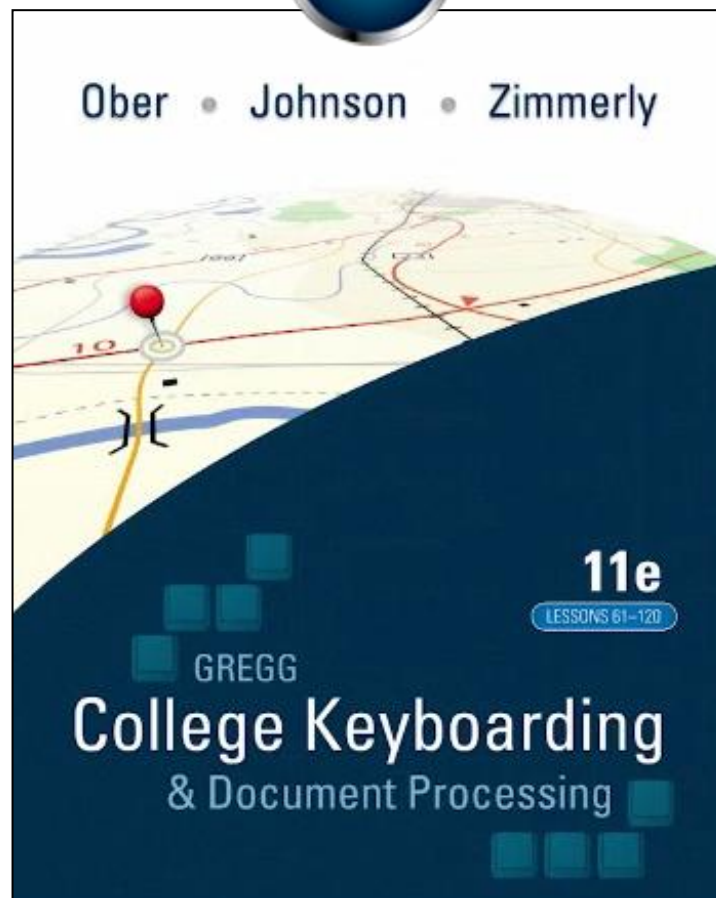


# *This We Believe*

*About Improving Keyboarding Technique*

*Ober, Johnson, and Zimmerly  
GDP11e Authors*



# *This We Believe . . .*

Walk past any computer lab and you are likely to observe anything from students looking at their keys, slouching, sitting on one bent leg, sitting too far from or close to the screen, using the wrong fingers to type—we've seen it all. Is it any wonder, then, that workplace injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome and back pain are rising? And as more and more students learn online or come to us with bad habits developed since they were old enough to hold their hands over a keyboard, we can expect the problem of poor technique to become more pronounced.

Here are some techniques (in no particular order) you can use to motivate your students to improve their technique:

## **ABOUT TEACHING TECHNIQUE:**

- ❖ Discuss the implications of poor technique—increased errors, inability to move beyond a speed plateau, health-related issues, physical fatigue, and the like. Assure students that although exhibiting correct technique may seem artificial at the beginning, it will soon become second nature.
- ❖ Provide constant reminders, observation, and remediation to improve technique during the first several weeks of the course (of any keyboarding course—not just the basic course). Always use positive reinforcement.
- ❖ Enlist the help of keyboarding instructors in observing and remediating these problems in related courses taught by nonkeyboarding instructors. The same goes for lab assistants.
- ❖ Assure students who watch their fingers that gradually they will need to do less looking in order to develop locational security (knowing where the keys are located). Be honest in admitting that initially, students may type faster by looking at their keys than by trying to keep their eyes on the copy. But assure them that they will soon reach a plateau where their speeds will not increase unless they're able to follow the copy in their textbooks. In other words, keyboard watchers are condemning themselves to permanent low speeds. Demonstrate your own skill by taking a 12-second speed sprint in front of the class to drive home your point. Develop locational security (the confidence in knowing where the alphabetic keys are located) to minimize keyboard watching.
- ❖ Emphasize speed as the prescription to break the habit of looking at the keys. The pressure for more speed doesn't leave students time to look at their keys (in psychology, this concept is called response interference):
  - ✓ Students must be convinced that they actually can type while keeping their eyes on the copy.
  - ✓ Always voice positive rather than negative reinforcement; for example, "keep your eyes on the copy" rather than "keep your eyes off the keyboard."
  - ✓ These GDP skillbuilding routines are especially effective in helping students to concentrate on maintaining or increasing speed: 12-Second Speed Sprints, Sustained Practice, and Progressive Practice.
- ❖ Finally, accept the fact that you're not going to be able to correct all the poor techniques of all students. Be proud of any improvements you've been able to motivate in your students.

## **ABOUT ASSESSING TECHNIQUE:**

- ❖ Assess correct technique—assign it perhaps as much as 20% to 25% of the final grade during an introductory course and perhaps 5% to 10% for advanced courses. Students need

to know that you consider proper technique important—throughout the keyboarding and document processing courses.

- ❖ Evaluate technique as follows: Acceptable, Needs Improvement, or Not Acceptable.
- ❖ Schedule a formal technique evaluation for each student about one-third of the way through the term. A few days before your formal evaluation, distribute to the students the evaluation form you will use. See page GDP-12 in the *Instructor Wraparound Edition* of our text or download it from our [GDP Information Center](#), Instructor Edition link—click [here](#) for details. Or use this alternate form that provides more information to the student: [Technique Check Form](#).
- ❖ Ask students to perform a self-assessment of their techniques and discuss this with them prior to your performing your own assessment. Click [here](#) for a self-assessment form for online students.

## ABOUT USING GDP TO IMPROVE TECHNIQUE:

GDP can help your students develop the locational security and muscle memory they need to type by touch using correct fingering. After you administer a formal technique check and identify troublesome keystrokes, give the students a copy of the [evaluation form](#). Or you can provide a link to the form using the [Resources](#) feature in GDP 11e—click [here](#) for details. Then send students to GDP for remediation as follows:

- ❖ **Relearn a key:** Click **Skillbuilding, New Keys** tab; click the desired key on the menu to move to the lesson where the key was introduced; review the demonstration, and type the drills to relearn the key. Enrichment lessons are also available for Lessons 1-20.
- ❖ **MAP+: Unlimited skillbuilding drills, Lessons 1-18:** If you are on Lessons 1-18, click **MAP+**, **Lesson 1-18**; from the drop-down list, click the desired lesson for unlimited drills on all keys learned *up to and including* the selected lesson.
- ❖ **MAP+: Intensive practice on any key:** For Lesson 17 and beyond, click **MAP+**; click any key on the “live keyboard” for intensive, unlimited practice drills for that key.
- ❖ **MAP+: Diagnostics—Alphabet (Lesson 17 on), Numbers (Lesson 19 on), and Symbols (Lesson 20 on):** Click **MAP+**, **Pretest, Alphabet** if you have completed Lesson 17 or beyond; click **Numbers** for Lesson 19 or beyond; click **Symbols** for Lesson 20 or beyond; take the pretest and follow the prompts to complete the unlimited prescriptive drills.

Click **Skillbuilding, Drills** tab; click the desired drill:

- ❖ **12-Second Speed Sprints:** Achieves higher speeds by typing in short bursts on short, easy copy without error limits; to break keyboard-watching habit, type each sprint without ever looking at your fingers.
- ❖ **Paced Practice:** Encourages steady, paced typing; alternates between speed and accuracy improvement; forces you to speed up “just a little” for speed gain and to slow down “just a little” for accuracy gain—any gross deviation from normal speed is detrimental to skill development.
- ❖ **Progressive Practice:** Breaks keyboard-watching habit; builds straight-copy speed/accuracy using 30” timed writings.
- ❖ **Sustained Practice:** Builds higher speeds by maintaining speed on increasingly difficult copy.
- ❖ **Technique Practice:** Builds skill on these keys: SHIFT, BACKSPACE, TAB, ENTER, and SPACE BAR.
- ❖ **Pretest/Practice/Posttest:** Builds straight-copy skill focusing on either speed or accuracy, while emphasizing specific reaches.