

**ART COMES FROM  
YOUR BODY**

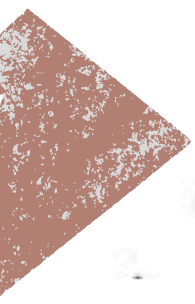
**Take care of yourself: make more art**

**Ashton MacKenzie**

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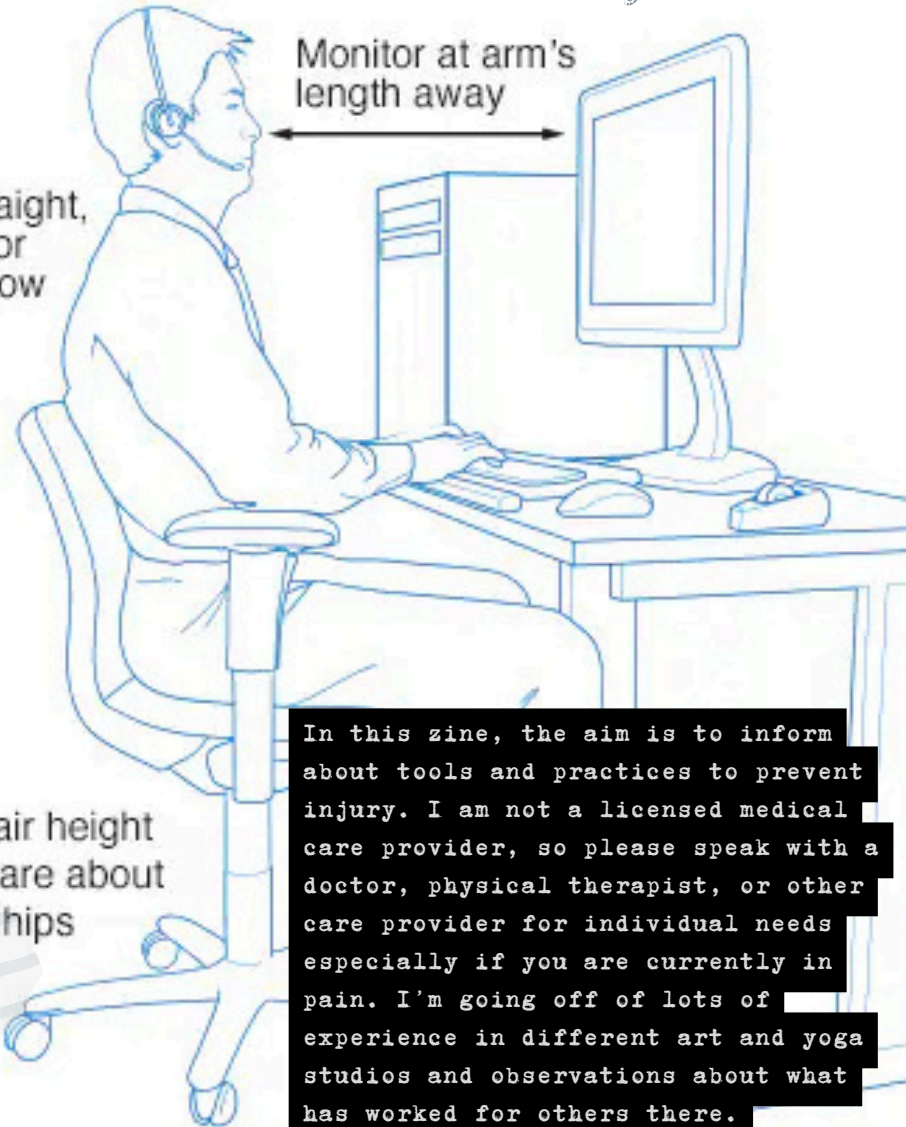


# TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY

Repetitive stress injuries are painful and can sometimes end whole art careers. Drawing, painting, illustration, textile and jewellery work, playing instruments, sculpting, carving - whatever your media, it is possible to cause a repetitive stress injury with art.

Wrists straight,  
hands at or  
below elbow  
level

Monitor at arm's  
length away



Adjust chair height  
so knees are about  
level with hips

In this zine, the aim is to inform about tools and practices to prevent injury. I am not a licensed medical care provider, so please speak with a doctor, physical therapist, or other care provider for individual needs especially if you are currently in pain. I'm going off of lots of experience in different art and yoga studios and observations about what has worked for others there.

Remember to stretch



### Wrist extensor stretches

1. Hold one hand at chest level with the elbow bent.
2. With the other hand, grasp the thumb side of the hand and bend your wrist downward.
3. To increase the stretch, bend your wrist toward your little finger.
4. Repeat the same exercise with a straight arm.
5. Switch hands and repeat.



### Wrist flexor stretches

1. Hold one hand at chest level with the elbow bent.
2. Grasp the fingers of that hand with the other.
3. Pull the hand back gently.
4. Repeat the same exercise with a straight arm.
5. Switch hands and repeat.



On the previous page, an infographic shows the ideal placement of a monitor and keyboard or tablet for computer-based artwork. The point is to work with all the major joints in a neutral position. But even a neutral position will cause pain over time, which is why it's so important to take breaks periodically to stretch. It can also be useful to change positions from a seated to a standing position, or take a walk during a break.



Don't let yourself get too pressured with your art - burnout can be another type of injury.

# TAKE BREAKS

THE WHOLE PAPER IS IN REACH, MEANING IT'S WITHIN MY SHOULDER'S RANGE OF MOTION

Work in a larger format if you can

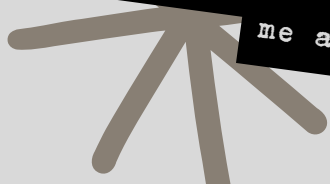
<- I MIGHT WANT TO WORK A LITTLE MORE AT EYE LEVEL

<- STAND AS UPRIGHT AS YOU CAN COMFORTABLY MAINTAIN

LEVEL APP ->




Proper easel setup - the bottom of the media should be no lower than the waist. Use a level tool or app to level the media stand. Test your setup by standing up straight with the feet together, rolling the shoulders back, and standing with the gaze level at the media. If any part of the media requires reaching or the gaze is too low, adjust until things are more comfortable! The photo demonstrates an easel setup that is on the low end of comfortable for me, but allows the legs to be set wide enough to be stable when fully extended. I could also shorten the legs and place the easel on a table to achieve the ideal height for my media when standing to work. Notice my case of tools is hanging close at hand, and my lights for my plants are behind me and not in my eyes!





It is also helpful to begin thinking of a drawing session much like a workout session.

Joints gain flexibility as they are used - notice the difference between flexibility in the arms before and after lifting. The same will apply to your art



Notice how your ability to stretch and achieve a range of motion and pressure or tension changes throughout a session of creating your art.

Recruiting larger joints and muscle groups to do artwork means that instead of using only tiny flexors in the hands and wrists to do repetitive activities, the body can spread the work across many more parts of the body and thus resist and repair the wear and tear that repetitive motions place on the body. Anecdotally, this has helped many people in studios I've worked in resist developing carpal-tunnel syndrome, but I am not a clinician, so remember to speak with a healthcare provider to learn more.

# WARM UP

Social media has put a lot of pressure on sketchbooks being full of fully rendered work. Your sketchbook is for workouts and trying new things. Draw on packing paper. Draw simple shapes and forms.

THIS IS WHAT YOU SKETCHBOOK OR PRACTICE TIME IS \*REALLY\* FOR!

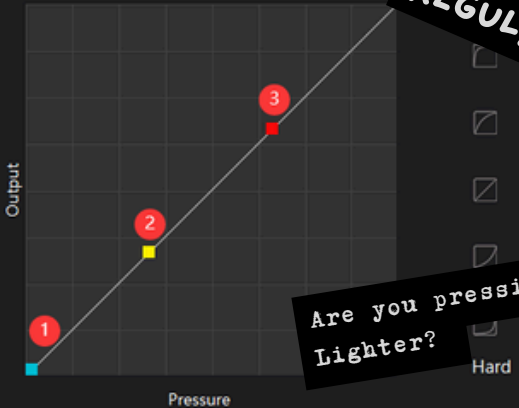
What kinds of movements do you need to practice the techniques you want to get better at? Spirals, line weight, shading?

When you get started doing your art for the day, spend a little time just handling your tools and get a sense for how you feel in the moment.

Pen Computer Digital Pen Store

Press Key Pressure Sensitivity Adjust

Pressure Sensitivity Adjustment



ADJUST PRESSURE ON YOUR TABLET REGULARLY!

Are you pressing harder than usual? Lighter?

Click Threshold Sensitivity

# USE TOOLS THAT WORK FOR YOU



→ ↻ 🏠 🔒 <https://www.tpgcreations.com/collections/pencil-grips>

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NEW! Five Finger Pencil Grip 6 Pack

\$24.00



The Pencil Grip, Original  
From \$12.99

Do you need a pencil grip, wider or shaped handle for your tools? Does your chair need to support crossing your legs? Bring your tools to you, modify your instruments to make your art as pain-free as possible so you can make more art!!





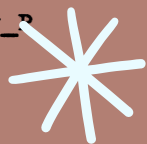
THERE IS ENOUGH  
SUFFERING IN THE  
WORLD

We do not need to suffer  
for our art as well.

In addition to my own sketches,  
some outside resources were used in  
the creation of this zine.

Image credits by page:

- Hand anatomy (1) | [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wrist\\_extensor\\_compartments\\_\(numbered\).PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wrist_extensor_compartments_(numbered).PNG)
- Ergonomic desk arrangement (2) | <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/office-ergonomics/art-20046169>
- Exercises for hands (3) | <https://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/exercises-for-pain-free-hands>
- Shoulder anatomy (5) | <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gray326.png?useskin=vector>
- Pressure Adjustment interface for pen tablet (6) | <https://support.huion.com/en/support/solutions/articles/44002457763-how-to-adjust-the-pressure-sensitivity->
- Pencil Grips (7) | <https://www.tpgcreations.com/collections/pencil-grips-1>
- Kneeling Chair (7) | [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Varier\\_Variable\\_Monochrome\\_Kneeling\\_Chair\\_Design\\_by\\_Peter\\_Opsvik\\_1979.jpg?useskin=vector](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Varier_Variable_Monochrome_Kneeling_Chair_Design_by_Peter_Opsvik_1979.jpg?useskin=vector)



Further reading!

<https://uncivilizedbooks.com/draw/>

All art is political; and  
it will be hard to make  
more political art if  
we're all suffering from  
joint pain