## THE GENTLE TOUCH

Mastering the skill of touch-typing is essential for many aspects of home computing. What was once regarded as a clerical chore has in recent years been taken up by programmers as well as journalists and typesetters; in fact, anyone who needs to type quickly and accurately.

The ability to type complete words on paper or for viewing on-screen, rather than laboriously tapping at individual letters on a keyboard, eliminates a time-consuming step in a process where speed is often of importance, and reduces the margin for error.

Typing has traditionally been taught through instruction manuals, or in a classroom, using a variety of teaching methods. There is even a range of software programs on the market that links lessons directly to the computer. Regardless of the teaching method, there are four principles that must be learned to become an accomplished touch-typist. These are:

- Mastering the keyboard
- Training the eyes on a screen (or paper)
- Accuracy
- Speed

These skills are developed slowly, through exercises and drills, until the typist has reached a

level of proficiency. Constant repetition is the main method of learning; striking the same letters until the sequence of fingering becomes automatic.

The standard English language typewriter layout is known as the QWERTY keyboard, so called because these are the letters displayed on the left-hand side of the second of the four rows of keys. Keyboard symbols and letters are positioned according to their frequency of use, and each keyboard row is divided into left- and right-hand sides for the purpose of instruction.

Touch-typing instruction generally begins with the mastering of the eight keys in the middle row of letters. These are known as the 'home keys', because the fingers return to these keys once they have typed other keys on the keyboard. The home keys for the left side of the typewriter, and therefore the four fingers of the left hand, are asdf. The home keys for the right side of the typewriter, and therefore for the right hand, are jkl; (the semicolon). Once these keys have been mastered, the typist learns the location of the other keys in relation to their position from the home keys, feeling and stretching for them while in the 'home' position. One surprise for the newcomer to typing is the use the little finger is put to. Touch-typing requires the use of all the fingers and the little finger is allocated a number of keys to 'cover', as are all the others. Once the keys have been learnt,



## **On Location**

Sight and Sound offer touchtyping courses for beginners and have a proven record of success. In this picture, students are being taught by a combination of audio and visual techniques