POSTURE
(A 4-H Club Activity)

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POSTURE*

"How can I put my best foot forward" is a common expression used by people when they are interested in making a good impression upon some specific person. Good posture has much to do with this first impression in that it helps to give you a feeling of self confidence. However, good posture, poise, grace or good carriage is not something artificial to be applied at will. It is attained through every day living. Every movement you make has something to do with molding your body. If you have formed poor posture habits it's too late to do much about this first impression at the moment. However, through persistence and desire you can do much to correct many poor posture habits.

Note the people whom you meet each day. What effect do those people have upon you? Do they add or detract from the picture which life gives you? Nature intended that your surroundings be attractive, therefore the trees, flowers, shrubs, plants, birds and animals assume a most graceful posture. We must admit that a person, whom you meet with a sagging head, protruding abdomen and a sway back is not attractive. If we intend to add to this picture then it is necessary that we carry our body in an upright position so that it may be beautiful and graceful as it was intended to be.

Every movement of the body tells you something about an individual. Did you ever analyze characterization in movies or stage production? The director of plays knows the effect he can produce in characters through certain body movements and posture. Think of the posture which characterized the villain, the lazy man, the hero and the heroine of a play. Does your posture tell a true story of your character and personality?

Each day you are helping to mold what we call posture through your habits of sitting, walking, standing, sleeping, and thinking.

The term "Posture" has come to mean to many boys and girls - chest out, shoulders back, chin in, legs straight, eyes straight ahead. This is a militaristic posture possibly used to show off uniformity which is most unnatural and today obsolete and not good posture, because it is not natural and always has to be an artificial position. Let us think of posture as the way that you use your bodies in your every day activities of work and play. As you walk to school, study at your desks, carry loads of water etc., sweep the floor, prepare food for a meal, play football or tennis, you are shaping your bodies.

Poor posture may have caused some ill effect which you now have. The internal organs of the body are most delicate and work best when the body is in correct position. By push-

*This bulletin has been prepared by Helen L. Church, State Club Agent. Material in quotations has been taken from material by Miss Ella Gardner, Recreation Specialist, Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington,D.C.
ing one organ out of place the whole system needs to make adjustment. Therefore, ill health may result. If you have a type of posture causing ill health it's best to consult a physician for correcting this posture. Any individual with a curvature of the spine needs medical attention. The most common posture faults are usually found to be forward head, round shoulders, prominent abdomen, and hollow backs.

WHAT IS GOOD POSTURE?*

Good posture is a question of body balance. It consists in using the various parts of the body in proper balance and line, in keeping the curves of the spine normal and in holding firm the lower abdomen with the chest up and the chin in. These fundamentals are the same for everybody. They apply whether you are walking, standing, sitting or sleeping.

Perhaps the abuse which we give ourselves through poor posture habits is due to the fact that we forget the construction of the body. Note the general structure in Figure (1-A). The body is well balanced, the weight is carried over the hip, knee and center of the foot. A plumb line would pass through the lobe of the ear, the tip of the shoulder girdle, the outermost tip of the hip girdle and the outside hump of your ankle bone. Figure (1-B) looks as if he were collapsing. The head is forward, the ribs sag and the weight is not balanced over the large joints.

Attached to this bony structure are muscles. There are three hundred of them working together in an attempt to keep the body in an upright position. In analyzing Figure (1-B) using the muscles shown in Figure (2) you can easily see what is happening to these muscles. The upper back muscles and neck muscles are becoming stretched and with continual stretching they remain out of shape. The abdominal muscles also are stretched. While the lower back and thigh, and calf muscles are probably shortened.

The tone of these muscles is influenced by food. Without proper food these muscles lose their elasticity and fail to function as they should. The control of our body which makes for graceful and skillful movement is dependent upon the development of the muscles.

Did you ever tinker with a car or piece of machinery and find that there were certain laws of balance and motion that you had to remember to make it run and keep it in running order. The body is similar to a machine in that certain laws of balance and motion must be kept if this body of ours is to keep in running condition. If we are going to have an efficient body then we must observe some of these health rules.

The following pictures will give you an idea of good and poor posture in its relationship to body construction.

*Adapted from Good Looks through Good Posture, by Ella Gardner, Recreation Specialist, Extension Service, U. S. D. A.
Figure 1
What Causes Poor Posture?

Your everyday motions and activity are making your posture. Analyze the things which you do. Do you work at a desk which is too high? Do you sit incorrectly in a chair, automobile, etc? Do you use your feet correctly? Possibly tight shoulder straps or heavy clothing may be causing poor posture.

A. Working surface which is too low.

B. Corrected table height.
The height of working surfaces influences the posture which you assume during work. Do you look like Figure 3 when you are working at a table? It is easy to see which of the two will make you tired and ruin the looks of your body.

Remember that the body contains three weight centers—first the head, second the shoulder weight and third the hip weight.

The spinal column holds these weights together. As soon as one weight becomes out of balance then immediately the muscles become tense and must hold up this weight. Consequently, you become tired after a short time at work. Note the strain you put upon the muscles of the back and shoulders using too short a handle in the hoe. (Figure 4).

Several hours of continuous work with a hoe, shovel, broom, mop or other short handled equipment would certainly make you so tired that at the end of the task you would have a stooped appearance and possibly a bad disposition.

![Figure 4](image)

Many times bad eyesight will cause you to lean forward through shoulders and drop your head. This pulls and stretches the muscles in the back of shoulders—the chest tends to sink; and shoulders will become rounded. Breathing may be so hindered that poor circulation of blood is caused thereby causing the person to become susceptible to colds and other respiratory infections. Attention therefore should be given eyesight before any correction of posture could be made.

General health conditions many times influence posture. If you are not receiving the right kind and amounts of foods and the correct amount of rest each day you will experience a feeling of weariness. This weariness in turn may be shown
through relaxing many muscles. The muscles of the abdomen sag, this in turn throws the whole system out of line and many times serious illness is a result.

In your busy life of work and play, filled with activities of home, school and community you must not forget that rest is necessary for you to keep and have a most efficient body. Remember you cannot run this machine day and night and expect it to keep going. Your car or other machinery wears out, you buy new parts or exchange it for a new model. We can't do this with our bodies. We can't buy new parts or exchange it for another body. We must give nature time to make necessary repairs. Much of this repair work is done while we sleep. Nine hours of sleep every night in a well ventilated room are needed for nature to make its repairs that you may be alert and energetic. Many times it becomes necessary for us to learn to make choices in the things which we do. Select the things which will mean the most to you and let the others go by.

Poorly fitted clothing many times is responsible for poor posture. The general weight of clothing should hang from the shoulders. If clothing is too heavy it causes the shoulders to droop under their load. Suspenders and straps across the shoulder may be so tight that stooping the shoulders relieves the pressure and, consequently, a stooped habit results.

The raising of the foot by a high heel is another clothing fault which causes many girls to have poor posture.

A. Normal posture.  B. Placing high heel under body pushes it forward.  C. Strained position necessary to keep balance.

Figure 5
This poor posture usually takes form of sway back. High heels should only be worn for dress. For everyday activities at work and play, during which time you are moulding your posture, lower heels should be worn. Figure 5.

If you happen to be tall for your age you may attempt to reduce your height when with friends who are shorter. This can become habitual and you will find yourself taking on stooped shoulders. Carry your height high in an upright manner, it looks so much better than it does distorted. Don't allow your shorter friends to ruin your fine build. These friends will be prouder of your tall fine figure than of your stooped shoulders.

How Shall I Stand?

"Look around you. How many of your friends stand with one hip thrown forward and with all of their weight on the other side? Watch if any fold their arms on top of their abdomens and settle down in a standing slump to talk, or do they hug a pile of school books and seem to rest on them. What do they do with their feet? Some stand with their feet as much as twelve inches apart. Others put their weight on one foot and turn the other in at the ankle and out at the toe. These are graceless positions and make a girl look tired out and fit for nothing interesting. Stand tall with your weight on both feet, your head, shoulders, hips and ankles in line. This does not mean that the body cannot be relaxed and easy. Indeed you cannot look your best unless you are comfortably erect.

"When standing you should hold your head high. This means that the crown of your head is pushed toward the sky. Visitors to Haiti tell us that the natives there walk regally, as queens are supposed to walk, because all their lives they carry burdens on their heads, water, baskets of fruit, and such things. Try it yourself with a book and see how you push up. That is what the head should do all the time. You should make the lower part of your abdomen flat. Your knees should be slightly relaxed. Your feet should be in a straight line from toe to heel with the weight on the outer edge of the foot and equally divided between ball and heel. Now if an imaginary line were drawn perpendicularly from a point in line with the back of the ear it would pass through the shoulder, hip, and ankle joints. Such a standing position gives the effect of a regal head carriage, a lifted chest, shoulder free and wide, flat back and slender hips."

How Shall I Walk?

"You may think that walking is just a matter of feet and the way that you treat and use them. Of course to walk gracefully your feet must be comfortable and well used. One bit of advice for achieving an attractive walk is to spin the world with your toes as you walk. Shove it away behind you lightly as though you were on top of a large rubber
ball. Keep your toes pointed straight ahead and swing your legs from the hip but do not allow yourself to wiggle your shoulders or your hips as you go along.

"The way your hips and shoulders behave makes a great difference in your appearance while walking. Look around you. Do some of your friends swing their shoulders as they walk? Do others move their hips? These habits are not easy to break. Have you ever seen a kangaroo? You know this queer beast has two weak forelegs, two strong back legs and a great heavy tail. When he wants to go somewhere in a hurry, he pushes his tail against the ground and jumps from his back legs. As you walk, try to imagine that you too have a heavy tail at the end of your spine. Push it against the ground but, do not bend your knees. It sometimes helps you to achieve grace to imagine you are floating instead of walking. Lift the weight off of your hips, --"think" the whole body up — and carry your head on a line parallel with the ceiling.

"Your head is very important in good walking, not only because there are many points to remember but because much of a good effect depends upon carrying the top of the head high. Practice walking as though the very tip-top of your head were trying to touch the ceiling, tangle your hair in the clouds, -- walk tall!

"Now let us see the whole picture. A person who walks well carries the crown of his head high. The back is tucked down and the body is carried lightly. He will walk with resiliency, as though he were spinning the world with his toes."

How Are My Feet?

"Much of one's grace and efficiency can be charged to the feet. Good health for your feet depends upon cleanliness, adequate care of any deformities, and enough exercises to keep the foot muscles strong and elastic. The proper development of the foot is possible only if shoes are well fitted and stockings are neither too long nor too short. Be sure your shoes are large enough for you, that they follow the shape of a normal foot, and that the inner border line is straight. It seems almost unnecessary to add that point-ed toes and very high heels not only make it impossible for a girl's foot to keep itself efficient but also take from her the ability to move with sureness and grace. Shoes and stockings that are too short may cause serious arch trouble as well as great discomfort.

"The shoe which you wear to school should be an oxford with a straight inner margin, a rommy toe, a moderately heavy sole, and for girls who have begun to wear high heels, a heel of from 1 ½ to 1 ¾ inches, for boys one about 7/8 inch high.

Most foot discomforts can be traced to one or both of the two great arches of the foot. These arches are the longitudinal one which goes the length of the foot, and the
crosswise one which is under the ball of the foot. These
arches are very different in different people. Some have
very low arches, some very high. Because of undernourish-
ment some people have very weak muscles and ligaments that
allow their arches to flatten. There are many causes for
bad feet but the outward indications of weaknesses in the
arches are not difficult to detect and, if not too advanced,
much trouble can be avoided or corrected by proper shoes and
stockings and by exercise.

"Look at your feet in a mirror. Do
your ankles seem to sway inward? Does the
long arch seem to be flattening? Have you
a tendency to swing your toes out as you
walk? These indicate a weak longitudinal
arch. If there are callous spots on the
ball of your foot, the crosswise arch
needs attention. The best thing to do is
to ask a doctor, an orthopedist, to help
you. The doctor who gives you your
physical examination can tell you whether
you can help yourself or should have med-
ical attention."

Figure 6

Exercises and games for strengthening the feet are giv-
on in Figures A, B, and C. A nightly scrub, clean stockings
daily and well fitted shoes will also help uncomfortable
feet.

A. Sit with one knee crossed over the
other - stretch upper foot as far
down as possible, then bend upward
and turn sole inward as far as pos-
sible - 15 times with each foot.

B. Bend toes down to make a fist - then
extend and spread toes as far as
possible. Repeat slowly 10 to 20
times with each foot.
C. Stand, feet slightly apart and parallel. Roll outer edge of feet - pull toes under - 25 times slowly.

D. Stand with feet slightly apart and toes in a straight line. Pick up marbles or a paper napkin with toes. This might make a good racing game.

Walk along a crack in the floor, raising knees and putting weight on outer border of feet. Keep head high and back flat.

How Shall I Sit?

Do you know how to sit in a chair properly? Have you ever noticed people who were unattractive when sitting down? To sit comfortably and well sit far back in your chair with as much as possible of your backbone touching the back of the chair. This is not possible in all chairs and therefore your work chairs should be selected because they meet these requirements:

1. The lower part of the back supports the spine at the top of the hips while the upper part slopes back slightly for comfort.

2. The seat slopes slightly back to discourage any forward sliding and is short enough from front to back and low enough to avoid pressure from the forward edge under the knees.

In good sitting posture the seat bones, the points of the hips and the shoulders are in the same line. This line between the hips and shoulders should be maintained when leaning forward or back. This means that to write or work at a table you should lean forward from your hips rather than from the middle of your back. Your desk or table should be as high as your elbows when you are seated before it.

Keeping your feet on the floor rather close to the chair, your body relaxed against the chair and your head at rest directly over the shoulders is the most attractive as well as the most scientifically restful way to sit.

Appearing graceful and at ease while in a sitting position is most essential. The correct chair height is important as well as what we do with our feet and hands. Many times we are seated before people in a room or on a stage.
Your posture may give people an impression of your character and personality. We do not want to appear stiff but at ease and graceful. When and if you do cross your knees, a much more graceful appearance occurs if you cross them at or below the knee instead of crossing the upper legs. The top leg will follow down the line of the supporting leg and foot. Legs crossed at an ungainly criss-cross angle are not graceful and many times most unsightly. The feet crossed at the ankles is probably a more graceful posture for girls than crossing the knees.

After you are seated, you will want to arise from your chair gracefully. If you will place one foot slightly backward toward the chair and lean forward from the hips without bowing the back or thrusting the head forward, you may rise from a chair with ease and grace.

**HOW CAN I CORRECT POOR POSTURE?**

There are many ways to correct poor posture. First from your self-analysis you have discovered the cause of your poor posture. If ill health has caused poor posture then it will be necessary to correct these physical ailments through a doctor's advice. If ill health is a result of poor posture and carelessness then we will have to begin some type of corrective exercises under a doctor's care.

Testing correctness of posture may be done by standing against any flat wall surface with feet about four inches away from wall. The buttocks, shoulders and head should be against the wall. The lower back is then flattened against the wall so that you can barely slide fingers between wall and back. The chin is pulled in which places the chest in proper position. After assuming this posture, step away from the wall and look at yourself in a mirror. This should give you correct posture.

Another test of posture is the plumb line test which follows the straight line illustrated in Figure 1 page 5. A plumb line should follow straight down passing through the lobe of the ear, the tip of the shoulder girdle, the outermost tip of the hip girdle, and the outside hump of your ankle bone.

As you stand before a mirror make the following checks:

**Feet** - The toes should point straight ahead. The inside border of the feet should be parallel, with the body weight resting upon the center of the ankle bone. A test of correct position of the feet can be made by raising the heels slightly from the floor, without a complete shift of position of the body.

**Knees** - The knees should be slightly flexed, similar to the flexibility of the elbow as your arm hangs at your side.

**Hips** - Make yourself small as you would if you were squeezing through a narrow gate. This should give the hips
the correct position.

Chest - Should hang easy in balance over the hips.

Shoulders - Should swing free - not backward or forward.

Head - The head should balance on top of the neck which rises upright from the shoulders. The head should be carried at all times so that it would balance a flat object on top of it.

Prominent Abdomen and Hollow Back

A. Lie on the floor with knees bent and feet on the floor, finger tips meeting under neck, tighten abdominal muscles and make lower back touch the floor -- 10 times. Hold position, slowly slide feet on floor until legs are as straight as you can make them without raising the back.

B. Lie on floor - bend one knee to chest, keeping other leg flat on floor - hug bent knee, slowly raise and lower other leg - 10 times with each leg.

C. Scissors - Lie on side, stretch the underarm straight up resting head on it. Straighten legs, kick and kick back and forth. Keep balance on side. Kick 50 to 100 times on each side.

D. Bicycle - (Abdominal muscles) With hips flat on the floor and legs in air push heels upward in a treadling fashion. Be sure that the lower part of the back keeps flat on floor and the shoulders stay flat.

E. Airplane - (Decreases waistline) Place feet parallel but about two feet apart. Straighten arms out from side, keep arms stiff touching opposite hand to opposite foot. This exercise because of the twist involved gives good exercise for the waist line.
F. Bend both knees to chest. Try to bend them to chin - straighten legs upward and lower as far as possible without raising back - 5 times.

G. Stand against wall with hips, shoulders and head touching and feet advanced about 4 inches. Flatten the lower back by pulling in the abdominal muscles and contracting the buttock muscles. This may be done any number of times. Repeat with hands back of neck, fingers straight and finger tips touching.

H. Lie on the floor - arms extended at sides in line with shoulders. Kick toe of left foot to right hand vigorously - keeping shoulders flat but rolling hips - then kick right foot to left hand. Alternate 20 times with each foot.

I. Rowing Exercise

Sit erect, elbows bent at sides of chest as if pulling back on oars. Reach forward and touch the toes. Pull back to first position. 30-40 pulls.

For Round Shoulders and Forward Head

A. Prone lying

Lie face down, fold the hands in the back below the hips, pull the back and shoulders together while lifting upper trunk from floor. Do not bend the waist. Count 1-2.

B. Windmill

Lie flat on floor shoulders relaxed and arms at side. Bring right arm up and back until it touches the floor its entire length without raising the position of the shoulders. Alternate arms.
Gener al Postur e Exercise and Games

Wicket Walk

Keep the knees stiff, bend forward touching the ground with both hands. Arms and legs straight—walk on all fours keeping the knees straight.

Activity and exercises through play are possibly the most wholesome type of exercises. Games played out of doors are most wholesome and may aid in muscular coordination which is essential for good posture. Some of the popular outdoor games might be hiking, bicycling, skating, golf, soft ball, volley ball, etc. Every boy and girl should have one type of sport in which he or she indulges and possibly one in which he excels.

The following group games are suggested for you to use at club meetings:

Balloon Race -- Each relay team has a balloon. At the signal to start, the first player in each line throws the balloon in the air and then advances it over the route as fast as she can by bumping it along with her head. Every time a balloon falls to the floor it counts a point against the team.

A short relay route and teams of not more than five members each should be used.

Bean Bag Games -- (Bean bags are easily made from canvas or other strong cloth. They may be square, oblong, or round and may vary in size. Six inches square is a convenient dimension. The bag should be filled slightly more than half full of beans.)

Bean-Bag Relay -- The players line up in column formation with 4 or 5 players standing one behind the other in a single team. The first player in each line has a bean bag or book on his head.

At the signal to go, the first players walk to a goal line and back. If the book or bean bag drops, they must stoop, pick it up and replace it. When they return to the line they give the book to the second player, who places it on his head and goes to the goal. This continues until every one has walked to the goal and returned.

The team that finished first is given 10 points. One point is subtracted for each time that the book or bean bag fell to the floor. The game should be played through 3 times.

Over and Under -- The first player in each team is given a bean bag, ball, potato, or other object. When the whistle blows he passes this object over his head to the second player, who passes it between his knees to the third, who hands it over his head to the fourth. Thus the object
goes alternately overhead and between knees to the last player, who runs to the head of the line and starts it back over his head. The game proceeds until a line has regained its original order, with the first player at the head again. The line finishing first wins the race.

**Tip Toe Relay** -- The first player in each team walks on tip toe to a goal and back touching off the second player who does the same thing and starts the third. The team that finishes first wins. This may be played another time with a bean bag on the runners' heads.

**Around and Down** -- The players form in two or more teams, and each team sits down in a compact group, the players having their backs together and their legs extended. When the whistle blows, each first player rises, runs around his own team, and sits down. As soon as he is seated the second player must be up and running, and so on. The race is won by the team all of whose members have run around and sat down while players of other teams still are running.

**Squat Tag** -- Players scatter around the playing area. One is It and tries to tag someone else who must go It in his place. In order to be safe from tagging the players must squat.

Double squat is played by allowing It to tag anyone who has not caught hands with someone else and then squatted. If a player squats alone, he may be tagged. Players may not run around in couples but must keep changing partners.

**I Say Stoop** -- The person who is It faces the group and gives commands which he may take correctly or not as he chooses. The players must obey only those commands that start with "I say." It tries to confuse them by giving them fast, with or without "I say," and taking them wrong himself. He says "I stoop," "I say stand," "Stoop," "Stand" in any order he wishes. Any player who stands when he should stoop or vice versa must go It.

**Partner Snatch** -- Players stand in couples around a circle, one circle of players faces to the right, the other to the left. When the whistle blows they begin to walk away from each other in the direction in which they are facing. When it blows a second time everyone dashes to his partner and they stoop together. The last couple down drops out. The circle is formed again and the game is repeated until two couples are left and declared the winners.

**Piercing the Hoop** -- A barrel hoop is suspended from the branch of the tree. The players stand in a line about twenty feet away and try to throw a fishing pole or light ten foot rod through the hoop. Each contestant has 3 trials and a point is scored each time the rod goes through the hoop. This may be played by teams in large groups.

**Jumping-Rope Relay** -- A jumping rope or a smooth stick about 4 feet long is given to the first player in each team. When the whistle blows he hands one end to the player directly behind him. Together they draw the rope or stick
back under the feet of all the players, keeping it close to the ground until the last player has jumped over. The first player stays at the end of the line while the second one takes the rope back to the front as quickly as he can. He gives one end to the player who is third in line, and with him draws it along the ground to be jumped over as before. So the game continues until the last player in one of the teams has handed the rope back to the first player. The team finishing first wins.

HELPS AND HINTS FOR LEADERS

"Leadership requires a vision of the ends to be attained. Your value lies not in what you do, but what you can get other people to do."

--Knapp.

Since this activity will be of interest to both boys and girls the activity should be planned for community club meetings. In every phase of club work we should be interested in the development of boys and girls as well as their project. Every good demonstrator should have good posture as he appears before the public. Every boy will want to have as good a figure and appear in as good health as the animal which he leads into the judging ring. Every girl wants to appear her best in the clothing which she constructs. Demonstration teams are not persuasive unless the members have self-confidence which many times is felt through good posture.

Demonstrations, illustrated talks, plays and silhouettes are effective in their method of teaching this activity.

If the club desires to keep record of posture improvement it is suggested that they keep posture growth development, using the health chart which is in the project literature of Health and First Aid. Club members who expect to take part in health contests should keep such records and should participate in posture activity work.

Silhouette shadows reveal posture characteristics. By wearing close fitting clothing such as slip-over sweater, etc., the body outline can be easily distinguished. Use a sheet placing the individual back of this sheet. Cast a light upon the individual on the side which is away from the sheet. An outline of the figure can be seen if the room is darkened. Members may show correct and incorrect method of walking, sitting, studying, dancing, etc., by shadow pictures.

Correct posture can be dramatized showing correct posture when sitting before a group of people, walking on street, walking down steps, etc.

Any available supplementary material from magazines, school texts, etc., may be used in preparing discussions and talks. The following is a list of topics for meetings.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR MEETINGS

Why have good posture.
Your profession and your posture.
Posture and your clothes.
Standards of good and poor posture.
Sports and health and posture.
Food as an aid to beauty and health.
Sick feet and your posture.

SUGGESTED DEMONSTRATIONS

1. How to know good posture.
2. Testing standing posture.
3. Good posture in sitting. (Ind.)
4. Good posture through the day. (Team)
   At dining table, at school, at play, in bed, at chores, reading or studying.
5. Corrective exercise for round shoulders.
6. How to care for the feet.

ROLL CALL TOPICS

1. Your poor habit of poor posture.
2. A habit which may lead to poor posture.
3. A posture rule.
4. A man or woman I admire for their posture.
REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Your Carriage, Madam - Janet Lane
Posture - Farmer's Wife Magazine
National Dairy Council - Chicago, Illinois
Posture in Housework - Miscellaneous Publication #84,
U. S. D. A., Washington, D. C.
Metropolitan Life Insurance Bulletins - Chicago, Illinois