

# Sensory Service (Vision Impaired)

### Touch Typing

Because it eliminates the need to look at the keyboard, touch-typing is one of an important and useful skill that blind and visually impaired children can learn.

[Doorway Online is a touch-typing tutor for learners with vision impairment that should suit anyone learning to touch type. These touch-typing games take learners from the home keys to mastery of the whole keyboard and typing sentences. Each activity has a range of accessibility options.](https://www.doorwayonline.org.uk/author/doorway-online/)

### Useful strategies to use when learning to touch type

#### Posture and Positioning

The importance of having good posture when typing cannot be emphasised enough.  It is especially important to monitor posture and positioning in younger students, who are constantly growing and may need to have the height of their tables and chairs checked a few times a year or more.

#### Realistic Time Limitations

In reality, learning to touch type can be boring.  Pair that with the fact that the attention spans of younger children are somewhat limited and you can understand why it is so frustrating for the students.

Varying opinions about how much time each typing session should last, but most do agree that starting out small and allowing for breaks decreases the student’s anxiety and the likelihood that they will reach their frustration point.

For these reasons, it is usually recommend that typing lessons start out at 5-10 minutes and increase by a few minutes per week.  This helps students get accustomed to sitting in one place in a given position and to using their fingers in ways that they are not used to.  Often setting a timer and providing visual and auditory feedback about how much time is left keeps the students on task.

For primary aged students, in general do not let them type beyond 20 minutes without at least a 5-minute break to walk around and stretch or to at least engage in another activity.  For older students, increase that limit to 30 minutes before a break.

#### Proper Keyboard Orientation

It is tempting to plop a student in front of a keyboard with a typing program and tell them to “have a go at it”, but it certainly is not best practice!

Orienting a student to the keyboard he or she will be using is very important.  Teaching hand positioning on the home row is a major first step to learning to use all of the keys on the keyboard.  If that is not learned correctly within the first few lessons, the student will not be able to progress and reach frustration point rather quickly.

In addition, although many keyboarding programs and instruction tools provide verbal instruction about hand positioning, ensuring that students are correctly able to follow the instructions is crucial.

Additionally, as typing is taught, it is also important that students learn where the other major keys on the keyboard are located.  If they are screen reader users or you are hoping to decrease their dependence on the mouse, it is even more important for the students to be able to locate and use alt, control, insert, tab, and other keys that allow keyboard control of the operating system, screen reader/magnifier, and other programs.

#### Mix it Up!

Providing some time for students to work on typing up school assignments or homework during keyboarding time reinforces that learning to touch type is not just something you are doing as a form of torture, it has a purpose.  Assignments should not be lengthy, especially the first few times.

It is important to spend some time teaching students how to use the computer functionally.  Learning to open Word documents, navigate to a webpage, or perform other tasks are things students both need to know and will appreciate learning.  Approaching it like a “secret code” to using a computer is often helpful for younger children...especially if students can show peers that they can perform tasks peers cannot without the aid of a mouse (such as open a programme, get to the desktop, etc.)

Keep records: Challenging students to improve their words per minute (WPM) and accuracy can be tricky.  Creating charts or graphs to show them how much they have progressed is a great way to motivate some students.