Welcome to the Typospheric Typing Speed Competition

at
"Virtual Herman's 2"
Saturday, February 19, 2022

The copy text for this contest is being distributed ahead of time to give participants an opportunity to print it, if they desire, before the contest begins.

*** Please do not look at the copy text until you are ready to begin the contest along with the other participants!

*** Contest categories: "modern" manual (front-strike), electric, "ancient/antique/difficult" (e.g. up-strike, separate upper/lowercase keyboard) -- subject to participation with a "winner" in each category

*** The winner(s) will get a tee shirt, a certificate via email, and the usual bragging rights!

Everyone will compete at more or less the same time. The copy text shows lines you will type with a cumulative count of "words" at the end of each line. (These are computed using an average word length of 5 characters.) You will subtract erroneous words from the number of words you attempted and divide that by the number of minutes to get your words-per-minute (wpm) score. The highest score wins!

Just follow these steps:

1. Note the time when you begin typing.
2. You must type for at least ten minutes.
3. Note the time when you stop typing and determine how many minutes you spent. (The math is easy if it's exactly 10 minutes, but you may score better the longer you type!)
4. Proofread what you typed by comparing it with the copy: you will be docked for words you "messed up" (mistyped or omitted).
5. Subtract that count of errors from the cumulative word count shown at the end of the last complete line that you typed.
6. Divide that result by the number of minutes to get your "words per minute" score.

For example, if you begin typing at 4:09 P.M. and stop at the end of the line marked 392 ("words") at 4:29 P.M. (20 minutes), your wpm would be 392/20=19.6, which you may round up to 20 wpm.

Here's a little worksheet:

_____ Number of Minutes (end time - start time)

_____ "WORDS" (shown at end of last line you typed)

_____ Number of Errors (one for each mistyped or omitted word)

_____ Correct Words ("WORDS" - Number of Errors)

_____ Words Per Minute (Correct Words / Minutes)

Good luck!

DO NOT PROCEED TO THE NEXT PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE READY TO BEGIN COMPETING!!!

The Typewriter as a Mechanical Writing Instrument 9

Early Efforts to Contrive a Writing Machine 17

From a mechanical viewpoint the printing press and the 27
typewriter are half brothers. This close relationship seems 38
not to have been recognized by the early inventors. For three 49
hundred years following the first use of the movable type press 61
in Europe, only two known efforts were made to construct a 71
writing machine. One of these was the work of an English 81
engineer named Henry Mill, who in 1714 obtained from Queen Anne 93
a patent on "an artificial machine or method for impressing or 104
transcribing of letters singly or progressively one after 115
another, as in writing." The other attempt, made in 1784 by an 126
unnamed Englishman, resulted in a crude machine for embossing 137
letters on rending material for the blind. 145

Basic Experiments on the Writing Machine 153

After the beginning of the nineteenth cntury, efforts to 163
contrive a servicable writing machine were intensified. The 174
twenty-five years following 1829 were marked by a succession of 186
experiments dealing with various mechanical problems basic to 198
the project. The four years from 1829 to 1833, for example, 208
witnessed the trial of two radically different methods of 219
arranging the type. An American named Burt patented a machine 230
in 1829 on which the type was all fixed to a semicircular plate 241
which moved as the writing progressed. In 1833 Projean, a 251
Frenchman, invented a machine fitted with a group of individual 263
type bars, which is the arrangement used on most modern 273
typewriters. 276

A notable contribution to the basic mechanism of the typewriter 288
was made in 1843 by Charles Thurber of Worcester, 297
Massachusetts. He contrived a moving platen, or cylinder, for 308
spacing between letters, which is now used universally in the 319
form of the carriage. In 1856 A. Ely Beach of New York 329
patented a machine with the type bars forming a basket shape 339
and printing at a common center. This arrangement of the type 350
bars is now used on most makes of machines. The Beach machine 361
had two serious defects: it was slow in operation and printed 372
only on a narrow ribbon of paper. In 1857 Dr. Samuel W. 382
Francis, a New York physician, patented a machine which 392
possessed one characteristic lacking in all preceding ones: it 404
typed with a speed exceeding that obtainable by hand. It was, 415
however, too costly for commercial use. 422

The Invention of the First Practical Typewriter 431

The final construction of a successful writing machine took 442
place during the seven years extending from 1866 to 1873. The 453

work was carried on by three men in a suburb of the city of 463
Milwaukee, Wisconsin. One of these men, Carlos Glidden, had 474
been interested in improving farm machinery. The other two, 485
Samuel W. Soule and Christopher Latham Sholes, were printers. 497
Immediately preceding the beginning of their work on the 507
typewriter, they had been engaged in developing a machine for 518
numbering serially the pages of blank books. Of the three men, 530
Sholes seems to have provided the inventive genius which led to 541
the construction of a practical typewriter. He had the 551
additional distinction of christening the new device with the 562
name, "type-writer". The first model of the 571
Sholes-Glidden-Soule machine was patented in 1868; the second 582
model was patented in the same year. While it is very crude in 593
appearance, it suggests in a vague way the machine of the 603
present. 606

The "keys" consist of the rows of bars on the front side of the 616
machine near the top. The type bars are located on the inside 627
at the bottom, being connected by wires with the keys. By 1873 638
the development had gone forward so rapidly that the machine 649
was presented to a manufacturer for consideration, and a 659
contract was made for production. 666

The company that undertook the production of Sholes' machine in 678
1873 had had long experience in the manufacture of other heavy 689
articles, such as guns, farm implements, and sewing machines. 700

Its early typewriters were suggestive in appearance of the 711
sewing machine and had, in fact, some features borrowed 721
directly from that device. The first commercial typewriter 732
stood on a high stand, designed like the frame of the sewing 743
machine. More interesting, however, is the foot pedal, by 754
which the carriage was returned. Many detailed improvements 765
have been made in the typewriter during the sixty years which 776
have elapsed since 1873. Most of the basic principles which 787
Sholes included in his first finished machine are, however, 798
still important features of the typewriter today. 807

* * *

Purposes Served by the Typewriter in the Kindergarten 817

At first thought it may be difficult for either teachers or 828
parents to give a set of sound reasons for using typewriters 838
with children as young as those in the kindergarten. It may be 849
supposed that on entering school, they would have little, if 860
any, need for a complex writing machine. It may not be easy to 871
perceive any relation between a child's manipulation of the 882
typewriter and his early contacts with the ordinary school 893
activities. The experience of a group of kindergarten teachers 904
indicates, however, that placing typewriters at the disposal of 916

even rather young children has a number of educational values. 928
Some of these will be briefly discussed in this section. 938

Provision for the Manipulative Stage 945

Anyone who has observed the early efforts of a child to gain 956
control of an instrument pencil or a brush will recall a 966
well-marked "scribble stage." As viewed from the outside, the 977
child, during this period, is merely engaged in producing 988
random marks on every surface with which he can bring the 998
instrument into contact. 1003

A closer analysis of this activity will usually reveal the fact 1015
that during this period of apparently purposeless movement the 1026
child is actually gaining his first crude mastery of the tool. 1037
He is learning to recognize the complex combination of physical 1049
and mental experiences which compose the act of making a mark. 1060
He is integrating the movements of his fingers, hands, arms, 1071
and eyes. This process of attaining unity of action is basic 1082
to using the instrument for the higher purposes of meaningful 1093
expression. 1096

The seribble stage of writing or drawing probably has its 1107
counterpart in the development of any complex manipulative 1118
skill, whether it be driving a car, using a tennis racket, or 1128
operating a typewriter. In the case of the last of these, it 1139
seems clear that a well-defined period of random operation of 1150
the machine marks the effort of the young learner to gain a 1161
general adjustment to it. He experiments with the amount of 1171
pressure needed on the keys and special devices, with methods 1183
of inserting paper, and with spacing between words and lines. 1194
These activities are gradually organized into a unified 1204
response to the typewriter and provide a basis for later 1214
meaningful writing. 1219

Contact with Symbols 1223

When the child enters school, he brings with him a stock of 1234
concrete experiences which he has acquired from people and 1244
objects. He knows various characteristics of animals, plants, 1256
human beings, foods, playthings, clothing, tools, and 1266
buildings. He understands how to perform many physical acts, 1277
such as walking, climbing, throwing, and lifting. 1287

In the early school grades the child is confronted with the 1297
dificult problem of grasping the meaning of the abstract 1308
symbols with which the grown-up world represents things and 1319
activities. He finds that a combination of crooked marks on 1330
the board or in a book stands for experiences which he is 1340
accustomed to expressing by sound or movement. He is thus 1350
introduced to an entirely new way of interpreting such objects 1361

as dog and boy and such activities as climb and run. Similarly, a set of marks is substituted for quantities such as two, five, and seven, which he has either pointed out or used a spoken word for.

The keyboard of the typewriter contains all of the symbols which are used to form words and indicate quantities. The manipulation of the machine by the child, even in a random way, provides him with an informal contact with symbols, and leads to an understanding of their general shapes and sizes. This is doubtless an important preparation for later use of the symbols in the more formal work of reading and number. With many children it makes possible a beginning in these subjects, even in the kindergarten. They learn to write their own names on the machine, as well as a few words and many numerals.

The Machine as a Writing Instrument

The complete grasp of the function of an instrument is an important phase of learning to control it. The novice in car driving has to learn not only how to operate the various levers and brakes but also which to operate under varying conditions. It helps him very little to know that he moves his foot if he does not remember what will happen when he moves it in a certain way. The function of the typewriter can be grasped by the young child not only in its totality but in its details. _He finds that a certain part of the machine holds the paper, another moves it, another makes the mark, another spaces between words, and that a combination of these devices makes writing possible.

More General Values in the Use of the Machine

In addition to the direct results of using a typewriter, there are a number of casual values which kindergarten children obtain. They learn that it is possible to devote themselves, for a period of time, to a piece of independent work. They learn to handle with care an important piece of school equipment. They are eager to assume the personal responsibility for getting a machine from the cupboard, carrying it around the room, opening it, and later replacing the cover.

In using the machines cooperatively with other children in the room, the individual receives many important social lessons. The typewriters have to be taken by turns so that each person will have an opportunity to use them. Care on the part of each person in handling machines results in keeping them in good repair for all. Often one child's problem in using some device on the machine can be solved by the assistance of another child who has had more experience in the work.

From "The Typewriter in the Primary and Intermediate Grades: A Basic Educational Instrument for Younger Children" by Ralph Haefner, The Macmillan Company (1932)