

The Touch Type Technique – An Evaluation – Garth Brink

I have often sat and watched my secretary as she typed, in a matter of minutes, a document that had taken me probably an hour to prepare. Her agile fingers flew over the keys at an incredible speed. Furthermore, she was accurate. How, I asked her, does one learn to type? A smile was all that I ever received, and the matter was left at that.

I had already acquired a computer for use at home, and I used it extensively. I enjoyed using the various programmes that I had, and learning some basic principles of DOS, RAM and so forth. But the biggest drawback was my inability to touch type. I was certainly no more than a two-finger typist. Each letter that I wrote was checked and re-checked, and still some mistakes crept in. This annoyed me – I had to learn to touch type.

By sheer coincidence I was introduced to the *Typequick* course of touch typing in ten easy lessons. I found this of such value that I am of the opinion that all who possess a computer must acquaint themselves with this course, and if it is followed diligently, will be able to touch type accurately. It has made a great difference to my approach when using the computer, as my thoughts can flow freely without having to concentrate too hard on the actual typing. What is more, I do not have to have everything proofed before it is sent out, which in itself is a great time and paper saver!

In evaluating this particular programme, I will examine the following:

What is *Typequick*?

What computer system is required to operate *Typequick*?

How does *Typequick* do it?

The Content of *Typequick*

Is *Typequick* expensive?

What *Typequick* did for me

Conclusion

What is *Typequick*?

Typequick is a computer managed instruction course which is easy to follow. The package consists of a hard-cover manual (a most welcome aspect, as manuals are so often soft-cover and damage easily when frequently handled) and a floppy disk.

What Computer System is Needed?

Typequick can run on any IBM XT, AT PS2/C, PC and compatibles using any versions of MSDOS or PCDOS. The minimum RAM required is 128k. Users of Macintosh, Commodore can also use *Typequick*.

It is important to stipulate when purchasing your copy what machine you operate.

How does *Typequick* do it?

Typequick does it very well, and I enjoyed all the lessons.

The instructions on how to get started are somewhat confusing, and this is due to terminology used. A "backup copy" first had to be made of the floppy disk, and although I understand the necessity of this, the terminology is confusing. The command "BACKUP" is distinctly different from "COPY", and it is a COPY which is required. However, if one follows the instruction implicitly and is not too concerned with this conflicting usage of terminology, the

correct procedure will be followed. I nevertheless thought the method quite cumbersome.

As most computers now have a hard disk, I found it easier to make a copy onto the hard disk than onto a separate floppy disk. This is easily done by creating a separate directory on the hard disk and using the "COPY" command to copy the files. One cannot operate the programme from the hard disk; the floppy must be used to commence the programme. Copying from floppy to floppy is a laborious task, and to me makes no sense in this instance (of course one still needs to make a BACKUP of the hard disk!)

The manual is well set out, and is therefore easy to follow. Early on it lists twelve reasons why the *typequick* method is the most effective touch typing system – and I certainly would have difficulty in questioning the validity of the statements. The aspect of adopting the correct posture whilst typing is also mentioned, and one is reminded of it at the commencement of each lesson.

Of great importance is the Chapter on "The Best Way to Learn to Touch Type". A commitment of one hour per day for ten days is required to complete the course, and the goal stated of 20 words per minute is easily achieved.

The Content

The course is divided into three sub-courses:

1. Learning the keyboard
2. Learning the keypad/calculator pad
3. Building speed and accuracy

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A interesting feature is the "Inform library" section. For newcomers to the concept of computer it is an interesting section and contains the following chapters:

1. Introduction to Computers - what the bits are all about.
2. Keyboard - what all the keys do.
3. MS Dos - Operating System MISStery explain
4. Word Processing - how to utilize this wonderful system

5. Healthy Operating
6. Protect your Information


1. *Learning the keyboard*

The alphabet is learnt in six lessons; the numbers are dealt with in lessons seven and eight. These are well presented, starting with the "home" keys for the left and right hands. The keyboard is drawn on the screen, and a cursor flashes next to the key which is to be learnt. If the incorrect key is

struck a "beep" sounds. Once the position has been mastered, the letters are presented on the screen and these are typed immediately below. An error results in a beep until the correct letter is typed.

After each session a progress report is displayed which depicts the keys learnt that lesson; the number of errors; the type rate (words per minute) as well as the keys on which more work will be done. A print out of these analyses can also be obtained.

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COMPUTERS IN PRACTICE

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As one progresses from lesson to lesson the typing becomes much more interesting as words are formed, and stories emerge. I found myself concentrating so much on the actual key position that I remember very little of these interesting tales, but it does certainly brighten up the dreary thought of typing!

Numbers still pose a problem for me, and I must admit that I still "peep" when I have to type them. One secretary that I asked about this problem said that only bookkeepers have to worry about numbers!

A further problem which I experienced is to decide which fingers to use for the various function keys and the ALT CTRL keys. It would certainly be a recommendation that these be added to the programme - but it will obviously depend on which keyboard is being used.

2. Learning the keypad/calculator pad

This follows the same approach as used for the alphabet, and generally caused little problem.

3. Building speed and accuracy

This is a most enjoyable aspect, and comprises two lessons. One concentrates on accuracy, whilst the other does not permit one to correct mistakes - typing continues until the end of the sessions. Again a performance analysis is presented at the end of each session, which at times is quite encouraging!

The paragraphs which one types are again most interesting - from computers to details about typing competitions. It certainly takes the boredom out of learning!

Is Typequick Expensive?

It is always difficult to determine whether an application or package is worth the price paid. At just over R200 (excluding GST) this package is definitely worth the price. Typing is used on a daily basis, and the better one can type, the more efficient one is in one's work. It is a skill which will be of use as long as one needs to communicate, or record the consultations with one's patients!

What did Typequick do for me?

1. I did enjoy the lessons

I looked forward each day to the lessons. Beware of attempting to type when tired - I find that after a long day the accuracy and speed falls considerably. Posture is extremely important, and I can now sympathize with secretaries who present with muscle tension headache!

2. I did learn to touch type

I have achieved 50 words per minute (provided there are no numbers!) with 90% accuracy. This is still not good enough, as I am unable to compete against my secretary and win!

3. I can now concentrate on the work which I am typing

No longer do I have to think of a particular key's position on the board and cloud my little grey cells with unnecessary clutter. I can concentrate fully on what I am attempting to convey in my writing - whatever the nature of such writing.

I have freedom of thought - and I can keep pace (or nearly) with my thoughts whilst I type. This I have found to be of great benefit, as it allows everything to flow.

4. I still need practise

As with everything else, practise makes perfect. If I have not been at my computer for one day I find that my accuracy drops alarmingly. I am nevertheless determined to challenge my secretary and be successful in my challenge!

Conclusion

I agree with the statement in the *Typequick* literature that everyone, including businessmen and executives, must be able to touch type. Soon we will all have computer terminals on our desks, entering details of our consultation with our patients. Unless we can touch type, and touch type accurately at speed, we will not be able to make the best use of the new wonder toy of our age - the computer.

Typequick can help you achieve all this - as it has for me. What is more, you will enjoy doing it!



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