GOAL: Learn to Type & Use the Computer Keyboard (& Mouse)

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Introduction

The ability to type and use a computer keyboard and mouse are essential if you want to be able to communicate well in the world today. As reading and writing skills improve, it's a great idea to include computer and typing training. And the great part about this curriculum is it includes exercises that will at the same time help you improve your reading and writing!

Although learning to write by hand is essential, there are benefits to using a computer for some of your lessons. With typing, there's no need to worry about your handwriting and editing is much easier. Plus, learning to use a computer will be a great boost to your confidence and self-esteem.

"But, wait," you say, "I don't know ANYTHING about computers!" No problem! This curriculum includes resources, activities, example exercises, and lessons that will be fun ways for you to become more confident in your computer and typing skills.

So, whether you've used a computer before or not, you'll find an appropriate level within these lessons to jump in and begin. A few of the resources begin by teaching what all the keyboard keys actually do. Plus, you'll learn to effectively manipulate computer windows and dialogue boxes using the all-important mouse.

So … ready to get started? Let's go . . .

Getting Started

To begin with, discuss your strengths and weaknesses regarding typing and computer use. Have you ever used a computer? If so, to what extent? Do you have typing experience? Do you have access to a computer so you'll be able to do homework if assigned?

Although the best way to learn is to dive right in to a particular task, or maybe even play a computer game or two, if you are very new to a computer keyboard and mouse you may need step-by-step help to get started. Begin here by learning about finger placement and keyboard keys.

Finger Placement and Letter Keys. Most people want to look at the keyboard as they type but will never become efficient and fast typists that way. That's why it's important to first learn finger placement.
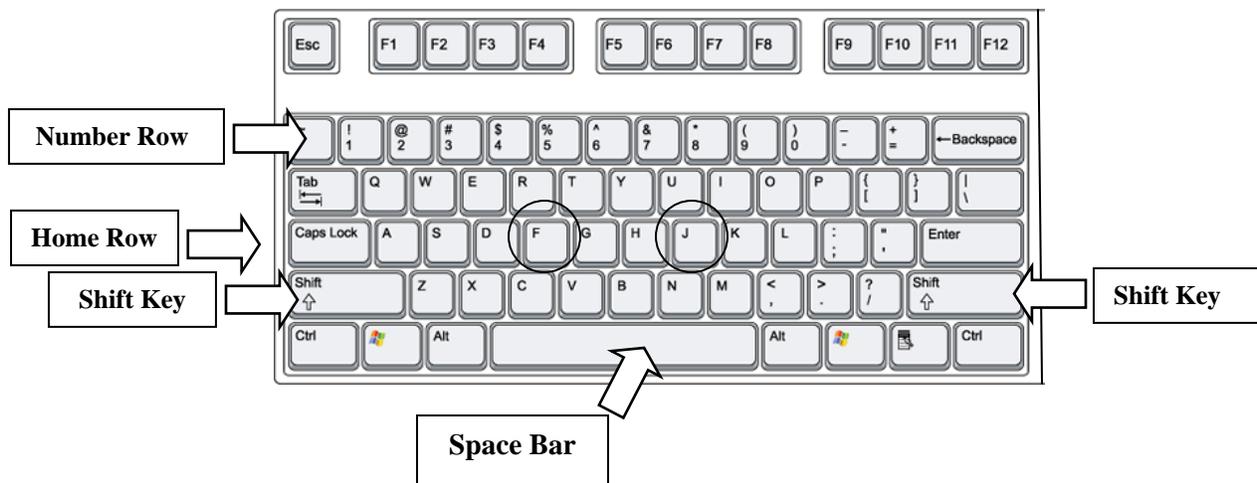
- The middle row of letter keys is called the home row. Place the four fingers of each hand on the home row. The first (pointer) finger of the left hand should cover the F key, while each of the other left-hand fingers rest on the keys to the left of the F key. The first finger of the right hand should cover the J key, while each of the other right-hand fingers rest on the keys to the right of the J key.

- The first finger of the left hand will also be used to press the R, T, G, B, and V keys. The first finger of the right hand will also be used to press the U, Y, H, N, and M keys.

- Use the thumb of the right hand to press the Space bar, and use your "pinky" on the right hand to press the apostrophe key and the Enter key.

- All of the other keys in the rows above and below the home row should be pressed with the same finger near them on the home row. Whenever a finger isn't typing another character, it should return to its home row position. Many keyboards have a raised area on the F and J keys to help you find your home row position without having to look at your hands.

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- Practice a few times taking your hands off of the keyboard and then, without looking, placing your fingers back on the keyboard in the proper position.

You will become proficient in typing (without looking) only after you've developed "muscle memory." This is accomplished best by repeating the same action many times until it becomes second nature.

- For now, begin by typing your name several times. You will need to peek, of course, the first few times, but keep going until you can do it without looking at the keyboard.

- Now type the alphabet. Remember to keep your fingers resting in their default position between each key pressed and to use the proper finger for each key. Type the alphabet several times to help build muscle memory.

- Next, follow the same steps typing the numbers 1 through 10. Then go from 10 to 1. Once you're comfortable with the number keys, practice with the punctuation keys. Type each character ten times. Some require the Shift key.

- The Shift keys (there are two of them) are used to produce capital letters and some of the punctuation symbols. Locate them now. Also take a look at some of the keys on the keyboard that show two things on each key. Most are on the top row, the number keys. When you hold down the Shift key and press one of these keys, you will type the symbol you see above the numbers on these keys. It's the same for the punctuation keys located on the right side of the home row and the bottom row.

Now that you know where all the letter keys are and where to place your fingers, practice will make perfect. Use the software and websites (below) to find typing "tutors" and games that allow you to practice and have fun at the same time. Just be sure to type a little every day if possible.

Using the Mouse. Because of its size and shape, plus the cord that generally (unless it's a wireless mouse) comes out of the end of it like a tail, the small hand-held device that sits by the keyboard is called the "mouse."

The mouse allows you to communicate with your computer because as you move the mouse, you are also moving the pointer arrow symbol seen on the monitor screen, and as you click the mouse buttons you are making choices, making something happen, telling your computer where you want to start typing, etc.

Books & Materials

Remember to check with literacy staff to see if these books and materials are already available through them. If there is a computer lab that is part of your literacy services, you may be in luck

and the software will already be there for you. If there is no literacy computer lab then chances are your library has computers available for public use and you will be free to visit any of the websites listed below.

Software

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing. No list of typing tutorials would be complete without this well-known software used in many schools and homes to improve typing skills. This program includes a number of speed tests and constantly tracks the user's words-per-minute typing speed. A certificate of achievement can be printed by the user upon the completion of tests. These certificates allow students to see their best typing abilities along with the areas that truly need some help. It also includes a number of typing games.

Microsoft Solitaire. One of the very best ways to learn to use the mouse is by practicing, and – lucky for us – playing a game like Microsoft's Solitaire is one of the best ways to practice! Solitaire is probably already on your computer. If you're in the literacy computer lab or in the library, ask a staff member to help you find the software and start a game. Otherwise, go to "Start" then "Games" and then select Solitaire. At first you will need coaching but soon enough you will be able to play this game on your own.

Typing Instructor Deluxe 17. Like Mavis Beacon, Typing Instructor Deluxe 17 software motivates you to improve your typing speed and accuracy using amazing graphics and fun challenges. It also suggests lessons, tests, strengthening exercises, practice material, and typing games for your skill level. It even comes with a keyboard key cover so you won't be tempted to peak as you're learning!

Books

Mastering Computer Typing: A Painless Course for Beginners and Professionals (Spiral Bound Book). User-friendly exercises and practice lessons to build up speed and efficiency. Designed for individual or classroom use in a handy spiral-bound format, Mastering Computer Typing is the perfect tutor or guide for anyone who needs to learn to touch-type on a computer keyboard.

Websites

Here are a few of the outstanding online resources that provide opportunities to practice typing and use the computer keyboard and mouse while learning about reading, writing, etc.

Fowl Words – www.primarygames.com/langarts/fowlwords/index.htm
Want some practice with your keyboard and mouse while you see how many words are in your vocabulary so far? Then, take a break from the serious stuff and give this game a try!

Grammar Bytes – www.chompchomp.com

Instead of just talking about rules of grammar, use these exercises to reinforce the rules AND get in a lot of mouse exercise as well.

KeyBlaze Typing Tutor – www.nchsoftware.com/typingtutor/index.html
KeyBlaze is a free typing tutor software program that allows you to start with basic lessons and then move on to practice lessons including poetry, prose and drills. KeyBlaze also features a typing test. The small program downloads quickly, creating a shortcut on your desktop. It has a simple interface—very easy to use.

Learning Express Library – www.learnatest.com/lel
This online course is available from any computer connected to the Internet. All you need is your library card number to register. It was created by certified instructors specifically for users who are new to Microsoft Word. It includes hands-on practice, interactive content, step-by-step instruction with audio, plus other great features designed to make learning the basics of the program effective and easy, all at your own pace. New users: Click "Register," choose the "Computer Skills**"** learning center, Microsoft Word course, *Course 1, Basic*.

LearningLadder – www.learningladder.org/basics
You'll find a *Computer Basics* learning module here that covers (among other things) the mouse, keyboard, and word processing. Good stuff!

MakeBeliefsComix – www.Makebeliefscomix.com
A great way to let creative juices flow—and to practice typing and writing skills—while you try your hand at creating your own comic strips!

Mousing Around – www.pbclibrary.org/mousing/intro.htm
If you're totally new to computers, you really should check out one of the very best tutorials out there – the *Mousing Around* tutorial. This surprisingly entertaining tutorial begins with the most very basic information about the mouse, and builds on each step, ultimately giving you the ability to use your computer with much more confidence. Try it!

Powertyping – www.Powertyping.com
Not necessarily a pretty site – and probably more for "kids" under 30 – but there could hardly be a more fun way to practice typing faster ... and faster ... and faster ...

Puzzler-Maker – www.Puzzler-maker.com
Although you cannot actually DO the puzzle online (unless you buy the software), it is still a fun exercise as you type words and clues to create your own puzzles. Then, just print the puzzle to fill out later.

Typing Master Games – www.typingmaster.com/games/typing-games.asp
These two games can be challenging and addictive, but either way, you'll learn while you play. In *KeyMan* you'll type changing letters to guide KeyMan through the maze. Eat all the energy pills while avoiding the evil typo ghosts. The other game is called *Bubbles*, and in this underwater typing game your goal is to burst the bubbles before they reach the surface of the sea.
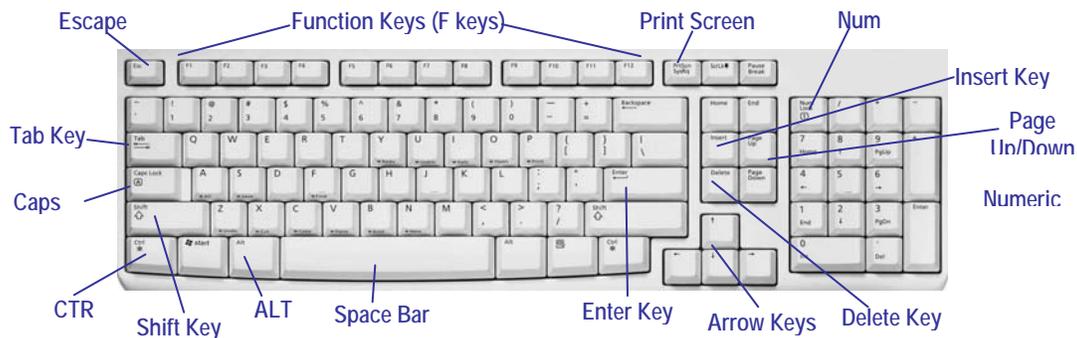
TypingTest – www.TypingTest.com
If you simply want to test your typing speed, here is the perfect, no-nonsense, no-download way to go. It takes only a few minutes to complete.

Vocabulary

Keyboard Vocabulary

Although keyboards differ, they all follow the same basic layout which looks something like this:

Shift Key. Press shift at the same time you are pressing any other key and you will get a new character. For instance, press shift at the same time you press a letter and it will capitalize the letter. Press shift at the same time you press a number and you will get a "%" or "$."

Tab Key. Just like a typewriter, the tab key helps you indent your text.

Function Keys. Sometimes referred to as "F keys," they are not as popular as they once were (with older DOS programs). But there's one F key you can pretty much always count on: the F1 key. It will most often bring up a help menu, no matter what program you're in.

Enter Key. On your keyboard, the Enter key might be marked as a "Return" key or with only a large arrow. It's used to go down to a new line when typing text. It also can be pressed any time a button or choice is highlighted (within a software program or on the Internet) to tell the computer you select that particular item.

CTRL Key. The Control key is used in conjunction with another key to initiate a certain action. In most programs, holding down the CTRL key while pressing the S key will save a file, CTRL+P will print a file, etc.

ALT Key. Also used in combination with other keys to do something. For instance, ALT+F usually opens the File menu.

Caps Lock. Press it once and when you type the letters they will all be capitalized. Press it again and the letters will go back to lower case.

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Num Lock and Numeric Keypad. The Num Lock key toggles the numeric keypad on and off. When off, the keys perform other functions (i.e., directional arrows) instead of typing numbers.

Space Bar. Used to enter a blank space between sentences when typing text.

Backspace. This key will remove the character to the left of the *cursor* (the small blinking vertical line that shows you where you are on a page of text).

Shift Key. The Shift key allows you to create a capital letter. Or ... you can hold down Shift key and press one of the number keys (on the top row of keyboard) to get a punctuation symbol (!, @, #, $, for instance).

Insert Key. No longer found on some keyboards. It's a toggle key for either inserting text as you type (the default), or overwriting existing text.

Tab Key. Within a text document, the Tab key will move the cursor to the next "tab stop." In forms, it is used to move from field to field or from one table cell to the next. Pressing Tab and Shift simultaneously will usually "tab" you back to the previous field.

Delete. Pressing this key will remove the character to the right of the cursor when pressed.

Print Screen. The Print Screen button will send a copy of your monitor's screen to the "clipboard" ready to be pasted into another program.

Mouse Vocabulary

Pointer/Cursor – When you move the mouse around, you will see a symbol that moves around on the computer's monitor screen that changes depending on what you're pointing to. You'll see an arrow or hand when there's a choice to be made, an "I" beam when you're in an area where text can be inserted, a cross of arrows when you can move something, and more.

Left-Click – (Select/Highlight) This is the standard click when you're choosing or selecting something. It's done with your pointer-finger on the left button (think about how it's like you're *pointing* at something you want!).

Double-Click – (Open/Start) By pointing to something and then double-clicking (double-clicks are ALWAYS with the left mouse button), you are telling the thing you're clicking on to open or to start. In text areas, however, double-clicking can select a whole word. (Try *triple-clicking* in text to select a whole paragraph!)

Right-Click – (Menu) If you remember only one thing, remember that a right-click ALWAYS means MENU. By right-clicking on an item or in a certain area, you'll get context menus, special menus specifically about whatever you're pointing to, letting you know what your options are. It's the secret weapon of expert computer users!

Drag – You can also use the mouse to drag items (like pictures, files, etc.) from one place to another or to resize windows or boxes. Practice pointing to a shortcut icon (little picture) on the computer desktop screen, holding down the left mouse button, and then moving the mouse to *drag* the icon to another place—then let go! Also, if you move your mouse arrow over an object and see a cross with arrows pointing each direction, you've found the "move" symbol, meaning you can move the object by holding down the left button when you see the symbol and then dragging. You'll often see the "move" symbol in programs with pictures and graphics.
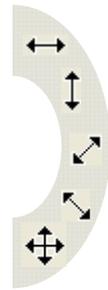
Scroll Bars – In open windows you'll sometimes see scroll bars along the right side or along the bottom of the window. They're usually grey-colored bars with elevator-type boxes in them that can be dragged up and down or sideways (at the bottom) to help you see more of a screen or document. If you don't see a scrollbar, you know there is nothing more to see!

Close Button – This "X" on a field of red is found in the upper right-hand corner of your screen. One-click on the "X" closes out what ever happens to be open on your screen.

Minimize – This button on the upper right-hand corner of your screen will shrink your work into a button so you can work on something else. Click that button once to restore your previous work to the full screen.

Maximize – This button on the upper right-hand corner of your screen will increase the size of the document that you're working on to fill the entire screen.
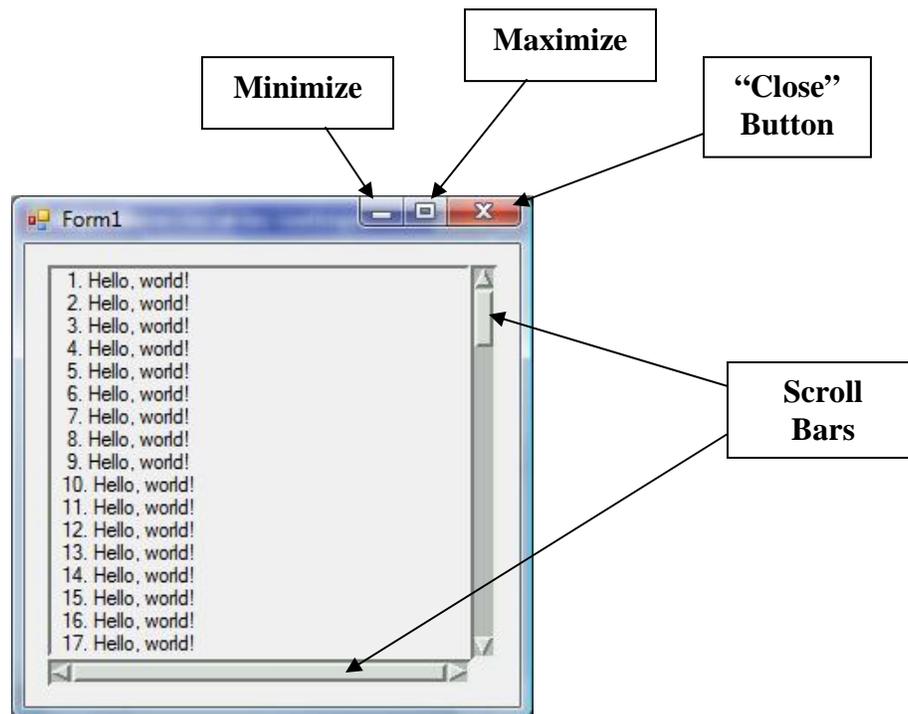
Basic Computer Practice

Let's practice using some of the keys we've been talking about. First we'll open WordPad (it's on almost every Windows-run computer). You can also use Microsoft Word for these exercises or any other word processing software.

Let's go!

To open **WordPad**, click the Start button in the bottom left-hand corner of the computer screen. On the Start menu click: **Programs, Accessories,** then **WordPad**.

   Or…

If you're using something other than WordPad, open that software. If you're at the library or literacy program computers, have someone help you open the word processing software.

1. Click the **Maximize** button (the symbol in upper right corner of the window, just to the left of the **X** (close) button. It looks like one square (or window). This makes the window fill the whole monitor screen.

2. Look for the blinking **Cursor** (a small blinking vertical line that shows that you can type in that space). This is where you are on the blank page.

3. On your keyboard, press the **ENTER** key three times, and notice how the cursor moves down the page.

4. Press the **BACKSPACE** key three times. This erases characters to the left of the cursor, including the returns you put in with the Enter key.

5. Point your mouse cursor (which now looks like an "I" beam because it's in a text area) to the middle of the blank page, then **Right-Click** with your mouse. You will see a menu pop up (REMEMBER: Right-clicks *always* bring up menus that have to do with whatever you're pointing to when you click).

6. We don't need the menu after all, so press the **ESC** key on your keyboard to close the menu (the **ESC** key is used by some programs to cancel an operation).

Type your name

1. Using the **SHIFT** key for capitals of the first letters of each,
   type your first and last name, then press the **ENTER** key.

2. Type the words **Keyboard Class** and press **ENTER** again.

3. Press the **Up-Arrow** key one time. Now you're back on the line that reads "Keyboard Class."

4. Press the **Right-Arrow** key 8 times. Your cursor (the vertical blinking line) should now be
   between the words "keyboard" and "class."

5. Press the **Home** key. This moves the cursor to the beginning of the line.

6. Press the **End** key, and watch the cursor move to the end of the line.

7. Press **Home** again, then press the **Right-Arrow** key 8 times.

8. Press **Delete** 6 times. The delete key deletes characters to the right of the cursor, so this should
   have deleted the word "class" and the blank space to the left of it.

9. Notice the toolbar towards the top of your computer screen– the row of little picture icons? On
   that toolbar, you'll find a picture of an arrow that's curved and pointing backwards? That's the
   undo button. Using your mouse, point to the **Undo** button
   and click it six times and watch it bring back the word "class," one
   letter at a time, and the blank space you deleted. REMEMBER:
   The **Undo** button is your friend! You can almost always count on it
   to undo the very last thing you did in a document. (Personally, I think it should be called the
   Oops! button.)

10. Now press **Backspace** 8 times. This will delete the word "keyboard."

11. Press **Delete** 6 times. This will remove the word "class."

Make a list

Next, you will create a tabulated list using the **TAB** key. *(In this exercise you will discover that the CTRL key can make other keys on the keyboard do more than one thing. **Note:** These commands can also be accomplished using the mouse.)*

1. Let's make the first line of our list in bold letters. To turn on the "bold" function, hold down the **CTRL** key, then tap and release the **B** key (**CTRL+B**).

2. Type **Monday** and press **TAB**. (The cursor should now line up under the 1" mark on the ruler.)

3. Type **Tuesday** and press **TAB**. (The cursor should line up under the 2" mark on the ruler.)

4. Type **Wednesday** and press **TAB**. (The cursor should line up under the 3" mark on the ruler.)

5. Type **Thursday** and press **TAB**. (The cursor should line up under the 4" mark on the ruler.)

6. Type **Friday** and press **ENTER**.

7. Now press **CTRL+B** to deactivate the bold formatting.

8. Type **Water plants** and press **TAB**.

9. Type **Clean kitchen** and press **TAB** (this should line up under **Tuesday**).

10. Type **Sweep porch** and press **TAB**.

11. Type **Go shopping**, press **TAB**.

12. Type **Wash car** and press **ENTER**.

13. Then type **Feed fish** (TAB), **Pay bills** (TAB), **Dust furniture** (TAB), **Groceries** (TAB), **Hair cut** – then press **ENTER**.

Save a document

Now let's save the list you created…

1. Hold down the **CTRL** key, then press and release the **S** key (**CTRL+S**).

2. In the **Save In** dialog box, point your mouse cursor to the **My Documents** folder in the left panel and click on it to make sure your document will be saved there. (Note: **My Documents** is the default, so it will probably already be chosen.)

3. Look in the box towards bottom called **File name:** -- and notice that the word **Document** is highlighted there. REMEMBER: Whenever text is highlighted, whatever you type next will replace that text, so do that now…

4. Type **List** and watch as it replaces the word **Document**. You've now named your document "List." (Note: Do you see a dot and the letters "rtf" or "doc" after the name "list"? That's called the "extension" part of a file name. All files have extensions that show the computer what program to use to open them.)

5. Point to the **Save** button and left-click with your pointer finger. You just saved your document! Now close **WordPad** (or the word-processing software you're using) by clicking on the red square with an "X" in it in the upper-right corner of the screen. Now we'll see if you can find it again.

6. To find your saved document: Open **WordPad** or the word-processing software you were using, as you first did.

7. Find the grey-colored menu bar toward the top of the window, and click on the word **File**.

8. On the File menu that pops down, you'll find a list of the last few files saved, and you should see your file: **List.rtf** or **List.doc**. Click on the name of the file, and watch it open. You did it! Now close again.

Reading Practice

Language Experience Approach. This exercise uses the *Language Experience* technique, with the following basic steps:

*   Think of something of interest to you. It may be about your family, a vacation, your job, your children—anything. This will be the topic of your "story."
*   Dictate your story as your tutor records your words—this will become your new reading and lesson material.
*   Read the story several times together until the story has become quite familiar.

- Work on any difficult words from the story and do other activities that will reinforce reading skills.

Then… when you are able to read your language experience piece well on your own, practice typing it and then reading the text aloud from your typed work. For practice using punctuation keys, talk about proper punctuation and edit your piece accordingly using your new keyboard skills.

Print the Paragraph. Use a paragraph of text from something you are reading and type it into the computer and save it in Word (you can also find some good paragraphs from an excellent resource such as www.breakingnewsenglish.com). Open the saved file and print a copy. Read from the printed page until confident, and then retype the text for extra practice.

Writing Practice

Question & Answer. Using the text from a book or magazine that you are currently reading, begin this exercise by typing a paragraph from the text into the first column of a two-column table (see example below). Do this for the first three or four paragraphs. Next, read aloud the first paragraph and think of one or two questions about the paragraph. Type the question(s) in the right-hand column next to the paragraph they refer to. Then, underline the words in the left column that answer the questions. This exercise demonstrates a method you can use to improve comprehension in everything you read… It is possible for you to have your own questions and answers in mind as you read. (This exercise is based on GreatStart5's *Use Those Margins!* interactive.)

Example from Bambi by Felix Salten:

Paragraphs	Questions
He came into the world in the middle of the thicket, in one of those little, hidden forest glades which seem to be entirely open, but are really screened in on all sides. There was very little room in it, scarcely enough for him and his mother.	1. Bambi came into the world in the middle of what? 2. Was there a lot of room for Bambi and his mother in their thicket?
Paragraph two would be typed here.	*(same as above)*
Paragraph three …	*(same as above)*

Chaining. Take turns adding a word or phrase to a sentence, first out loud and then typed below the original sentence. This will provide practice not only in typing, but also in copying, pasting, and inserting text as you copy each sentence from above, paste it again, and then add to it. (Based on GreatStart5's *Chaining* interactive.)

Example:

The storm left puddles in the road.
> This is the original sentence. Practice copying and pasting this a few lines below. Then the other person should think of words or phrases to add to it. For example...

The storm left <mark>large</mark> puddles in the road.
> After adding the word "large," you would copy this sentence and paste it below again ... (highlighting just for exercise explanation)

**The storm <mark>yesterday</mark> left large puddles in the road.**
> After adding "yesterday," copy and paste again, etc. Keep adding more words to the sentence (or sentences to the story).

One way to copy & paste text:
- Point to the space just before the text you want to copy and click once to put the cursor there.
- Press and hold the **Shift** key, then use the **right-arrow** key to move across the text you want to copy. You can also use the **down-arrow** key if you're selecting more than one line, and use the **End** key to quickly select a whole line of text (just remember to keep holding down the **Shift** key).
- While the text is highlighted, press **Ctrl**+**C** (the control key and the letter C). This will copy the text.
- Next, point to where you want to "paste" the text and click there.
- Now press **Ctrl**+**V**.

Another way to copy and paste text:
- Point to the space just before the text you want to copy, click and hold the left mouse button down.
- Still holding the left mouse button down, drag your mouse over the text you want to copy. It should cover the text in black.
- Let go of the left mouse button at the end of the text you want to copy.
- Go to the tool bar at the top of the page and find the "copy" button – it has two pieces of paper side by side. Click on that button.
- Now click the place in your document where you want the copied text to go.
- Go to the tool bar again and find the "paste" button. It shows a clipboard with a piece of paper on top of it. Click on that button.
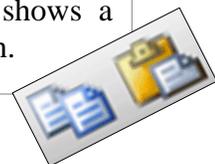
Real World Practice

Once you've become more comfortable "in the driver's seat" at the computer, it would be a good idea—if possible—to take a "field trip" to another computer. It's important to learn that not all computers are created equal. You'll find each one is set up a little differently, with different keyboards, monitors, and mice (okay ... is it MICE or MOUSES?!) and software. This will be a great learning experience and will help prepare you for the "real world."

Independent Practice/Homework Ideas

If you're able to practice outside of your tutoring session, spend some time each day going over what you've learned so far, to reinforce what you covered in your sessions together ... and don't forget the online typing games!

Milestones

- *Initial Effort* – Be able to locate main keys on keyboard and explain their function. Understand hand/finger placement on keyboard and mouse. Be able to use mouse to open Word (or Notepad) and type a few sentences.

- *Making Progress* – All of the above, plus… Begin to type letters, words, then sentences without looking at the keyboard. Move around text using arrow keys. Delete text with the backspace key and the delete key. Format text with bold, italics, etc. Save a document, close it, and find it again to reopen.

- *Accomplished* – Able to do all the above without assistance.

Contributor's Biography

Cindy Ehde. Cindy's background in computer software support and training helped much in the development of this curriculum. In fact, as part of a Merced County department a number of years ago, Cindy developed curriculum and provided training for groups of county employees—one group at a time—receiving on-going kudos for helping them feel more confident with their real-life work tasks requiring computer skills. Cindy's other interests include design and layout, writing and editing, and photography – the latter a hobby she shares with her husband John. And of her current activities, Cindy adds: "Being a part of the AmeriCorps team here in Ventura has been a unique privilege and joy."

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