Australian Standard™

Keyboarding speed tests (formerly known as 'Typing speed tests')

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Standards Australia

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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee MS-016, Keyboarding and Shorthand Speed Tests, to supersede AS 2708—1991, *Typing speed tests*.

The objective of the Standard is to provide a uniform method of testing for use by bodies that conduct, assess and certify keyboarding tests for speed and accuracy.

The Standard provides a test method that facilitates the comparison of individual keyboarding speeds. Allowance is made, when counting errors, for the use of word processing software that automatically determines line length. The procedure for calculating keyboarding speed has also been clarified.

The need for the Standard stemmed from the fact that, although many employers hire staff or award pay increases on the basis of keyboarding speed, the tests to determine keyboarding speed have in the past varied widely, producing results that are not comparable. As a consequence, many employers conducted their own speed tests; however, it must be recognized that speed is not the only indicator of a keyboard operator's capability.

In preparing this edition, the committee agreed to retain the accepted practice of expressing keyboarding speed in words per minute, where a word is a standard unit consisting of a specific number of keystrokes. The number of keystrokes that should constitute a standard word, however, was an issue that provoked considerable discussion during the development of the previous editions.

Research conducted by L. J. West[1], D. J. Perry[2] and B. S. Ober[3] indicated that the average word, including spaces and punctuation marks, in written American business language contained respectively 5.97, 5.83 and 6.13 keystrokes. A study by the committee of 300 current Australian shorthand test passages, which had an average of 5.6 keystrokes per word, tended to support the assumption that Australian business language also had closer to 6 keystrokes per word than the commonly accepted 5. If a speed test was intended to measure actual keyboarding speed, then the standard word should resemble as closely as possible the average word in current business language, i.e. 6 keystrokes.

On the other hand, many argued that the main purpose of a standard speed test was not necessarily to provide an accurate measure of speed, but rather to provide an effective ranking method. In that case, the unit of measurement used was not as important as the fact that the unit should remain constant for each test. Also, considerable resources, both written and financial, have been invested in the development of a body of work based on the 5-stroke standard word. Finally, the 5-stroke standard word has been accepted both internationally and in Australia for many years. On these grounds, the committee acknowledged that to introduce a 6-stroke standard word in Australia, at this time, might cause unnecessary complications.

It should be noted that although the Standard retains a 5-stroke standard word, results achieved using this test method will not be comparable with results achieved using other test methods, because the keystrokes themselves are counted differently.

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1 WEST, L.J. The vocabulary of instructional materials for typing and stenographic training—Research findings and implications. *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal*, 1968, vol. 10, no 3, pp 13-25.

2 PERRY, D.J. *An analytical comparison of the relative word-combination frequencies of business correspondence with phrase frequencies of selected shorthand textbooks*, vols I and II. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1968.

3 OBER, B.S. The difficulty level of typewritten copy in industry. *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal*, 1983, vol. 25, no 1, pp 1-8.

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FOREWORD

Modern technology has necessitated several changes in the previously accepted rules of speed tests. The most obvious of these is the change from the concept of a speed test as a test in which error correction was not permitted to a test where corrections are permitted.

The change was brought about by the rapid replacement in the workplace of manual and electric typewriters by computer-based equipment, which allow quick and imperceptible correction of errors.

Although the Standard does not enable comparisons to be made between speeds achieved on different types of equipment, e.g. computers, electronic and manual typewriters, it will enable employers to confidently compare speeds achieved by different persons on particular equipment.

Reliability is also behind the separation in the Standard of the two distinct qualities, speed and accuracy enabling employers to distinguish between a fast, inaccurate keyboard operator and one who is slower but accurate.

Finally, examining bodies using this Standard should recognize that the Standard is a method only. The responsibility for designing, conducting, scoring and certifying speed tests remains with the examining body.

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STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

Australian Standard

Keyboarding speed tests (formerly known as 'Typing speed tests')

SECTION 1 SCOPE AND GENERAL

1.1 SCOPE

This Standard sets out a method for the conduct, assessment and certification of keyboarding speed and accuracy tests conducted in the English language.

The Standard does not deal with tests in the theory or application of keyboarding skills, nor does it prescribe correct techniques (e.g. keyboarding, touch typing).

1.2 APPLICATION

This Standard is intended for use by all bodies that conduct keyboarding speed tests.

1.3 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are referred to in this Standard:

AS
1680 Interior lighting
1680.1 Part 1: General principles and recommendations
1680.2.0 Part 2.0 Recommendations for specific tasks and interiors
1680.2.2 Part 2.2 Office and screen-based tasks

3590 Screen-based workstations
3590.2 Part 2: Workstation furniture

HB 10 Occupational overuse syndrome—Preventative guidelines

HB 59 Ergonomics—The human factor—A practical approach to work systems design

Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers (AGPS Press, Canberra)

1.4 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Standard, the definitions below apply.

1.4.1 Automatic correction facility

A computer or software feature that can point out and correct common keyboarding, spelling or grammatical errors.

1.4.2 Equipment

Any device with a keyboard, such as a computer, or electronic, electric or manual typewriter, that can be used to print characters.

1.4.3 Examining body

An institution or group that devises, administers, assesses and certifies keyboarding speed tests in accordance with this Standard.

1.4.4 Font

A printing typeface of a particular style and size.

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