Keyboarding Basics

This handout will help you with getting familiar with using the keyboard to be able to do some simple typing. Below are example pictures of a keyboard. Keep in mind that all keyboards are slightly different in appearance. Do NOT let this concern you. All of the keys listed will still be on the keyboard and they should be approximately in the same places with the same keys around them.

To begin with, remember that the computer keyboard keys are extremely sensitive. Each press on a key should be a quick light tap. Do not hold down the key. (Unless it is the *Shift* or *Ctrl* keys being used in conjunction with another key simultaneously.) If you hold down one of the keys on the keyboard too long it will repeat and you will see multiples of the character on that key show up on your computer screen.

The following is a guide to the 4 sections of the keyboard:

Typewriter Section

This part of the keyboard should be the most familiar to the majority of users. It looks like and is set up exactly like a typewriter. All of the letters and numbers and most of the symbols are in exactly the same spots they would be on a typewriter. Anyone who has learned how to type on a typewriter will be able to use the computer keyboard in exactly the same way. Descriptions of some of the keys and how to use them follows.

Letter Keys – If you press any of the letter keys, a lowercase version of that letter will appear on the screen. If you hold down the *Shift* key while simultaneously tapping a letter key, a capital version of that letter will appear instead.

Spacebar – This is the longest and largest key on the keyboard. It is in the center of the bottommost row of keys between the two *Alt* keys. Pressing this key places a space between what you are typing on the screen. Standard practice is to put 1 space between words and 2 spaces between sentences. Be careful you do not hold down this key too long or accidentally rest your thumbs on it or you will insert multiple, repeating spaces on your screen. If it looks like you cursor is running away, you are probably resting your fingers on this key too long.

Number & Symbol Keys – If you press any of the number or symbol keys on its own, the bottom character will appear on the screen. If you hold down the *Shift* key while simultaneously tapping any of the number or symbol keys, the top character will appear instead.

Backspace – Each time you press this key, one character to the left of the blinking cursor will be erased.

Tab – In a word processing program, pressing this key indents the line of typing half an inch. When filling out a form on the internet, pressing this key moves the blinking cursor to the next text entry box.

Caps Lock – This key is an on/off switch for typing ALL capital letters. You can tell whether or not Caps Lock is on by looking at the *Caps Lock* light in the upper right corner of the keyboard. If the corresponding *Caps Lock* light is on in the upper right corner of the keyboard, when this button is pressed it will turn the light off and vice versa. If you press a letter key when the *Caps Lock* light is on, a capital letter will appear on the screen. If you press a letter key when the light is off, a lowercase version of that letter will appear instead.
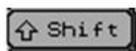
Shift – This key has no function when used by itself. If you press and hold down this key while simultaneously tapping and releasing a letter key, a capital version of the letter will appear on the screen. If you press and hold down this key while simultaneously tapping and releasing a key with two characters on it, the top character will appear on the screen. Be sure that you locate the letter key that you would like to use BEFORE beginning to hold down the *Shift* key. Holding down the *Shift* key by itself for too long will turn on an automatic selecting feature that you will NOT be able to turn off without restarting the computer.

Ctrl & Alt – These keys have no function on their own. But when they are used simultaneously with other letter and symbol keys, much like using the *Shift* key with a letter, they will perform various commonly done tasks in the program being used.

Enter – This key enters, or gives, information that you've just typed to the computer. In a word processing program, this key also creates a new line for text to be typed on, much like the carriage return key on a typewriter.

Editing & Navigation Section

This section of the keyboard contains keys that are used to move your cursor around (navigating) or are used when changing text already on the screen (editing). These keys are not used very often and some aren't even activated for use in most current software. Don't be surprised if you never use many of them.

Insert – This key is a toggle switch that alternates between Insert and Overwrite mode in a word processing program. When using Insert mode, typing can be added between other text. When using Overwrite mode, typing between entered text will replace the text already on the screen.
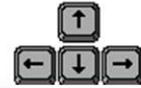
Delete – Each time you press this key, one character to the right of the blinking cursor will be erased.

Home – Pressing this key moves the cursor to the beginning of a line or a page.

End – Pressing this key moves the cursor to the end of a line or a page.

Page Up – Pressing this key moves the cursor to the top of a page.

Page Down – Pressing this key moves the cursor to the bottom of a page.

Print Screen – This key copies a picture of what is currently on your computer screen and places it on the clipboard to be pasted.

Scroll Lock – This key originally was intended to temporarily stop the automatic scrolling of text or to halt the operation of a program. This key does not work with, and is not needed by, most programs in use today. Nowadays, we use the Scroll bar instead.

Pause/Break – This key originally was intended to temporarily suspend (*Pause*) or to terminate (*Break*) the execution of a program. This key does not work with, and is not needed by, most programs in use today.

Arrow Keys – These keys are used to move the blinking cursor up, down, left, and right.

Numeric Keypad

This part of the keyboard can be used to type numbers and the numeric symbols that go along with them. Keep in mind that these numbers and symbols will look and act no differently than the matching numbers and symbols on the typewriter section of the keyboard. It is merely another configuration for the keys for speed of use for those accustomed to using an adding machine or calculator, which has the number keys set up in this same pattern.

Num Lock – Pressing this key either turns on or turns off the number feature of the numeric keypad. If the corresponding *Num Lock* light is on in the upper right corner of the keyboard, when this button is pressed it will turn the light off and vice versa.

Enter – Exactly the same as the *Enter* key on the typewriter section. This key enters, or gives, information that you've just typed to the computer. In a word processing program, this key also creates a new line for text, much like the carriage return key on a typewriter. Just another key in a more convenient place for when you are using the numeric keypad instead of the typewriter section.

Number Keys – If you press any of the number keys while the *Num Lock* light is on, the number will appear on the screen. If you press any of the number keys while the *Num Lock* light is off, the keys will perform the action of the lower symbol on the key instead.

Symbol Keys – Will input one of the corresponding symbols on the screen when pressed.

Num Lock, Caps Lock, & Scroll Lock Lights – These three lights tell whether or not the various lock keys are on or off. If the light is on, then that lock is on. If the light is off, the lock is off. Sometimes instead of *Num Lock*, *Caps Lock*, and *Scroll Lock* there will be a **1**, an **A**, and an arrow ↓.

Function Keys

The function keys, *F1* through *F12* perform commonly done tasks in various programs, such as saving, printing, starting the spell check feature, closing out of files, exiting out of games, or accessing the help function. In each different program, the function keys are assigned their own task. This means that the same key will NOT perform the same function in all software. Each application decides separately what the common tasks for the function keys will be. However, the *ESC* or *Escape* key at the far left end will almost always exit out of, or stop, something.

Some Word Processing Basics:

This information is to be used in a word processing program such as WordPad or Microsoft Word.

- Immediately after opening the word processing program, you can begin typing. There is no need to "set up" the page. It is ready to go.
- DON'T press the *Enter* key at the end of every line of text. Word processing programs will automatically "wrap" the text around to the next line when it no longer fits on the current line. Only press the *Enter* key when you are ready to begin a new paragraph.
- Don't worry about correcting any mistakes and typos that you make as you go. It is more time efficient to type all of your text in first and then fix the errors and make changes after.
- When making changes to text already entered, you must first move the blinking cursor to where you would like to edit. There are two ways to move the cursor:
  - Press the *Arrow* keys on the keyboard to move the cursor in the direction the arrow points.
  - Move the I-beam mouse pointer to the location in the text and click once on the left mouse button.
- If you want to erase text, remember that the *Backspace* key deletes characters to the left of the cursor and the *Delete* key deletes the characters to the right of the cursor.
- Remember that the text already typed is not fixed in its location. You always have the ability to move the cursor and add more text between what was previously typed.
- Lastly, remember that all of the typing and other key actions take effect wherever the blinking cursor is. You always need to be aware of its location before pressing keys on the keyboard. For example, when you are finished with a correction, be sure to move the cursor back to the end of the text before continuing to type or pressing the *Enter* key.