



Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Instructional Resources Library

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Basic Concepts: Computer Keyboard Layout and Modifier Keys

Age(s) / Grade Level(s): Elementary

Subject(s): Technology

Length of time: 30-45 minutes

Curriculum Standards:

- RULE §126.8 Technology Applications, Grade 3, Adopted 2022
 - (12) Practical technology concepts--skills and tools. The student selects appropriate methods or techniques for an assigned task and identifies and solves simple hardware and software problems using common troubleshooting strategies. The student is expected to:
 - (C) demonstrate proper touch keyboarding techniques with accuracy and ergonomic strategies such as correct hand and body positions;

Objective(s):

- Understand the basic layout of a computer keyboard and what modifier keys are

Materials Needed:

- Computer

Lesson/Activity Sequence:

1. The objective of this lesson is for you to learn how the keyboard is laid out on your computer and what modifier keys are used for.
2. Rationale:
 - a. You may be working on a braille display and you may decide that you will use your display to navigate and perform actions on the computer. However, there may be some cases where it will be helpful or necessary for you to use the keyboard to perform functions. Additionally, over time, it will benefit you to learn about your keyboard and how it works in case your braille display stops working for some reason.

3. Let's explore the computer keyboard! First, we will start with all of the keys that are on the outside of the keyboard, starting with the bottom left. Many of these are modifier keys. What does the word "modify" mean? (That's right, it means to change something in some way). These keys are called modifier keys because when you press one of them, either just the one key or with a combination of other keys, they change something or make an action happen on the computer. When you press these keys together, these are called keyboard commands. Now, we'll continue going through all of the modifier keys (each keyboard layout is slightly different - make sure to cover Ctrl, Alt, Shift, Caps Lock, Tab, Windows Key, Function Keys, Home, End, Insert, Enter, and any other peripheral keys like Backspace, Spacebar, Escape, and Delete).
4. Excellent! You learned about your modifier keys, including the special keys called function keys. Now, let's make sure we know about a couple of other important areas of your keyboard. Can you locate your alphabet keys? That's right, they are in the middle part of the keyboard. How about your number keys (be sure to point out the number pad, if there is one)? Excellent, they are above your alphabet keys. Last but not least, let's review the arrow keys.
5. One important modifier key to know related to using JAWS is the Caps Lock key. It is going to be our primary key when we use the keyboard to execute JAWS-specific commands. (Note, the user must have the "laptop" layout setting in place in order for Caps Lock to work as the modifier key. If the layout is set to "desktop" then Insert is the primary modifier key. This can be changed in the "JAWS Startup Wizard").
6. Great job today! Let's review. I'd like you to point to the following areas of your keyboard:
 - a. Alphabet keys
 - b. Function keys
 - c. Number keys
 - d. Arrow keys
 - e. Enter
 - f. Caps Lock
 - g. Ctrl
 - h. Alt
 - i. Shift
 - j. Spacebar
 - k. Windows key
 - l. Backspace
 - m. Delete
 - n. Tab

7. Exit Ticket: Give me an example of a modifier keys and explain what modifier keys are used for.
8. Questions?

How will I assess student progress?

- When asked, student independently locates different areas of the keyboard
- Student can explain what a modifier key is used for and name some examples of modifier keys

Differentiation:

1. Differentiate by Learning Modality

- **Tactile Learners:**
 - Use physical exploration of a real keyboard with tactile markers (e.g., bump dots on “F” and “J,” raised stickers on modifier keys).
 - Give extra time to feel and trace the keyboard layout.
- **Visual Learners:**
 - Provide printed or digital diagrams of a keyboard layout (large print, high contrast, etc.).
 - Highlight modifier keys in a different color.
- **Auditory Learners:**
 - Narrate the keyboard layout while students follow along and repeat key names out loud.
 - Use sound cues or JAWS speech output to reinforce locations.

2. Differentiate by Skill Level

- **Beginner Level:**
 - Focus only on basic keys (alphabet, number keys, spacebar, enter, backspace).
 - Practice identifying just a few modifier keys (Shift, Ctrl, Alt).
- **Intermediate Level:**
 - Introduce all modifier keys, function keys, and navigation keys (Home, End, Arrow Keys, etc.).
 - Practice a few simple keyboard commands (e.g., Ctrl+C, Ctrl+V).
- **Advanced Level:**
 - Incorporate JAWS modifier key settings (Caps Lock vs. Insert) and practice JAWS-specific keyboard commands.
 - Introduce touch typing practice or keyboard shortcuts for navigation.

3. Differentiate by Support and Practice Structure

- **High Support:**
 - Hand-under-hand guidance or direct physical prompting to locate keys.
 - Step-by-step instructions with frequent checks for understanding.
- **Medium Support:**
 - Provide a labeled tactile diagram or braille/print guide.
 - Have students work in pairs to quiz each other.
- **Low Support:**
 - Give students a blank keyboard diagram to label from memory or have them teach a peer about modifier keys.
 - Challenge them to demonstrate 3 to 5 keyboard shortcuts independently.

Next steps/lesson:

- Basic Keyboard Commands for Navigation and Editing