

Nichols, L. (2004). Learning to keyboard: Does the use of keyboard covers make a difference. Information Technology in Childhood Education Annual, 2004, 175-185.

Quantitative or Qualitative: Quantitative

Purpose of Study:

- In order for students to maximize their time on computers they must learn the proper keyboard techniques in order to develop speed and accuracy.
- Children need to learn the touch fingering technique to avoid developing bad habits such as the 'hunt and peck' way.
- A challenge of learning the touch technique is to prevent students from looking at the keyboard when being instructed to keyboard.
- This research investigated whether using keyboard covers would yield better results with accuracy and speed.
- It was hypothesized that students using covers would have better speed and accuracy than students using no covers.
- It was also hypothesized that 4th graders would have better speed and accuracy.
- With regards to males and females, it was predicted that girls would have greater overall speed but no predictions were made about accuracy.

Length of Study: 4 weeks

Number of Participants (Sample Size):

- N=84 participants in Grade 3 (n=36, 22 boys and 14 girls) and Grade 4 (n= 48, 18 boys and 30 girls).

Method Used:

- Students were randomly assigned to one of the two study groups – in one group students had skin covers for their keyboards during keyboarding instruction while the other group had no covers for the keyboards.
- Students received keyboarding instruction every day for 30 minutes, for 4 weeks (total 10 hours of keyboarding instruction).
- They used the keyboarding tutorial program called "Type to Learn" (Sunburst, 2002).

Results:

- A three factor ANOVA was used to analyze the data (i.e. Cover/no covers X grade level X gender).
- The findings of this research showed a significant difference between the two treatment groups.
- Students in both 3rd and 4th grade who used covers had an overall higher word-per-minute rate than students who did not use covers.
- Students in 4th grade had more words-per-minute than students in grade 3.
- Females had a higher word-per-minute than boys whether they were in covered or uncovered treatment group.
- As for accuracy, there was no significant difference between the two treatment groups or between grade levels.
- With regards to accuracy, the authors suggest that based on past research once students acquire speed, accuracy will follow.
- There was a difference with gender; girls had higher accuracy rates than boys.