

## Occupational Therapy Service for Children and Young People

### Advice for Improving Touch Typing Skills

Learning to use the keyboard effectively is an important skill for any child. Computers are becoming ever more prevalent at school and home and they can make a huge difference in producing work quickly and legibly.

In order to be able to successfully touch type, you need to be able to isolate each finger movement and make separate finger movements in a very small and controlled area. This controlled movement requires the coordination of the small muscles in the hand and fingers. These are the same muscles that are used when doing tasks that require in-hand manipulation.

#### The keyboard has many important advantages;

- It increases legibility and clarity of presentation
- Increased speed of output
- Spelling; learning physical letter patterns on the keyboard can be helpful with the spelling of some words
- It reduces the physical pressure and concentration of handwriting- pressing a key can be much easier than manipulating a pen or pencil
- Confidence. The keyboard may allow the child to record work more independently and to produce the required work in the time allowed.
- A reduced demand on visual perception skills. Some individuals with poor visual perception find it difficult to move their focus from screen to keyboard (and perhaps to a classroom whiteboard). By learning to touch type, the individual reduces the demand they make on their visual perception skills by not having to look at the keyboard.

#### Free online touch-typing programmes for practice/learning include;

- BBC Dance Mat Typing – this has four levels divided into three lessons each and are introduced by animated characters.
- Typingclub.com – this has some nice visuals and audio to help with typing. If you click on 'Home' and then 'more lesson plans', you can choose stories which you need to type along to,
- Typetastic.com – this has games which make typing fun! It has different levels available based on age.

#### Activities to Help promote Typing Skills:

##### **1. Finger warm-up activities**

Typing can be a repetitive motion so warming up the fingers is important.

##### **- Put On Imaginary Gloves**

Pull on your "gloves" by applying firm pressure to the fingers and back of the each hand. This provides proprioceptive and tactile feedback and prepares the muscles for movement.

- ***Finger Push-Ups***

Place the tips of your fingers together and straighten the fingers while pushing the finger tips against each other.

- ***Piano Fingers***

Drum your fingers on the table or desk as if playing the piano. Make sure each finger touches the desk. You can also work on fast vs. slow movements with this. “How slowly can you play the piano?” “How fast can you play the piano?” “Can you use both hands together to play the piano?”

## **2. Playing a musical instrument like the piano**

Playing a musical instrument uses many of the same skills that are needed for typing. Visual scanning, muscle memory, finger dexterity, hand strength, bilateral coordination are just some. Other instruments such as the violin, guitar, or cello can be helpful, however the piano is most like typing in that the hands are in the same position.

## **3. Working on bilateral coordination activities**

Bilateral coordination skills include using both hands together. Here are some bilateral coordination activities that can help.

- Stencils: make sure they hold the stencil with one hand while tracing with the other hand.
- Hand clapping rhymes
- Lacing activities: lacing cards, lace up stockings (two pieces of construction paper with holes punched around the edges).
- Games to help promote this skill include: Bop It, Mr. Potato Head (make sure the child stabilizes the head with one hand while placing body parts with the other hand), Rubik’s cube, Etch-A-Sketch, rhythm sticks, Legos.
- Ball and balloon games: have the child use both hands to pass the ball or balloon overhead, between legs, roll at a target etc.

## **4. Working on visual motor skills**

Visual motor skills include visual scanning, eye-hand coordination activities and more. Jumping games, origami, flashlight tag, mazes, puzzles, connect the dots and other similar activities are all great for working on visual motor skills.

**Ideal positioning for keyboarding:**

