

MORE ABOUT LEARNING TO TYPE



The first commercially successful typewriter was invented in 1867 by Christopher Sholes, a Milwaukee newspaper editor and printer. Sholes had a problem -- if someone typed too quickly on his typewriter, which originally had its letter keys arranged alphabetically, the typebars would jam into each other and stick. So Sholes spent six years experimenting with keyboard layouts, until he devised one that slowed an experienced typist enough to prevent jams. In other words, he intentionally invented the worst keyboard layout possible. It's called the QWERTY layout, based on the first six letters of the top row. Now look at the first six letters on the top row of your computer keyboard. Yes, almost every keyboard in the world (and the world's few remaining typewriters) uses the QWERTY layout. So does your BlackBerry. So if you're going to learn to type, should you learn the world's worst possible typing system? Just because it's popular? There are alternatives. The most well-known is called Dvorak, but not because its first six letter keys say DVORAK. (In fact, they say PYFGCR.) The Dvorak Simplified Keyboard was patented in 1936 by August Dvorak, an educational psychologist and professor of education at the University of Washington in Seattle. He wanted to replace QWERTY with the fastest possible layout. And in the age of computer keyboards, jamming is not so much of an issue. Various sources claim that Dvorak typing is between *74% and 93% faster* than QWERTY. So which should you choose? If you type Dvorak, you'll be much faster and more efficient, but your employer will have to set up your computer for the Dvorak system (a simple task on Mac and Windows machines) and buy you a Dvorak keyboard. (Unless you never look at the keys anyway -- then it doesn't matter what keyboard you use. Also, some people yank the keys off their QWERTY keyboard and rearrange them for Dvorak.) On the other hand, just about everyone on the planet uses QWERTY, and just about every employer on the planet expects you to use it. I guess the best choice is to learn both, if you have the time and inclination. Which you probably don't. But seriously -- if you can't type, [learn how](#). QWERTY or Dvorak. You'll be glad you did.