain-Free Pressing



What pain-free pressing posture looks like whether standing or sitting:

- Elbows: 90–110°
- Shoulders: relaxed (not lifted or rolled forward)
- Neck: neutral (not craned downward)
- Back: upright (not bent forward)
- Wrist: neutral straight (not locked)

You should feel like you're working in front of you, not down below you.

Pressing Station Checklist

Here is pain free pressing check list

- Elbow bent at approximately 90 degrees
- Board set at your pain-free predetermined height
- Hand is flat on top of your iron, with no bend in the wrist
- Roll your shoulders back, naturally drawing the shoulder blades down and together
- Chest is out which allows us to breathe deeply, pumping oxygenated blood through the body, providing energy for more sewing time.
- Eyes are looking forward whenever possible
- Hips are even, weight is evenly distributed on both feet, unless you are dancing or have special concerns.

Our boards have a limited number of adjustment choices, so having your board an inch lower is better than higher if you can maintain good posture.

Seated Pressing

If you've got a lot of ironing to do, sit down. It's not just "allowed" it's often better for reducing fatigue and is a relaxing way to make a repetitive task easier.

Set your height (this is everything)

You may find using a bar stool or counter stool works well because they're already near the right height, however this set-up works with a regular chair as well.

Lower your board so that:

Elbows are approximately at 90°

Forearms are roughly parallel to the ironing surface

A common issue (and why it matters)

The ironing board often can't go low enough because

it hits your thighs

This leads to:

- slight wrist bend
- slight shoulder lift

Even small misalignments → build up strain over time (neck, shoulders, wrists)

If the board won't go lower:

Use a travel iron (~3 inches tall)

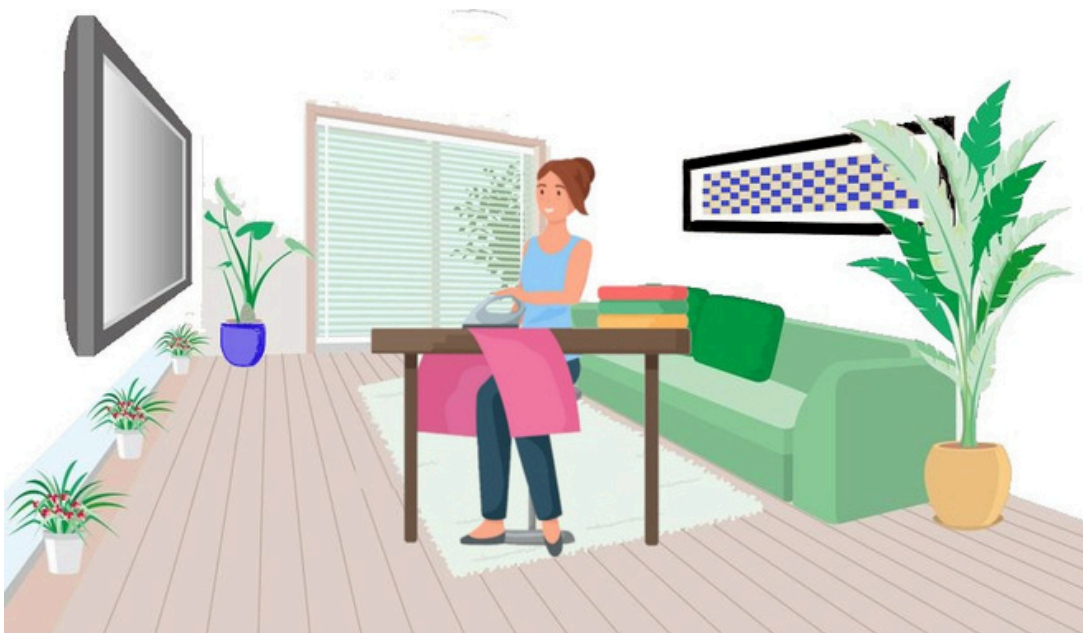
- effectively raises your working height
- brings your arm back toward neutral

Same result as lowering the board but achieved differently for example:

39-3 (instead of 6) means your board now can sit at 36 inches high, which can help keep it off of your thighs.



Seated Pressing Checklist



Posture matters more than people think.

Keep these consistent:

- Feet flat on the floor
- No slouching
- Shoulders relaxed (not lifted)
- Wrist straight (not bent up)
- Elbows 90–110°
- Make it is sustainable (so you actually stick with it)

To reduce neck strain Face a window, or television.
Something at eye level so you're not constantly looking down.

A Hidden benefit of sitting is that it is more difficult to press down forcefully on the iron, which is actually good—let the heat and steam do the work.

Less force = less strain on wrists and shoulders

Next Steps

You may not have a Pinterest worthy, picture perfect setup, but you can still use what you have learned here, and have the most pain-free pressing station as possible:

- Right height
- Neutral joints
- Minimal effort

If you can't adjust it , adjust the relationship between your body and it, whatever it may be.

Homework

1. Determine your magical ergonomic number.
2. Measure your iron from handle to soleplate.
3. Deduct iron depth from magic number.
4. This is your pain-free pressing height.
5. Modify your ironing board to your perfect height.

For Example

Ergonomic number: 39 inches

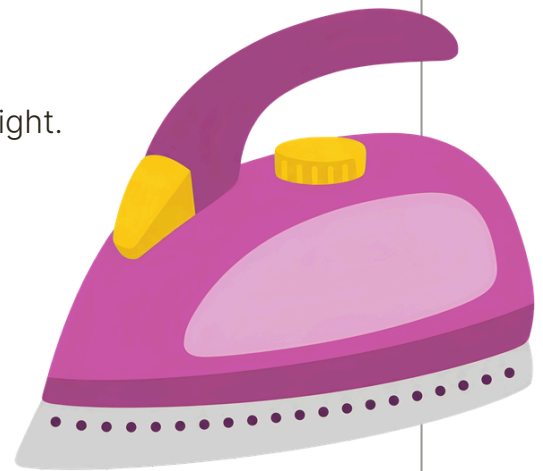
Deduct iron depth from magic number 6 inches

Your pain-free pressing height is 33 inches

Adjust your ironing board to your pain-free pressing height. Further adjustments may be needed if using a wool pressing mat. Ironing boards have a limited number of heights to choose from. If you are unable to locate your perfect spot, always go a touch lower, not higher. If your ironing board

,

Always bring your work to you.



Notes

