

Welcome to the Typospheric Typing Speed Competition

at
"Virtual Herman's"
Saturday, November 14, 2020

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!

*** If we have participants with electric typewriters as well as manual ones, we will have two categories with a winner in each category.

*** The winner(s) will get a certificate via email and bragging rights!

*** You may want to print this out prior to the contest, but try not to look at the copy text pages until the contest begins!

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 divide the number of words you type less erroneous words and divide that by the number of minutes to get your words-per-minute 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!)
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.

Here's a little worksheet:

_____ Number of Minutes you spent typing
_____ "WORDS" shown at end of last line you typed
_____ Number of Errors: one for each mistyped or omitted word
_____ Correct Words: subtract Number of Errors from "WORDS"
_____ Words Per Minute: divide Correct Words by Minutes

Good luck!

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

* The copy text is from The Story of the Typewriter 1873-1923, "published in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the invention of the writing machine" in 1923 by the Herkimer County Historical Society.

We have noted the fundamental features contained in the original typewriter of 1873. It had the step-by-step escapement mechanism which caused the letter-spacing travel of the paper carriage. It had type bars on which type were mounted which printed at a common center. It fed the paper around a cylinder on the paper carriage. It was equipped with a line spacing and carriage return mechanism. It printed through a ribbon, which traveled across the printing point with the movement of the carriage. It had the standard number of printing keys, placed in four rows, and the characters on these keys, and the corresponding type bars, followed the arrangement now known as "universal." To these fundamental features the Model 2 Remington of 1878 added the shift-key mechanism, with two type mounted on a single bar.

Every one of the features above described is standard in all the leading writing machines of the present day. It must not be supposed, however, that the reign of each and all of these basic features has been undisputed throughout the entire fifty years of typewriter history. In time other typewriters appeared on the market, which represented radical departures from one or another of these principles. Some of these machines proved practical in actual service and won a considerable popularity, and some of them are manufactured and sold today. A review of typewriter history would not be complete which failed to take note of these departures from the type of construction generally known as "standard."

One of the earliest issues in the typewriter field concerned the relative merits of the type-bar principle versus the type wheel. Mention of the type wheel brings us back to John Pratt's Pterotype and the article concerning it in the Scientific American of July 6, 1867, which is said to have suggested the idea of a typewriter to Sholes and his colleagues. Pratt is said to have actually built and sold some of these machines in England, but they were not a success, and he for a time despaired of being able to construct a machine on which the printing wheel would move quickly and yet stop instantly. He worked over the problem for years, and when at last he approached the United States Patent Office he found himself in interference with two other inventors, James B. Hammond and Lucien S. Crandall, both of whom appeared with writing machines built on the type-wheel principle. A deadlock ensued which was finally settled by Pratt yielding precedence to Hammond upon a type-wheel machine and receiving a royalty, while Crandall proceeded with his application for a patent on a type-sleeve instrument. The first Hammond patents were taken out in 1880, and the machine was placed on the market shortly thereafter. The early Hammond had what was called the "ideal" keyboard, semi-circular in shape, but later Hammonds have conformed to the "universal" keyboard arrangement.

The Hammond was the first practical type-wheel machine and is today the leading machine of this class. The type-wheel construction has always had strong advocates, but these machines have never been very serious competitors of the type-bar machines in the general commercial field.

Soon after the advent of the Hammond, another important typewriter issue arose--that of single versus double keyboard. The first double-keyboard machine was the Caligraph, placed on the market in 1883, an enterprise upon which Yost entered after it became evident that he could no longer retain his interest in the Remington. The Caligraph was devised under the direction of Yost, principally by a skilled German mechanic named Franz X. Wagner, who afterwards won prominence as the inventor of the Underwood Typewriter. Yost's aim was to construct a typewriter which would evade the Remington patents, but, failing in this, he was subsequently granted a license. In after years the Smith Premier became the leading double-keyboard machine. This machine, the invention of Alexander T. Brown, was placed on the market in 1890 by Lyman C. Smith, the gun manufacturer of Syracuse, and during the next few years attained a wide popularity. It was urged in behalf of the double-keyboard machine that the key for every character made its operation easier and simpler for the beginner. The construction, however, was more complicated, because it doubled the number of type bars and connecting parts, and there was a further disadvantage in the enlarged keyboard, which time made evident. The double keyboard would probably have yielded to the shift key sooner or later, but it was the advent of the touch method of typewriting which really settled the matter. For use in connection with the touch system, the compact keyboard of the shift-key machine proved so obvious an advantage that the double keyboard lost ground rapidly and machines with this keyboard began in time to disappear from the market. The present Smith Premier Typewriter, invented by Jacob Felbel, is a shift-key machine of standard design.

Another early issue in typewriter construction concerned the relative merits of the ribbon and the inking pad. This brings us to the last enterprise of G. W. N. Yost, which he undertook after-severing his connection with the Caligraph. In 1888 Yost brought out the machine, developed by Alexander Davidson, Andrew W. Steiger and Jacob Felbel, that ever since has borne his name. The most notable departure of the Yost Typewriter from the standard design was the elimination of the ribbon and the use instead of an inking pad, on which the face of the type rested. The first Yost was a double-keyboard machine, but later models embody the shift-key principle. Of late years this type of machine has been hardly known on the American market, although it has always enjoyed a considerable sale in Europe.

The inking pad, as a substitute for the ribbon, found many advocates at one time because of one serious deficiency in the early ribbon machines. The automatic ribbon reverse is an old story now, and present-day typewriter users take it as a matter of course. Many of them may be surprised to hear that the typewriter was twenty-two years old before the first automatic ribbon reverse appeared on a writing machine. Some of the older generation of typists, however, can still remember the time when it was always necessary to operate the machine with one eye on the ribbon, in order to be sure to reverse it at the right time, or else suffer the consequences in a "chewed-up" ribbon and spoiled work. During the early nineties Jenne labored hard on the problem of an automatic ribbon reverse, the solution of which called for inventive skill of a high order. After several experimental devices had been designed, all of which were far too complicated, a simple solution was found by George B. Webb, and the first automatic ribbon reverse made its appearance on the Remington in 1896. Within a few years. the old hand reverse became practically obsolete on all standard machines.

In the meantime a new demand had been steadily growing, which was destined to influence quite radically the future course of typewriter development. All of the earlier type-bar machines were built on what is known as the understroke principle. The type bars were arranged in a circular "basket," underneath the carriage, and the type printed at a common point on the under side of the cylinder. These machines were satisfactory in speed and quality of work, but they had one practical defect--it was necessary for the operator to raise the carriage in order to see the writing line. The advantages of visible writing were so obvious that the problem began at an early date to engage the attention of typewriter inventors. On the type-wheel machines, visible writing was easily attained, but on the type-bar machines it called for real inventive effort. The first type-bar visible writer, the Horton, appeared as early as the year 1883. Most of the early type-bar visible writers were of the down-stroke type, the type bars striking downward to a common point on the top of the cylinder. Prominent among machines of this construction were the Columbia Bar-Lock (1888), the Williams (1890) and the Oliver (1894). The latter machine, in particular, secured and has since held a considerable market. Later on the front-stroke principle of construction took the lead in the general business field. The first front-stroke machine to attain prominence was the Underwood. This machine was the invention of Franz X. Wagner, whose earlier connection with the Caligraph we have already noted, and was placed on the market in 1897 by John T. Underwood, who had long been identified with the

writing-machine industry as one of the pioneer manufacturers of 1468
typewriter ribbons and carbon papers. The design of the 1478
front-stroke machines represented a new departure in the 1488
arrangement of the type bars, which were placed in a segment in 1498
front of the carriage, the type printing on the front of the 1508
cylinder. This front-stroke principle proved to be a 1517
satisfactory solution of the problem of visible writing, and 1528
all of the leading standard machines are now of the 1536
front-stroke type. Prominent among these machines today are the 1547
Underwood, the front-stroke Remington, which was largely the 1558
work of Oscar Woodward, followed by later improvements; the "L.
C. Smith," brought out by Lyman C. Smith, the original 1578
manufacturer of the Smith Premier, and the Royal, followed some 1589
years after its first appearance by a new model. 1597

Visible writing is an old story today, the last non-visible 1607
machines having disappeared from the market many years ago. 1617
Doubtless, when this problem had been solved, it seemed to some 1628
as though the typewriter had attained finality. But there is 1638
nothing final on this earth, and a new demand has been growing 1649
of recent years until it has become as strong and insistent as 1659
the demand for visible writing of twenty years ago. The 1668
familiar "clicking" noise of the typewriter has been with us as 1679
long as the machine itself, and in the early days people did 1689
not seem to mind it. But when the use of the typewriter had 1698
grown until whole batteries of them had invaded every 1708
department of business, the accumulated noise became a 1717
disturbance, and users began to wish that the machine would 1727
imitate, if it could, the one and only virtue admittedly 1737
possessed by the pen--that of silence. The development of quiet 1748
typewriting brings us to the present-day stage of typewriter 1758
progress, which hardly belongs to this story. It is sufficient 1769
to say that the writing machine, which has always been equal to 1779
any demand made upon it, has run true to form in this case. 1789
During recent years one typewriter has appeared, the Noiseless, 1800
built around this central idea, also quiet models of at least 1810
three of the standard makes. 1815

It seems a far cry from the first typewriter of 1873 to the 1825
shift-key, front-stroke, visible-writing, quiet machine of 1835
1923. Equally great has been the progress in the skill of the 1845
operator, from the first would-be typists who awkwardly tried 1856
their hands on the early machines, to the standards attained by 1867
the best typists of the present day. The progress of the 1876
operator, however, has not been marked by the same slow, 1886
successive stages. It has been the outcome of one great 1895
development--the introduction of the scientific method of key 1906
fingering known as touch typewriting. 1912