

# THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO TEACHING KEYBOARDING

IN 45 MINUTES A WEEK

## A K-8 Curriculum



**THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE  
TO TEACHING  
KEYBOARDING IN  
45 MINUTES A WEEK**

***A K-8 Curriculum***

*by The Structured Learning IT Team and Ask a Tech Teacher*

**First Edition 2012**  
**Part of the Structured Learning Technology for the Classroom series**  
**Visit the companion website at <http://askatechteacher.com> for more resources to teach technology to**  
**Kindergarten-Eighth Grade**

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# Table of Contents

## **Overview..... Page 5**

- *Introduction*
- *Objectives*
- *How to Use This Book*
- *Research on Keyboarding*
- *How to Teach Keyboarding in K-8*
- *Body Position*
- *Questions You May Have*
- *About the Authors*

## **Kindergarten .....Page 17**

- *Scope and Sequence*
- *Best Practices*
- *Overview*
- *Objectives and Steps*

## **1<sup>st</sup> Grade .....Page 28**

- *Scope and Sequence*
- *Best Practices*
- *Overview*
- *Objectives and Steps*

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Grade .....Page 37**

- *Scope and Sequence*
- *Best Practices*
- *Overview*
- *Objectives and Steps*

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade .....Page 47**

- *Scope and Sequence*
- *Best Practices*
- *Overview*
- *Objectives and Steps*

**4<sup>th</sup> Grade .....Page 64**

- *Scope and Sequence*
- *Best Practices*
- *Overview*
- *Objectives and Steps*

**5<sup>th</sup> Grade .....Page 75**

- *Scope and Sequence*
- *Best Practices*
- *Overview*
- *Objectives and Steps*

**6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade .....Page 85**

- *Scope and Sequence*
- *Best Practices*
- *Overview*
- *Objectives and Steps*

**Articles .....Page 94**

- *What about Those Lefties?*
- *Summer Keyboarding Class–Here are the Details*
- *What to Expect of Younger Keyboarders?*
- *The Elephantine Impact of Technology on Education*
- *How to Teach Internet Safety in K-6*
- *Is Keyboarding Dead?*

## Introduction

You may think it impossible to find a keyboarding curriculum that creates accomplished typists from the skimpy forty-five minutes a week you can devote to keyboarding. You teach what you can, but it always seems to be the same lessons—hands on home row, good posture, eyes on copy. You wonder if it's making a difference.

Every year, you promise it will go better and then it doesn't. You're thinking of giving up. You have lots of friends who hunt-and-peck as adults and are doing fine. Does it even matter if students learn to touch type?

**Yes, it matters**, and there is a way to teach them—that works. It requires a plan, faithfully executed, with your eye relentlessly on the goal, but if you commit to that, it works. K-8 students have the finger dexterity—they play piano and the like quite well—to type, just not the knowledge. Research also tells us that children who learn to keyboard improve academically (Wood and Freeman 1931; Erickson 1959). It makes sense that it should be one of school's essential skills.

In *The Essential Guide to Teaching Keyboarding in 45 Minutes a Week: A K-8 Curriculum*, one grade at a time, I'll share a keyboard curriculum for K-8 that I've seen work on thousands of students. You'll find directions on what to do, how and when, using mostly free resources. The biggest cost is the price of this short textbook. Consider this the keyboarding version of Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*—everything you need in 110 (give or take) pages.

## Objectives

The overarching objective of keyboarding is to **facilitate communication of ideas**. That means first, students must type fast enough to exceed the speed of their handwriting, and second, they must keep up with their thoughts. Done as described in this book, the former will occur around fourth grade and the latter around seventh or eighth.

## How to Use This Book

For each grade, the lesson organization is clear, with sections to address what you need to know to teach that grade level to keyboard.

Here's a sample:

At the **beginning** of each grade-level section:

**FIRST GRADE**

1. Lesson Big Concept

2. How to accomplish the Big Concepts

**OVERVIEW**

3. Best Practices for keyboarding for this grade level

4. Step-by-step directions

**Objectives and Steps**

Introduce 'technology'—what's that mean? What's a computer (all the parts, not just the keyboard). Ask students about their experiences. Who has their own computer? What do they use it for? What do

*Best Practices*

At the **end** of each grade-level section:

• Monitor doe  
• Computer d

5. Extras to extend the learning

6. Problem-solving for this lesson's concepts

7. Free helpline--where you can ask questions of a teacher using this book

8. Scope and Sequence for keyboard skills for this grade level

**SCOPE AND SEQUENCE CHECK LIST**

Need help? Go to <http://askat>

for hand position on mouse  
hold, drag

1. **Overview**—overarching skills to be accomplished at this grade level.
2. **Objectives and Steps**—practical strategies for achieving the lesson’s essential goals with step-by-step guidelines to show evidence of accomplishment
3. **Best Practices**—Essential items that scaffold comprehension of the big concepts
4. **Step-by-step**—check off each objective as it is accomplished
5. **Extension**—Ideas to extend learning, vertically plan, and/or encourage student risk-taking (located at end of section)
6. **Trouble-shooting**—how to problem-solve possible difficulties (located at end of section)
7. **Need Help**—a website that provides free help on this lesson from teachers who use the curriculum (located at end of section)
8. **Scope and Sequence**—checklist of skills to be accomplished at this grade-level. Be sure to complete all of them before moving onto the next grade level. The curriculum’s success depends upon this simple commitment (after Objectives and Steps section)

You’ll find a lot of links in this book. They are **extras in the digital ebook**—as are full color images and being able to search with Ctrl+F. To put them in the print version would take oh-so-much-space and ultimately be oh-so-confusing. If you would like a PDF of the book so links are available, contact the [publisher](http://structuredlearning.net) (<http://structuredlearning.net>) to get a discounted PDF with your Proof of Purchase. If there are just one or two links you’re curious about, visit the helpline (that’s [Ask a Tech Teacher](#) noted at the end of each grade-level section) and leave a request as a comment on the most current article. Be sure to include the book name and page number. I’ll answer within 24 hours.

As a bonus, we’ve included nine articles on pedagogic topics like *What About Those Lefties*, *Summer Keyboarding Class—Here are the Details*, and *Is Keyboarding Dead?*

## Research

If you’re like many teachers I’ve talked to, you are asking yourself (or parents in your school are asking) the following questions before committing the time necessary for a comprehensive keyboarding program:



1. *Can elementary school children learn to keyboard?*
2. *What is the best age to begin keyboarding?*
3. *How important is it that the teacher be knowledgeable about typing?*
4. *Is it still important that students learn keyboarding?*

Here are the quick answers:

1. *Yes—emphatically*
2. *As soon as students use a computer*
3. *Extremely*
4. *Of course!*

Don't take my word for it. Read the research.

### **Can K-8 Children Learn to Keyboard?**

An overview of research says **yes**, elementary- and middle school-age students are cognitively, emotionally, and physically capable of learning keyboarding skills. Just as with piano and violin (and any number of sports), their fine motor skills, mental processes, and physiologic development are mature enough for the demands of typing.

But let's dig deeper.

**Developmentally**, some researchers maintain keyboarding is too abstract for immature brains and too demanding of undeveloped fine motor skills to learn at a young age.

Let's look at that claim. In order for the skill of keyboarding to be mastered, one must be able to let fingers flow freely (Waner, Behymer, & McCrary, 1992), a concept backed by Bloom's idea of automaticity and discussed by Wronkovich (1998), who defines it as a "system of automatic habits corresponding to the system of tasks".

I agree--keyboarding requires this "system of automatic habits". Is that a reasonable expectation of the K-8 child?

Yes and no. To ask a kindergartner (or a first/second grader) to concentrate on what each finger is doing is unreasonable and not age-appropriate. However, it is just as unreasonable to NOT expect a sixth-eighth grader to be able to accomplish these.

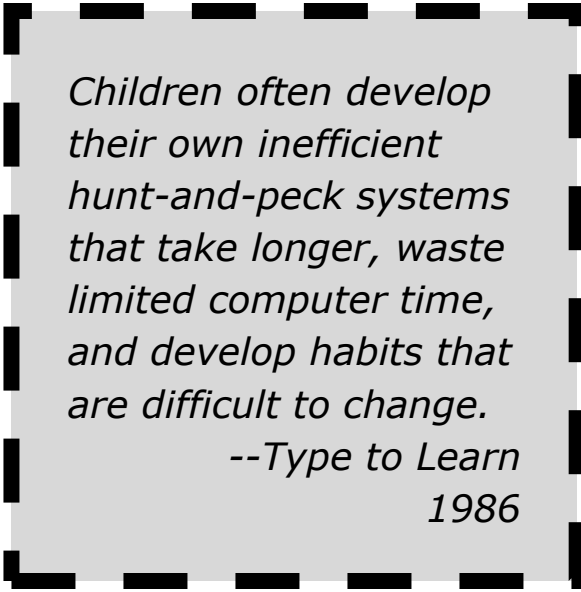
The key is to introduce skills that are **age-appropriate**.

### **Best Age to Teach Keyboarding**

Most researchers agree effective keyboarding isn't instinctual and should be begun **before bad habits are created**. But when does that happen? Is elementary school too early—or too late?

Research varies on this topic. Bartholome (1996) found that third grade is appropriate for touch keyboarding, but first and second graders can learn this skill as well if given adequate instruction. This conclusion was reinforced by Feutz (2001).

On the opposite side is Erthal (2002) who found that third graders do not possess the manual dexterity required for keyboarding, and Hopkins (1998) who considered fourth grade an appropriate age for the commencement of formal keyboarding.



*Children often develop their own inefficient hunt-and-peck systems that take longer, waste limited computer time, and develop habits that are difficult to change.*

*--Type to Learn  
1986*

We are left with a mushy consensus among researchers that third-fifth grade is the appropriate time to begin keyboarding skills.

But fifth grade may be too late. Young children are in front of keyboards earlier than ever. In the absence of training, they will still learn, likely wrong. Therefore, logic dictates that **when students start to use computers to type, they should be taught correct keyboarding practices**. From my experience, that's third grade with this caveat: Teach pre-keyboard skills kindergarten-second grade before beginning the focus on traditional skills of posture-speed-accuracy.

## **Importance of Teacher Knowledge**

Sormunen's 1991 study found that classroom instructors were teaching keyboarding, but only 12% had any formal preparation in how to do that.

Condon's study (1989) found that educational administrators felt elementary teachers should be provided with sufficient training to teach keyboarding. McLean (1994) suggested that instruction can be supplied by teachers who have taken a keyboarding methods course, or a business education teacher who has had elementary learning methods, or a combination of both.

*...only a small proportion of classroom teachers have any formal preparation for teaching keyboarding.*

*Sormunen, 1991*

Consensus of most studies indicates that a "knowledgeable" teacher is critical to help students develop appropriate techniques, as well as provide motivation and reinforcement (Nieman, 1996; Erthal, 1998).

## **Importance of Learning Keyboarding**

Many studies document the value of children learning proper typing technique (McKay, 1998; Owston, 1997; Bartholome, 1996; Bieman, 1996; Hoot, 1986). Rogers (2003) lists the following eight benefits:

- 1. Improvement in language arts—reading, spelling, and writing*
- 2. Improvement in efficiency using computers as writing, editing, and computing tools, thereby maximizing classroom time*
- 3. Improvement in attitude toward writing—less frustration in looking for keys rather than entering information*

*Student writing develops faster through word processing because it facilitates the review and revision learning process.*

*Zeitz, 2008*

*<http://im.ly/ed3bd/>*

4. *Improvement in proper keyboarding techniques and use of the computer, thereby eliminating the formation of bad keyboarding habits for later word processing and computer applications*
5. *Improvement in motivating students toward doing schoolwork*
6. *Improvement in creative thought*
7. *Improvement in integrating keyboarding with all subject areas*
8. *Improvement in preparing all students for a technological society*

## **How to Teach Keyboarding in K-8**

Two criteria are mentioned over and over in keyboarding research:

1. *Keyboarding instruction is most effective when spread out over several years and designed to build on the student's prior knowledge. (Robinson 1992)*
2. *Once skills are taught, it is important to use them, reinforce them and refine them (Adams, 1984; Wronkovich, 1998).*

I agree and have made these cornerstones to my curriculum for fifteen years. Here's an overview of my keyboarding focus for grades K-8:

- K-1 Introduce mouse skills and keyboarding while focusing on key placement and posture*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Introduce keyboarding while focusing on key placement, posture, and two-hand position*
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Reinforce basics of key position, posture and hand position while beginning accuracy and technique*
- 4-5 Reinforce key position, posture and hand position. Continue work on accuracy and technique. Begin focus on speed with age-appropriate speed-and-accuracy goals*
- 6-8 Work on all essential elements of keyboarding—technique, speed, and accuracy—with grade level goal of 35-45 wpm*

Class lessons must include lots of variety so no one gets bored with the mundanity of typing. Here's a rundown of the pieces I include (more detail later on how to incorporate them at each grade level):

- *Classroom keyboarding software*

- *Online keyboarding websites*
- *Age-appropriate use of hand covers (grades 2-8)*
- *Quarterly speed/accuracy quizzes (grades 3-8)*
- *Quarterly blank keyboarding quizzes (grades 3-8)*
- *Monthly homework (grades 3-8)*
- *Wall chart on those who meet/exceed grade level expectations*
- *Wall chart tracking student progress throughout the year*
- *Wall chart showing which students type faster than they can handwrite*
- *Wall charts on important keys, body position*
- *Grading based on student improvement, not conformity to class norms*

## **Body Position**

### **Seat**

Position chair facing keyboard about one hand's-width from the table with keyboard one inch off edge of table.

### **Head and eyes**

Place monitor so eyes look straight ahead with neck straight, not bent too far forward or back.

### **Body and Hands**

Sit straight with elbows tucked against sides. Keep body natural, easy and relaxed with feet on the floor slightly apart. Keep fingers curved over keys, resting on home row.

## **Questions You May Have**

In my class, keyboarding is the most-asked topic with parents. On [my blog](#) (Ask a Tech Teacher), keyboarding posts are read thrice as often as any other topic. Based on research (see above) and my fifteen years experience teaching thousands of students, here are answers to some of the critical questions:

### **Why learn keyboarding?**

If you've ever seen a third grader struggle to type a web address into the computer or type a book report when they don't know where the keys are, you know they should have started keyboarding earlier.

That's the first reason. There are more:

- *to communicate ideas*
- *to find out more about what interests them*
- *to offset a learning disability that interferes with writing—i.e., dysgraphia*

### **When should children learn keyboarding?**

Today's children interact with keyboards from an early age and as a result are in danger of learning bad habits if they aren't taught early rather than late. In short, students should learn to keyboard:

- *when teachers expect projects that require keyboarding*
- *when a child's interests dictate a demand for typing*
- *when students are expected to use classroom computers*
- *by fourth grade: A trained fourth grader can write and type at the same speed*

### **What are some of keyboarding's developmental considerations?**

In a macro sense, correct keyboarding takes into account cognitive maturity, fine motor skills and age-appropriateness of skills taught.

These three factors are constantly considered and adapted for in these lessons.

### **How do I (Ask a Tech Teacher) teach keyboarding?**

I teach pre-keyboarding skills like posture, hand position, mouse skills, key placement, before starting technique. I make all lessons age-appropriate:

- *Kindergarten is about mouse skills, getting hands on the keyboard and learning good posture*
- *First grade is about getting hands on the correct side of the keyboard and forming good habits*
- *Second grade is about understanding that fingers type different keys-- and good posture*
- *Third grade starts touch typing—use the right finger for the right key, make good posture a habit*

- *Fourth grade is about memorizing key placement, keeping eyes on the screen, and posture*
- *Fifth-eighth grade is about speed and accuracy*

I teach [finger exercises](#) to remind students they have eight fingers and a thumb (they don't use the left thumb). These make keyboarding fun.

I teach key placement first, using programs like [Big Brown Bear Typing](#) for kindergarten-first grade and a blank keyboard exercise for older

I teach touch typing starting no sooner than third grade. I get serious about key memorization in fourth grade.

I teach shortcuts at all grade levels. Students feel good when they can zip out a shortcut instead of struggling with an awkward combination of keys.

I keep it fun

### **What about keyboard homework?**

You'll see it in grades three-five.

### **Why is keyboarding a 'hot topic' with parents?**

- Kids want to use the computer; parents want them outside playing
- Teachers are asking for computer projects
- The child sees something on the computer—[Starfall.com](#) or [Santa traveling across the holiday sky](#)—and wants to go there

### **Will keyboarding replace cursive writing?**

- Not until input devices are more available—but why not?

### **What are good online sites to practice keyboarding?**

Start with these twenty:

1. [Big Brown Bear typing](#)—great for grades kindergarten, first
2. [Typing Web](#)—a log-in allows you to track progress
3. [Test Your Typing](#)--see if you're improving
4. [Keyboard challenge](#)—adapted to grade level
5. [Keyboard practice](#)—quick start

6. [Keyboarding Fingerjig](#)—6 minute test of ability
7. [Keyboarding for Kids](#)
8. [Keyboarding practice](#)
9. [Keyboarding—alphabet rain game](#)
10. [Keyboarding—barracuda game](#)
11. [Keyboarding—bubbles game](#)
12. [Dance Mat Typing](#) — very popular with grades 3-5; lots of fun
13. [Keyboarding—full online course](#)
14. [Keyboarding—games](#)
15. [Keyboarding—lessons and speed quiz](#)
16. [Keyboarding—lessons](#)
17. [Keyboarding—more lessons](#)
18. [Keyboarding—must sign up, but free](#)
19. [Keyboarding—quick start](#)
20. [Keyboarding—speed quiz](#)

### **How do I fix a broken keyboard**

You sit down to type that long project with the imminent deadline, and nothing happens. The cursor blinks... and blinks... and blinks... but goes nowhere. What do you do?

*Before you go buy a new keyboard, try these:*

- *Is the keyboard's power light on? If it is, check your screen. Is there something that's preventing you from typing? Maybe a dialogue box that wants an answer? If the light isn't on, continue down this list*
- *Check the plugs. Maybe the cord that connects the keyboard to the computer is loose or fell out.*
- *Reboot. Sometimes the stuff in the computer's boot-up sequence that makes the keyboard work gets lost. Restart your computer so it can re-establish itself.*
- *Do you eat at your keyboard? Doesn't everyone? I say this next solution hesitantly: Bang on the keys. Sometimes they get food between them and get stuck. If that doesn't work, turn the keyboard over and see what falls out.*

*None of those work? Throw the darn thing out the window and buy a new one. They don't cost much anymore.*



## About the Authors

**Structured Learning IT Team** provides classroom teachers with practical knowledge, pedagogical articles, how-to books, tips and tricks, and the tools required to fulfill the technology needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom. All textbooks, workbooks, and tools are classroom-tested, teacher-approved with easy-to-understand directions supported by online materials, websites, blogs, and wikis. Whether you are a new teacher wanting to do it right or a veteran educator looking for updated materials, [Structured Learning](#) and its team of technology teachers is there to assist you.

**Ask a Tech Teacher** is an award-winning resource [blog](#) run by a group of technology teachers **and visited by more than 60,000 people every month in search of resources and advice**. It offers oodles of free lesson plans, pedagogical conversation, website reviews and more. Its newsletters and website articles are read by thousands every day, including teachers, homeschoolers, and anyone serious about finding the best way to maneuver the minefields of technology in education.

**Jacqui Murray** (editor and lead Ask a Tech Teacher blogger) is the editor of a [technology curriculum](#) for K-sixth grade, creator of two technology training books for middle school, and four ebooks on technology in education. [She](#) is the author of **Building a Midshipman**, the story of her daughter's journey from high school to United States Naval Academy. She is webmaster for six blogs, an [Amazon Vine Voice](#) book reviewer, a columnist for [Examiner.com](#), Editorial Review Board member for [Journal for Computing Teachers](#), [Cisco guest blogger](#), [IMS](#) tech expert, and a bi-weekly contributor to [Write Anything](#). Her technology articles have appeared in hundreds of online newspapers and magazines.

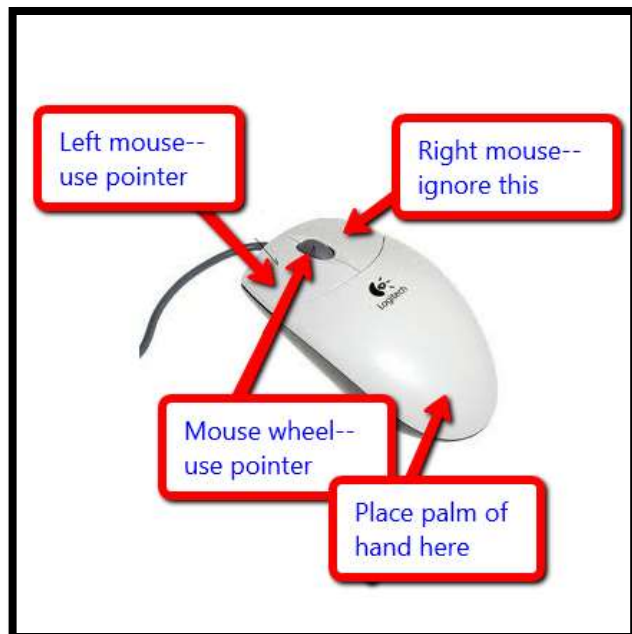
# KINDERGARTEN

## OVERVIEW

*Mouse mastery first, then an introduction to keyboarding where the focus is on key placement and posture*

### Objectives and Steps

- \_\_\_ Introduce technology. Ask students about their experiences with technology. Who has a computer? What do they use it for? What do their siblings/parents use it for?
- \_\_\_ Review parts of the computer—mouse, keyboard, headphones, mic, monitor, CPU, ports.
- \_\_\_ Explain that both the mouse and keyboard are input devices. Training will start with the mouse and move to keyboard.
- \_\_\_ Mouse use for new computer students isn't intuitive. Understanding requires explanation and reinforcement. Encourage students to be risk takers in these early stages.
- \_\_\_ Demonstrate the correct way to hold the mouse: 1) the pointer (index finger) is on the left mouse button, 2) the middle finger is on the right mouse button, 3) thumb is on left side of



mouse, 4) palm is on bottom of mouse. Walk around and make sure students are holding the mouse correctly.

\_\_\_\_\_ Be sensitive to the fact that kindergartners barely know right from left. If they get it wrong, correct gently. I often say, “The other left” to indicate the other side.

\_\_\_\_\_ Show students how their station is set up: 1) keyboard directly in front of them, directly in front of the monitor, one inch from table’s edge, 2) mouse to the right of the keyboard, 3) chair one hand’s width from table. See next pages for wall chart discussing proper position at the computer.

\_\_\_\_\_ Left handed students may use the mouse traditionally or you may set it up to the keyboard’s left. Find out what parents do at home and synchronize (see Articles for a discussion on lefties and mouse use).

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss mouse buttons. Have students click the left one. Discuss what that does and when it’s used.

\_\_\_\_\_ Have them click the right button on a program (maybe the internet). It drops down a menu with lots of words. Let them know they won’t use this until next year or later.

\_\_\_\_\_ Experiment with the mouse wheel. It rolls. Put in on a webpage and see how to go up and down the screen. Relate that to the scroll bar on the right side of the screen.

\_\_\_\_\_ Explain terminology for mouse skills and try out each skill: 1) click means push left mouse button, 2) right-click means click right mouse button (again, they won’t need that skill this year), 3) scroll means roll the mouse wheel and move up and down the page, 4) drag-and-drop means click the left mouse button and move the mouse.

\_\_\_\_\_ Skills to be learned this year on mouse (see wall chart at end of unit):

- *Correct hand position (see inset)*
- *Left mouse button*
- *Ignore right mouse button*

*Put this on your wall:*

### **Best Practices**

- *Develop good mouse skills (skip right mouse button) before starting keyboarding*
- *In general, students should learn to type as fast as they need to for classwork. In kindergarten, there’s no need for speed. It’s about creating good habits*
- *Every time students type—in tech class and all classes—use good posture, proper hand position. Create good habits.*
- *Teach age-appropriate keyboard shortcuts*



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## OVERVIEW

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*Reinforce basics of key position, posture and hand position. Begin accuracy and technique with grade-level goal of 15wpm*

### Objectives and Steps

\_\_\_\_\_ Keyboarding is a cumulative skill. What can be effectively learned in one grade depends heavily upon what is learned in earlier years. If hunt 'n peck habits become ingrained, it's difficult to develop keyboarding competence when it matters in later years.

\_\_\_\_\_ During the first keyboard class of the year, tour the keyboard. Review:

- *Caps lock and shift—what is the difference between these?*
- *Backspace and delete—what's the difference between these?*
- *Tab—what's this used for?*
- *Home row—why is this row more important than others?*
- *Top row with numbers*
- *Numeric keypad—works for numbers if NumLock invoked*
- *Ctrl, Alt keys—share some uses of these two keys (Alt+F4 to exit a program; Ctr+Alt+Del to log-onto the computer)*

\_\_\_\_\_ Basics to remember during third grade are:

- *Keep fingers on home row keys*
- *Use correct posture for typing (see inset)*
  - *Sit up straight, shoulders back, head up, body centered in front of keyboard, feet flat on ground, body one hand's width from table*
  - *Keep elbows close to sides*
  - *Keep hands on their own side of the keyboard*

- *Have fingers slightly curved*
- *Place keyboard one inch from edge of table*
- *Begin focus on touch typing*
- *Use right thumb for spacebar*
- *Keep copy to the left or right of keyboard, eyes on copy or screen— NOT keyboard*
- *Key with a steady even pace*
- *Use keyboard shortcuts (i.e., Ctrl+B, Shift+Alt+D, Ctrl+Z)*
- *Apply keyboarding skills whenever possible, not just during typing practice*

\_\_\_\_\_ I add two keyboarding hints in third grade that appeal to their more mature mind:

- *Use inside fingers for inside keys, outside for outside keys*
- *Use finger closest to the key you need. Sounds simple, but this isn't what usually happens with beginners.*

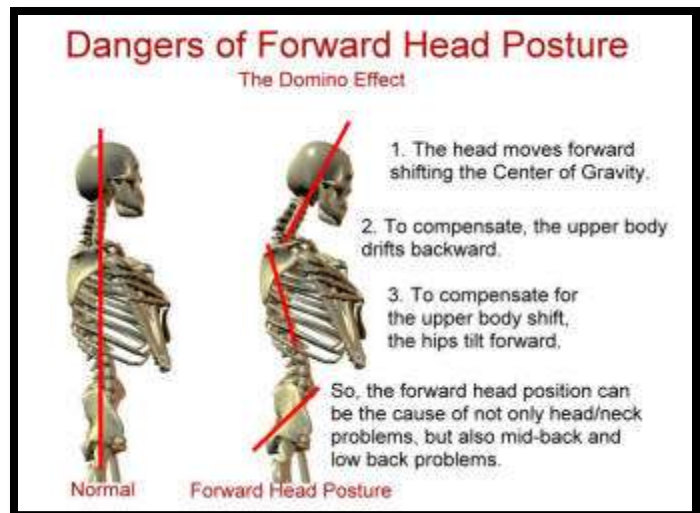
\_\_\_\_\_ The focus in third grade moves from good habits (these are now established and simply need to be reinforced) to memorizing keys. Once students know key placement, speed and accuracy will come (don't worry if it doesn't happen until 5-8<sup>th</sup> grade. That's common).

\_\_\_\_\_ Start **Month #1** with five minutes of finger warm-ups and repeat these several times a month. These show students

that they have ten fingers that work, even though some are stronger than others. [Go to \(http://learnkeyboarding.wikispaces.com/Keyboarding+Warm-ups\)](http://learnkeyboarding.wikispaces.com/Keyboarding+Warm-ups) for fun exercises third graders love.

\_\_\_\_\_ Start keyboard practice by working on one row at a time, one per month, using [Dance Mat Typing](#) and [Nimble Fingers](#). Here's a schedule for Months **#1, #2, and #3:**

- 1) *first month: home row*
- 2) *second month: QWERTY row*
- 3) *third month: lower row*





# SIXTH-EIGHTH GRADE

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## OVERVIEW

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*Work on all essential elements of keyboarding—technique, speed, and accuracy—with grade level goal of 35-45 wpm*

### Objectives and Steps

\_\_\_\_\_Keyboarding is a cumulative skill. What can be effectively learned in one grade depends heavily upon what is learned in earlier years. If hunt 'n peck habits become ingrained, it's difficult to develop keyboarding competence in later years.

\_\_\_\_\_Basics to remember in sixth-eighth grade are:

- *Keep hands on home row*
- *Use correct posture and keyboarding skills for all typing (keyboard practice and practical applications)*
  - *Sit straight, shoulders back, head up, body centered in front of keyboard about one hand's width from table, feet flat on ground*
  - *Keep elbows close to sides*
  - *Have fingers slightly curved over home row*
  - *Reach for keys—don't move hands (only fingers move)*
- *Focus on touch typing*
- *Keep copy to the side of keyboard, eyes on copy or screen—NOT keyboard*
- *Key with a steady even pace*

- Use keyboard shortcuts (i.e., Ctrl+B, Shift+Alt+D)

\_\_\_\_\_Sixth grade is a combination of the following typing activities:

- Key memorization with:
  - Work on each row
  - Work on two-letter words and common phrases
  - One-time Brown Bear typing challenge
- Continuous practice with a graduated keyboarding program like *Type to Learn* or *Typing Web*
- Covered hands during all typing practice. They will want to memorize key placement so this is easier.
- Continuous reinforcement of shortcuts to remind students that keyboarding makes typing faster, easier and more fun
- Anecdotal observation by teacher of typing skills—posture, hand position, finger use, etc.
- Monthly finger warm-ups as a reminder that all fingers are used for keyboarding and all of them function
- Quarterly quizzes
- Yearly (or bi-yearly) keyboard challenge to test student ability to remember skills associated with touch typing (see notes under fourth grade keyboarding lesson)

### Best Practices

- Students learn to type as fast as they need to for classwork. Set a goal of 35-45 wpm—exceeding the speed students handwrite.
- Focus on speed and accuracy, but remember good habits like proper hand and body position.
- Work on age-appropriate keyboard shortcuts
- Cover keys when practicing

\_\_\_\_\_Start **Month #1** with five minutes of finger warm-ups, Repeat these once a month to show students that they have ten fingers that work. [Go to \(http://learnkeyboarding.wikispaces.com/Keyboarding+Warm-ups\)](http://learnkeyboarding.wikispaces.com/Keyboarding+Warm-ups) for fun exercises middle schoolers love.

\_\_\_\_\_As in fifth grade, **start the year** by working on one keyboard row at a time, using [Dance Mat Typing](#), [Typing Lessons](#), [Peter's Online Typing Course](#), or [Nimble Fingers](#). Students practice during class time (fifteen minutes a week) and at home (three sessions of fifteen minutes each, every week).

\_\_\_\_\_Here's a schedule for the **first six weeks**:



- *Weeks 1-2: home row*
- *Weeks 3-4: QWERTY row*
- *Weeks 5-6: lower row*

\_\_\_\_\_ Students practice 10-15 minutes during class and 45 minutes per week as homework on this schedule.

\_\_\_\_\_ During the **first keyboarding session of the year**, walk around and check to be sure all key posture points are followed (see above).

\_\_\_\_\_ **By Month #3** (after two weeks on each of three rows), have students practice the simplest form of touch typing by [mastering two-letter words](http://www.nimblefingers.com/teachers.htm#checkit) (<http://www.nimblefingers.com/teachers.htm#checkit>—scroll to bottom). This will be difficult at first, and then fun—like a game. Help them stick with it through impossible to challenging to huzzah.

\_\_\_\_\_ Have students take a fun ‘test’ before moving on to the graduated typing program they will spend the balance of the year on. Remember [Brown Bear Typing](#)—a favorite from kindergarten, first and second grades? Return to it and have a fifteen-minute contest to see who can get the highest score. This focuses solely on key placement—no worries about hand positions. Award the winner something that suits your student group.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Month #4**, students switch to [Type to Learn](#) (installed purchased software) or [Typing Web](#) (online—free). This is where they’ll spend the rest of their typing practice time for the year. Students must cover hands while practicing. I provide cloths they use at school and take home if they’d like. It feels hard at first and quickly becomes easier. The focus is on speed and accuracy.

\_\_\_\_\_ As students type, anecdotally observe posture, hand position, eye placement. Make suggestions to the class when you see an endemic problem.

\_\_\_\_\_ Typing is best learned in projects that collaborate with classroom learning and require the use of keyboarding. No later than **Month #2**, begin project-based typing using MS Word or Publisher (or similar) that integrates into classroom units. These can be short reports, magazines, trifolds, a story—pick one that works for your school environment. Reinforce use of enter key to end paragraphs, word-wrap to go to next line, tab to indent, and purpose of cursor in word processing.