

Tip 21: become a better typist

Ben Klemens

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level: basic computer user

purpose: gain some confidence at the keyboard

This may not be the C/POSIX tip you were expecting, but let me tell you how I taught myself to type. This is probably obvious, and I can verify from my experience teaching people how to use these systems, but comfort with the POSIX toolchain and comfort with the keyboard are closely (but imperfectly) correlated. It's hard to be comfortable on the command line if you're not comfortable typing.

If you're still a hunt-and-peck typist, then there are abundant tutorials out there to show you where the home keys are, and your search engine's recommendations are as good or better than mine. But for me, there was a point where I technically knew how to type but had hit my plateau. That's where this tip came in and made me the person I am today.

To do:

Next time you have some keyboard-oriented work to do, get a light t-shirt and drape it over the keyboard. Stick your hands under the shirt, and start typing.

The intent is to prevent that sneaking glance that we all do to check where the keys are. It turns out that the keys aren't very mobile and are always exactly where you left them. But those micropauses to check on things are how we keep our confidence and facility with the keyboard at a certain safe speed. If you're old enough to be reading this blog, then you've been looking at a qwerty keyboard for years now, and don't need those reassuring peeks.

Not being able to see will probably be frustrating for you at first, but persist through the initial awkwardness, and get to know those occasional keys that you never quite learned. When you are more confident with the keyboard, you'll have more brain power to dedicate to writing code.