

## Goldtouch ergonomic suite offers users relief for heavy typing

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### Mouse, keyboard, wrist rests and gel pads supply comfort at the keys' after you get used to them

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Repetitive stress injuries are not 100 percent avoidable, but you can reduce your symptoms by practicing ergonomics and taking regular breaks from the computer.

Manufacturers such as Goldtouch Technologies assert that using ergonomic peripherals for desktop PCs will result in fewer medical claims, more employee uptime and a more comfortable work environment.



The Goldtouch ergonomic suite's best item is the sloping mouse, which relaxes muscles working the inside of the hand.

For the most part, the Goldtouch suite follows accepted postural and ergonomic guidelines. The components are sold separately, but I recommend buying the whole lineup even if you think you need only one item. It makes little sense to change to an ergonomic keyboard but keep a standard mouse.

Like other ergonomic keyboards, the Goldtouch version splits down the middle where the T, G and B keys meet the Y, H and N keys.

This keeps the user's wrists from twisting to reach keys as on a straight keyboard, but it differs from most other products in having an adjustable degree of tilt. At the apex of the keyboard is a connection like a ball bearing that rotates the keyboard halves on a circular axis.

### New tricks

This setup is good and bad. Some employees who have long experience with the standard flat keyboard will resist relearning how to type on a split version. They can push the halves together like a standard keyboard even if their agencies have paid extra for ergonomic flexibility.

The advantage is that users with a lot of girth will feel as comfortable while typing as petite users. The keys can be adjusted to the exact spot where hands meet keys.

The Goldtouch keyboard, which has a standard PS/2 connection, does not have a built-in numeric keypad an omission that maintains ergonomic balance but will frustrate some users.

The separate number pad, which resembles the keypad in automated teller machines, shifts some of the function keys out of their usual positions.

It connects with a PS/2 passthrough adapter.

You can place the numeric pad wherever you want, which is more of a boon for left-handed users than for those seeking ergonomic benefits. Also, you could carry it with a notebook PC to have full keyboard features on the road.

I consider the mouse the best component. On the right-handed model, the pointer finger rests about an inch higher than the little finger.

It seems odd for a few minutes, but you quickly feel the tendons in your hand relaxing.

I found it so relaxing that I often grabbed the mouse even when I was not working, just to ease my hand. Goldtouch has eliminated the mouse scroll wheel in favor of a raised button under the pointer finger that, once software has been installed, can scroll through Web pages and documents with little effort.

The final component is three gelatin-filled pads. One supports the mouse, and the other two are for the wrists one in front of each half of the keyboard.

The science behind these pads is a little fuzzy. I have read reports that say they are beneficial, that they are harmful, and that they do nothing at all.

The Goldtouch pads are well-made and extremely comfortable.

They support the wrists without being too firm or too soft. Whether they convey an actual ergonomic benefit, I can't say.

As a whole, the Goldtouch suite would be good for anyone who uses a keyboard and mouse most of the day. You'll be comfortable, if nothing more.

**Box Score:**

**Goldtouch ergonomic suite**

**Ergonomic mouse, keyboard, keypad and gel pads**

- + Excellent, comfortable mouse
- + Solidly designed keyboard
  - Keypad not especially ergonomic
  - Rather high-priced components

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