

Basic Concepts of Touch Typing

Touch Typing is not really hard to learn. It simply involves learning a few basic concepts, then practicing for a half hour or so every day for about 3 weeks to a month to master the entire keyboard. It's time well worth investing because, like riding a bicycle, it's something you never forget once you learn.



The entire touch typing technique is based upon the concept of the **home row keys**. These keys are shown with highlighted caps in the picture. The eight highlighted keys are the "home positions" for the fingers of your left and right hands.



This next picture shows where you place your fingers. For the left hand, the little finger rests lightly on the A key, then ring finger on the S, middle finger on the D, and the index on the F. The right index finger rests on the J key, the middle on the K, ring on the L, and the little finger on the colon/semicolon key.

You may want to hold your palms up for better control when you're first learning. This can get tiring, so after a while you can rest the bottoms of your palms on whatever surface the keyboard is resting. You might wonder what role, if any, your thumbs play in touch typing. They will be used to press the spacebar, the long key at the bottom of the keyboard.

Pay attention--here is the secret to successful touch typing: **after you type a key, always "return home."** Put another way, always keep your fingers on the home row keys except when they are typing a "non-home" key. This means **all** your fingers, not just the one that is pressing a key. For example, to type an "e" (or any other "non-home" character) you would start out with all fingers on the home keys, reach up with your left index finger **while keeping the other fingers on their home keys**, press the E key, then return the left middle finger to its "home"--the D key. Keeping your fingers in "home row position" is what allows your muscles to "learn" the positions of all the characters on the keyboard. You won't have to consciously memorize these key positions; this will happen automatically with practice. This is why it's important to practice every day for at least a half hour until you have mastered the entire keyboard.

Now [click here](#) to learn about the left home row keys, the keys you will be typing on the first level of Type Now!.

Type Now! Tutorial

Basic Concepts of Touch Typing

Level 1 -- Left Home Row Keys ASDF

Level 2 -- Right Home Row Keys JKL;

Level 3 -- Adding E and I

Level 4 -- Adding R and U

Level 5 -- Adding W and O

Level 6 -- Adding Q and P

Level 7 -- Adding G and H

Level 8 -- Adding T and Y

Level 9 -- Adding V and M

Level 10 -- Adding B and N

Level 11 -- Adding Z and X

Level 12 -- Adding C and the Comma

Level 13 -- Adding the Question Mark and the Period

Level 14 -- Mastering the Number Row

Level 15 -- Mastering the Numeric Keypad

Good Typing Habits

Good Typing Habits

Here are some things to remember during and after you have mastered touch typing:

- (1) Try not to look at the keys as you type. You'll have to look at them when you're first learning, but try to let your fingers memorize the position as soon as possible. You can't type with any speed if you have to constantly move your head from the copy to the keyboard and back.
- (2) Try to avoid spelling out the words as you type. Again, you might find yourself doing this while you're first learning, as a sort of "crutch" to get you through the lessons, but get rid of this habit as soon as you can. Most of the words you will type will be ordinary words, and your fingers will soon memorize whole sequences of movements that will enable you to type a word as soon as you think of it. (I know, you don't believe me now--but it *will* happen! Trust me!)
- (3) Don't pound the keys. Use a light touch. Most PC keyboards will respond to the lightest touch, and will repeat if you press the key long enough. Take out your aggressions at the gym. Spare those poor little keys.
- (4) I don't want to sound like your mother, but it helps a lot to sit up straight and have the keyboard at the proper position, one in which your arms are parallel to the floor. Typing can be hard on the wrists, and *carpal tunnel* or "repetitive stress" syndrome is a very real problem for typists and people who do a lot of data entry. This condition could result in chronic pain and even require surgery. Generally, to avoid this condition:
 - a) take frequent breaks (every 10 minutes or so). Remove your hands from the keyboard and exercise your fingers by shaking them or making/releasing a fist.
 - b) get a wrist pad to put in front of your keyboard to rest your palms and wrists on while you type. (They're cheap--buy one if your stingy boss won't.)

Level 1 -- Left Home Row Keys ASDF



The very first keys you will actually practice typing are the left home row keys, the A, S, D, and F keys. Place the fingers of your left hand on these keys, resting them lightly. The little finger goes on the A, ring finger on the S, middle finger on the D, and the index finger on the F. At first it might be difficult to push down with one finger while not pressing down with the others, but this will get easier with practice. (You can try pressing A, D, or F now--but pressing S will open a Search box. If you want to just practice typing keys, you can do that when Type Now! is in [practice mode](#).)

Now you need to practice typing just these keys. Read the rest of this tutorial page, then close this help file and return to Type Now! and click on the **Start** button. A dialog box will appear:

Select a Typing Level:

Level 1 -- ASDF only Level 9 -- adds V M
 Level 2 -- adds JKL; Level 10 -- adds B N
 Level 3 -- adds E I Level 11 -- adds Z X
 Level 4 -- adds R U Level 12 -- adds C ,
 Level 5 -- adds W O Level 13 -- adds ? .
 Level 6 -- adds Q P Level 14 -- Number Row
 Level 7 -- adds G H Level 15 -- Number Pad
 Level 8 -- adds T Y Level 16 -- Review/User

Select a Game Type:

Single Letter Game Phrase/Sentence Game

Select Difficulty:

Easy Medium Hard

OK Cancel

Click on "Level 1 -- ASDF Only." This tells Type Now! to give you only letters, words or phrases consisting of the letters A, S, D or F. Then click "Single Letter Game" and "Easy" difficulty level to start. You can change these later, after you build up your speed and accuracy. Typing single letters can be tedious, so Type Now! uses a little horse racing game to make these single letter drills easy and fun.



As soon as you click OK, the area above the Type Now! keyboard changes to a white "racing field," and two horses appear. The top horse is yours, and has a letter in front of its nose. The race starts when you type the letter. Your horse moves and another letter appears (it could be the same letter). Your horse only moves when you type the letter that is in front of its nose. The other horse moves according to a timer, whether you type or not, so your goal is to move your horse to the right end of the racing field before the computer's horse. If you get there first, you win money! The amount depends on the difficulty level. Easy races pay off at \$50 each. Medium level pays \$100 per win, and Hard level pays \$500. (Hard is **very** hard. This level is only for those who enjoy impossible challenges.)

When you can win pretty easily at Medium difficulty level, go on to the phrase/sentence game. If you haven't quit Type Now!, your selections will still be there when you click on the Start button, so you can just click the Phrase/Sentence Game button. (You'll probably want to select Easy difficulty as well.)

Level 10 -- Adding B and N



Typing B is another job for that left index finger, and it's an awkward stretch. You're going to hate it, but there is just no alternative. If you find you can't do it without lifting your middle finger off the D key a bit, then you've got plenty of company. Try to keep the right little and ring fingers on the A and S, however. It's important to keep those other fingers on their home keys as much as possible. (Don't type the B right now, though--unless the Back button at the top of this window is grayed out.)



As you've probably guessed, the N is typed with the right index finger. The J-N reach is a bit easier than the J-M, so you should get the hang of it quickly. Try J-N, N-J, and so on. Only three more letters left!

Practice with the games at Level 10.

Level 11 -- Adding Z and X

At this point, you really begin to wonder whether Z and X are worth it, but you need to learn them to type **zero** and **six**. And if you apply for a job and someone asks if you can touch type, you're going to feel really silly telling them you can do it as long as you don't have to type Z or X.



The right hand is the workhorse here. The pinky reaches down from its cozy nest on the A key to type the Z. A bit annoying, but you won't have to do it that often. (Except when you practice, of course.)



Even more annoying is the reach from the S to the X. Lots of people have trouble doing this, so if you are one of those people, just be persistent. You *will* master it eventually. Type S-X, X-S, SIX, SAX, SEX. It *can* be fun.

Speaking of fun, go play the games at Level 11!

Level 12 -- Adding C and the Comma

By now you should be getting very proficient at touch typing. At this stage you can type almost anything, but if your name is Carl or Carol, you'll be glad you've finally reached this lesson. We're also going to add the comma, your first punctuation mark. Such excitement!



The C is a reach down from the D key with the right middle finger. Somewhat awkward, but certainly no worse than the Z or X reaches. (Don't try pressing the C key now, unless you want to go instantly to the Contents page of this help file.)



Type a comma (,) by reaching down from the K key. You'll also notice that this is a two-symbol key--if you hold down the shift key, you type the left angle bracket (<). In the next lesson, where you learn the period and question mark, you also learn the right angle bracket and slash symbols as well. Since all keys have a shifted state, it makes sense to put two symbols on non-alphabetic keys. This greatly reduces the size of the keyboard.

Practice with the games at Level 12.

Level 13 -- Adding the Question Mark and the Period

After you have learned these keys, you will have "mastered the keyboard," as much of it as most touch typists know, anyway.

There are several other keys on the PC keyboard that you'll need, such as the quotation marks, the backslash, the tilda (~), brackets [] and braces {}. Type Now! has no lessons on these keys because PC keyboards tend to disagree on where to place them. Since you have the basic home-row-reach-and-return method down by now, you can add these keys as you need them.



The period (and, shifted, the right angle bracket) key is reached from the L home row key. Just reach down with the right ring finger, then return to "home base" as you should with every non-home-row key.



The question mark is a shifted key. If it seems illogical to you to put the slash (/) in the nonshifted position, I am in total agreement. This practice probably stems from the older typewriters, where the period, a much more frequently used symbol, shared the keyface. The angle brackets (<, >) were added to computer keyboards by the math people, who were pretty much the only people into computers when the first PC keyboards were developed.

Practice these keys in the games at Level 13.

Level 14 -- Mastering the Number Row

You have two choices on the PC for typing numbers--you can use the numbers on the top row of the keyboard, or enter numbers with the numeric keypad, usually the far right portion of the keyboard. There's a good reason to learn the number row, because this row, unlike the numeric keypad, has a series of frequently-used symbols in the shifted position of each key. Fortunately, which symbols occupy these positions has somewhat stabilized in recent years, so the number row on most PCs looks like this:



A S D F F F/J J K L ; ; ;

You type the number/symbol keys using the same reach-and-return technique that you learned with the QWERTY row. The picture above shows the home row key that is used as a finger origin for each key. Note that the 6 key can be typed with either index finger--it's a matter of personal preference. The right hand pinky is used for the zero and the math symbols, as well as the backspace key, which is usually to the right of the +/- key.

The games at Level 14 will require typing the symbols !@#\$\$%^&*()-+= as well as the numbers. If you want practice in using only the numeric keypad (many data-entry jobs *must* use the keypad), then move on to Level 15, which features the PC's number pad.

Level 15 -- Mastering the Numeric Keypad

The number pad, or numeric keypad, is a new skill for typists, one that came in when PCs suddenly replaced typewriters during the 1980s. The keypad is a wonderful innovation for anyone who has to enter series of numbers into the computer, and the layout is more or less the same from one machine to another.

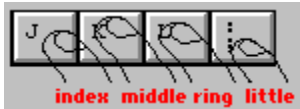


As you can see, the keypad is really a bank of five rows of four keys, except three of the keys are enlarged, for a total of seventeen. Keypad typing is strictly a right-hand affair, with the index, middle, ring and pinky more or less assigned to each of the four columns of keys. Only the index, middle and ring fingers are used to input numbers, while the pinky takes care of the -, +, and **Enter** keys. The Enter key has the same function as the Enter key on the main part of the keyboard, so you can "enter" a number, then immediately start typing another without having to move your hand from the keypad. The 4-5-6 row is considered the "home row" of the keypad, and the little finger gets the extra responsibility for the processing keys. The technique is basically the same--the fingers remain on their home keys and reach up or down (or to the right in the case of the pinky) to type the other keys.

Level 15 provides practice for the numeric keypad, using only the numbers and the math symbols. Be sure to use the keypad's Enter key while you're on this level.

Note: Most PC keypads have arrows on the 4, 6, 8, and 2 keys, and Home, Pg Up, Pg Dn, and End on the 7, 9, 1, and 3 keys. This is a holdover from the early PCs that had no dedicated arrow and paging keys. When the Num Lock key is lit, these functions are not available. With the PC "AT" type keyboard in almost all PCs now, and the Num Lock key automatically set to ON when the PC boots, most people simply ignore these other functions and use the keypad strictly for number entry.

Level 2 -- Right Home Row Keys JKL;



Now it's time to master the rest of the home row keys. Put your right index finger on the J key, middle on the K, ring finger on the L, and little finger on the colon/semicolon key. Are your *left hand fingers* still on the ASDF keys? They should be! From this point on, whenever you start typing, both right and left hand fingers should be positioned on the home row keys, each finger on its "home" key. This is the standard touch typing position. You should always assume this position whenever you first put your hands on a keyboard. Put your right hand fingers on the right home row keys if they aren't already there, and practice typing them.

When you first start Type Now!, the program is in *practice mode*. This means you can press the keys on your keyboard and they will appear to be pressed on Type Now!'s graphic keyboard. You can use this mode when you're just starting to locate new keys and getting used to the "feel" of each key. (However, pressing the spacebar could pop up the menu button or start button dialog if the focus is on one of these buttons.)

The procedure for learning new keys will be the same from now on: play the single letter game until you're fairly proficient, then move to the phrase/sentence game until you feel you're ready to learn the next set of keys. So let's start that single letter game at Level 2 now!

Level 3 -- Adding E and I

The E and I keys are located above and slightly left of home row keys D and K. There is an important concept to remember here: **Every non-home-row key is typed by "reaching" from a certain home row key.** This is always a two-step technique. The first step is to reach with the assigned finger and press the non-home-row key. The second step is to return the finger to its assigned home row key.



The E key is typed with the middle finger of the left hand. This finger's home key is the D key, so it's an easy reach to the E. Again, it's a two-step process. Lift the finger off the D key and press the E, then return the finger so it rests again on the D key, its "home." Try it now. Not too difficult, right? Try typing D, then E, then D again, and so on. Now you can see how important it is to learn the home key positions. (Note: Don't worry if your other fingers of your hand rise off the home row keys a little when you reach for a "non-home-row" key. This is normal.)



The procedure is exactly the same with the I key, except you're going to use the middle finger of the right hand, because the I key's home key is the K. Try it now. Alternate typing I and K, E and D. Then try I and D, E and K, and other combinations of these four letters.

Learning just these two new keys greatly expands the number of words you can type. Try typing **like**, **deal** and **flies**. Pretty cool, huh? Now you're ready to try the games at Level 3!

Level 4 -- Adding R and U

The R and U keys are located above and slightly left of home row keys F and J.



Type the R key with the index finger of the left hand. This finger's home key is the F key, so it's an easy reach to the R. Remember the two-step process. Lift the finger off the F and type the R, then return the finger so it rests again on the F key, its "home." Try it now. This shouldn't be any more difficult than typing E or I. Try typing F, then R, then F again, and so on.



The U key's home key is the J, so you reach up with the index finger of the right hand. Try it now. Alternate typing J and U, F and R. Then try U and F, R and J, and other combinations of these four letters.

Adding R and U continues to increase the number of words you can type. Especially R, which lets you make **sadder** out of **sad** and **Lakers** out of **lake**. Now you're ready to try the games at Level 4.

Level 5 -- Adding W and O

The W and O keys are located above and slightly left of home row keys S and L.



Type the W key with the ring finger of the left hand. Unlike the D-E and F-U reaches, it may be a bit harder reaching from S to the W. You may have a tendency to lift the little finger or other fingers with the ring finger when you reach. You'll just have to work at it. It'll come with practice. Lift the finger off the S and type the W, then return the finger to its home position on the S key. Try it now. Try typing S, then W, then S again, as you've done on the previous levels..



The procedure for typing the O is the same, only using the ring finger of the right hand. The right ring finger's home key is the L. If you're right-handed, you will probably find it easier to reach from L to O than reaching from S to W. Try alternating L and O, S and W, then try O, S, W, L, and other combinations of these four letters. Can you type **owls** now?

Now you're ready to try the games at Level 5.

Level 6 -- Adding Q and P

The Q and P keys are located above and slightly left of home row keys A and ;.



Type the Q key with the little finger of the left hand. This stretch is going to be difficult at first, because the little finger is not used for precision work that often. Again, it gets easier with practice. Lift your left pinky off the A and type the Q, then return the finger to its home position on the A key. Try it now. Try typing A, then Q, then A again, etc., until you can do it comfortably.



The procedure for typing the P is the same, only using the little finger of the right hand. The right pinky's home key is the ;. Like the L-O reach, if you're right-handed, you will probably find it easier than reaching from A to Q. Try alternating ; and P, A and Q, then try P, A, Q, ; and other combinations of these four keys. Now you can type **queue** and **paper**. Isn't that great?

Practice with the games at Level 6.

Level 7 -- Adding G and H

Now for something a little different: the G and H keys.

G and H, as you can see, are located right next to each other between the left and right home row keys. Technically, they're part of the home row. They would probably be home row keys if we had five fingers and a thumb on each hand, but alas--they're non-home row keys as for those of us with standard equipment.



To type a G, just reach to the right of the F with your left index finger. It's pretty easy. This should be a nice break from those A-Q and L-O reaches. Practice typing F-G, F-G, G-F, etc.



Now lift your right index finger off the J to the left a bit and press that H key. Not that hard, is it? Type J-H, J-H, H-J, H-J.

Congratulations--you're more than halfway to mastering the keyboard!
Now try the games at Level 7.

Level 8 -- Adding T and Y

If you've been keeping score, you've probably noticed that your index fingers are responsible for more keys than your other fingers. This is indeed the case. In fact, your two index fingers will be used to type almost a dozen keys (Six for the left index finger; five for the right). They are the "workhorse fingers" for touch typists. And T and Y are two more keys that you will type with those busy index fingers!



The T is typed by reaching up from the F, just as you did with the R, but this time a bit more to the right. It's not such a bad reach. Don't try typing a T right now, though--it'll open the History dialog box (see Menu buttons above).



Unfortunately, the J-Y reach is quite a bit longer than the J-U reach you learned back on Level 4. You have to stretch that right index finger up and over the H to get to the Y. Come on, now. Accept it with grace. You've got some even harder stretches coming, so practice it a bit and you'll see it's not impossible. Ah, the wonders of human anatomy! Type J-Y, J-Y, Y-J. Come on--don't give up now. If Joy, Jerry, Jody, Joey and Judy can do it, you can too!

Now go play those games at Level 8.

Level 9 -- Adding V and M

You have now reached a turning point in your typing education.
First, the good news: you've mastered 2/3 of this tutorial!

Sigh...now the bad news. Reaching down from the home row is a bit harder than reaching up from it.
But, hey--you can do it. You've come this far, so don't give up now.



The V is not really that bad, so let's start with it. Move your left index finger (yes--that one again) down and to the right a bit and press the V key. This is one of the easiest downward reaches, so practice a bit and build your confidence. F-V, F-V, V-F, V-F. Excellent!



Going from J to M is a little harder. Reach down with the right index finger. Just do it--what else can I say? It will get easier. Type J-M, M-J, etc. James and Major Tom will love you for it.

And, of course, play those games at Level 9.

Yeah -- from the British "yea."

COZY -- comfortable. This word came from Norway, where they value being warm and cozy. After this lesson, you'll be able to type it, too. (Yeah, well--you didn't **have** to click on it, you know.)

get the hang of it -- Roughly, "learn to do it." Even those of us who grew up speaking English have absolutely no idea why we say this. If you think this is strange, wait until you hear "hang in there," "we'll hang out a while," "hang five" and "hanging around." It's enough to make you want to hang yourself.

hey For our international friends, this is yet another one of those silly English expressions. It rhymes with "they" and is used to get your attention as in "Hey you! You dropped your wallet!" It's not very polite, however. Very useful in New York.

Pinky -- If English isn't your native language, you may not be familiar with this word. It just means "little finger." English can be pretty silly at times. But you probably know that.

practice mode -- When you first start Type Now!, it comes up in practice mode. You can press keys and they will appear to be pressed on Type Now!'s graphical keyboard. It's not a bad idea to "warm up" before a game by practicing the letters you've just learned. Type Now! also returns to practice mode whenever you quit a game.

yes

