

REV IT UP!

# MARIE BOU K12

Keyboarding and Supplemental Curriculum

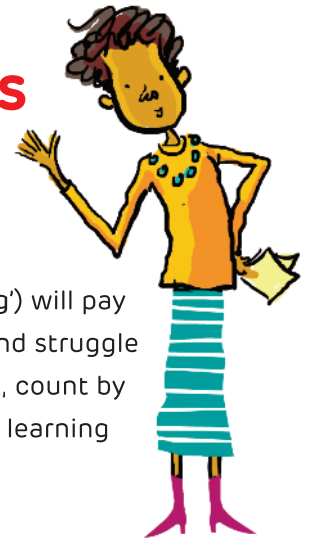
Teachers' Keys  
to Keyboarding Success



[www.mariebouk12.com](http://www.mariebouk12.com)

# Teachers' Keys to Keyboarding Success

By Marie Bou K-12: *Engaging web apps for growing minds*



## So you're the typing teacher!

Congratulations! You will find that your students' progress in keyboarding (aka 'touch typing') will pay off for them in the long run, and for their teachers as well. However, there are some time and struggle investments that need to be acknowledged up front. Just as learning to recite the alphabet, count by 25s to 1000, memorize a poem, or decipher the Periodic Table take time and effort, so does learning to type efficiently.



## Keys for teacher success

Begin with age-appropriate goals for your students. Pre-kindergarten and lower elementary students may only need to be familiar with the layout of the keyboard, be able to put spaces between words, begin sentences with a capital, and end sentences with a period. Older students can be expected to learn all 26 letters (and corresponding capitals) without looking at their fingers. Advanced students can enhance their skills by being able to type most of the common punctuation marks and all of the numbers without looking and to constantly improve their speed and accuracy.

Set up a timetable of how often your students will have typing or keyboarding practice. If your students are working on a program they can (and will) access from home, perhaps there can be typing "homework", however, this will not be consistent throughout your class. If your students need access to a lab, there may be scheduling logistics to work out. If you are teaching in a 1-to-1 environment, you may be able to have flexibility to incorporate practice when the students are using their devices for core subjects. Twice-a-week instruction should be the minimum for consistent progress. Set a reasonable number of weeks for intensive practice, preferably early in the school year. After that, be realistic about the amount of mastery you expect students to achieve.

## Keys for student success

Students progress in this complex skill set when they are motivated, monitored, and rewarded. They must spend quality time practicing, and learn to tolerate frustration.



### Motivation

Young students are motivated by the ability to communicate using the keyboard. They think typing is "grown up"! They love typing their names, the entire alphabet, the names of pets or their favorite...anything!

The finished product, a printed page that they've created, is a tangible reward as well.

Starting at about age 9, students are motivated by the ability to find the letters quickly in order to type online. Chat rooms that require entering letters from a QWERTY format (rather than ABC as in some game systems) can cause players to be very slow in crafting their responses. If any of your students are gamers or like to post online, you may be able to entice them to improve in order to speed up communication on message boards, and the like. (Even if they are typing on a smartphone using only their thumbs, it helps to know where all of the letters are on a QWERTY keyboard!)

When students are old enough to be assigned typewritten reports, they may be motivated by cutting down on hunt-and-peck time in order to shorten the homework period.

# Keys for student success (continued)

## Monitoring

No keyboard program, regardless of how sophisticated, can substitute for an instructor eyeballing the students' technique. Programs can tell which keys are struck quickly or slowly, and which keys are struck accurately, but cannot tell which of the student's fingers hit the key. Some students will self-monitor, but you need to be walking around looking at finger position and key selection. Even though it seems that students are actively engaged with the program, don't take a break. There is always someone trying to get away with something.



In order to build good habits, even very young students should be instructed to use both the right and left hands when reaching for keys on the keyboard. They should also be instructed in holding down the Shift Key rather than turning Caps Lock on and off to create capital letters. Students using a formal typing program should be instructed to map out which fingers are responsible for typing which keys and begin exercising those responsibilities. (It's rather amazing how many keys are assigned to the index and pinky fingers!)

It is very important to practice careful and consistent instruction on the keyboard layout and the keys assigned to each hand and finger. The older the student is when he/she begins learning to type, the more likely he/she has picked up bad habits purely out of convenience. Convenient fingering is hard to "break".

Because many students are enamored with speed, winning races, and finishing first, you may have to combat their tendency to revert to hunt-and-peck in order to be faster.

Make it a habit to circulate while the group is practicing. Don't just look at the student in front of you, look over at students who don't think you're watching them! You might even mutter some general comments: "I like seeing typists with good posture!" or "I'm seeing good finger position!". Students will feel like you are watching them personally.

## Rewarding progress

Besides the intrinsic motivators of learning a grown-up skill, consider creating group or individual goals toward which students can strive. Perhaps you can set up awards or lists recognizing such achievements as "Quality Typing Time" for extended periods spent on task, "Level Up" for advancing in the program, "Using Your Skills" for students who try to use proper hand position during routine tasks on the keyboard, or "Home User" for students who access the practice from home. Make a chart or print stickers onto label stock, or create small paper certificates in order to give instant recognition.



Because typing is an individual accomplishment, consider asking students NOT to compare their levels with others or to call out their scores. You might use a sports or instrumental analogy to explain that some people (adults included) are quite gifted in learning certain skills, but that "showing off" or teasing others is neither cool nor helpful to those for whom that particular task is a struggle. Teach students to measure their progress relative to their own previous levels, not their classmates' scores. When complimenting an accomplished typist, keep it low-key and don't hold that student's success up to the group as a standard that all are expected to meet. When encouraging a struggling student, commend him/her for the amount of effort and time on task.



## Quality time

There is no substitute for time spent practicing a skill. Multiple sessions per week for a set number of weeks is the best approach. A little typing instruction here and there over several months does not properly reinforce this kind of skill. As much as educators would love to have students practice at home, you should not make home-time the key to your instruction. Most families limit “screen time” formally or informally (using a timer, or by limiting access to the shared family device). You may have success enlisting the aid of a parent of a struggling typist but the monitoring is likely to be quite challenging for parents.

## Tolerance for frustration

This is the big one. One key factor in the success of formal instruction at a given grade level is the ability of students to deal with setbacks. Here are things a student needs to be able to handle, emotionally, in order to keep making progress:

- Being told (even by a cartoon character) that he/she has made an error.
- Mastering increasing numbers of memorized keys.
- Watching initial high scores decline as tasks get harder.
- Breaking old habits in favor of creating new ones.

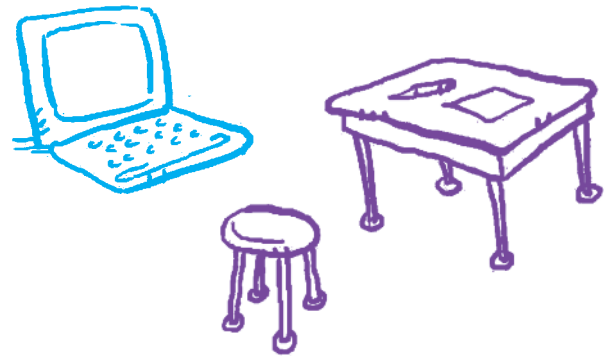
Some academically talented students, and many accomplished adults, find this the hardest part of learning to type. They haven't had many encounters with failure. Some struggling students will see this as just another subject at

which they “stink”. It may be best to be open and honest with your students about what it will feel like to “hit the wall” as runners say. Give them the vocabulary to express this phenomenon, and the encouragement to push through it. Do a search on “increase frustration tolerance in children” and look for more ideas.

## Finally, be realistic

The world is full of people who don't type well; but they often have other strengths. It's probably true that the ability to touch type accurately and speedily is a great “force multiplier” in academic and digital success, however, not all students will achieve mastery. Set high goals, push for those goals, and encourage, monitor and reward your students. Teachers have so many demands on their time and skills, and you certainly have many other objectives to achieve with your students, so just do your best.

## Good luck!





# TO RECAP

- Set age-appropriate goals
- Work intensively on skills
- Motivate students to master skills
- Monitor students carefully
- Reward effort as well as success
- Spend quality time with instruction
- Encourage tolerance for frustration
- Be realistic in terms of outcomes



**REV IT UP!**  
**MARIE BOU** K12  
Keyboarding and Supplemental Curriculum

[www.mariebouk12.com](http://www.mariebouk12.com)