

Snow Packet 3 Article Review

Read the attached article and then write several paragraphs covering the following:

- Provide a summary of Article-include the main point of the article.
- Include 2 things you liked or found interesting.
- Include 2 things you dislike about the article.
- Something you learned from the article.
- Conclusion of your thoughts about the topic of the article.

Be sure to write neatly on lined paper or type and print your review.

Out of Touch with Typing

Many schools aren't teaching typing anymore because they figure students already are proficient at using keyboards. That's a wasted opportunity.

August 15, 2011

Most children start typing on cell phones and computers long before they take keyboarding classes, so many schools, noting this trend, have stopped teaching typing. "The kids already know how to type," the staff at my son's school told us at curriculum night, "so we have decided to use computer time on something else."

But *how* are kids typing? Most develop idiosyncratic, personalized hunt-and-peck methods. Many do not touch type, or type without looking at the keyboard by placing the fingers on the home keys (asdf jkl;). As one of my undergraduates at Oberlin College put it: "People from my generation grew up with a computer so they knew how to use one before entering junior high school. However, I think most of us never learned how to type. I see many young people typing pretty fast, but some of them only use two fingers and no home keys...if there's one "right way" to type...I don't think many of us know it."



There has been, since the late 19th century, a "right way" to type. In 1889, there was a "duel" between two teachers who claimed to have devised the best methods. The winner, who used something called "home keys," typed a then-astonishing 126 words per minute. Afterwards, the inventor, Frank McGurrian,

many of us, and particularly digital natives, have practiced elaborate hunt and peck methods enough for them to be automatic and allow us to look at the screen, not our fingers (it requires about 400 hours of practice to achieve the reflexes to become a skilled typist, another 600 to be expert. However, the home keys method is, as far as extant research goes, the fastest technique. And it is not going out on any limb to suggest being able to type fast without looking at the keyboard is a 21st century basic skill.

But the letters keep shifting below our fingers. Keyboards morph, and smart phones and tablet computers render the home keys method almost impossible. Most iPad users hunt and peck: the technologies so many Americans are clamoring to adopt are far *less* effective for writing than previous devices. Strangely, we are adopting new devices at the cost of cognitive automaticity. On the iPad, tweeting, e-mailing and Facebooking takes more time, requires lots of looking down at the touch keypad. Hopefully someone out there is tinkering with a new typing system for the iPad, as Frank McGurkin did for the typewriter (although then we may have to practice it for 400 hours to master it).

There was a 15-year lag between the development of touch typing and when the neologism “touch typing” entered the English language. Perhaps we need another duel—a reality TV iPad typing show? —to spur new keyboarding innovations. Until then, even the littlest ones should be taught why the “f” and “j” keys have those funny bumps on them.

Anne Trubek, associate professor of rhetoric and composition at Oberlin College, is the author of A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses.

toured the country, performing his feat in front of large crowds. Over the next few decades, international typing races—a sort of *So You Think You Can Type?* trend—were the craze. Touch typing was eventually taught in high school.

Those classes are gone. Ironically, in our era of keyboard ubiquity, typing has fallen out of the curriculum.) Nor has anyone invented a rival to the home keys method (that we still cling to the QWERTY keyboard, despite the advantages of other layouts, is yet another puzzle). Since most students come to school familiar with keyboards, including cell phone keypads, educators are letting the ad hoc habits of six-year old computer gamers stand, although these same teachers spend hours laboriously showing their pupils how to hold a pencil and the correct way to write a cursive capital G—skills that the kids will likely rarely use once they get to high school, when typed assignments are the norm. (Not to mention how little handwriting will figure into their adult lives). As a K-3 technology teacher in a Philadelphia area public school explained to me, “I only see students at most for one 45-minute period per week, and it may be the only time the students have on a computer that week. With various other projects, there is no time for real keyboarding instruction and practice.”

Does it matter how we type? Yes. Touch typing allows us to write without thinking about how we are writing, freeing us to focus on what we are writing, on our ideas. Touch typing is an example of cognitive automaticity, the ability to do things without conscious attention or awareness. Automaticity takes a burden off our working memory, allowing us more space for higher-order thinking. (Other forms of cognitive automaticity include driving a car, riding a bike and reading—you’re not sounding out the letters as you scan this post, right?) When we type without looking at the keys, we are multi-tasking, our brains free to focus on ideas without having to waste mental resources trying to find the quotation mark key. We can write at the speed of thought.