



Alternative keyboards

Introduction

The standard 104-key Windows keyboard with QWERTY layout has evolved from the early typewriter. It has changed relatively little over the years and for now it has remained the main input device for the personal computer. For some individuals the standard keyboard can be difficult or impossible to use. For example labels on keys may be difficult to see, it may produce pain for the user after a period of use, or a person may not have the fine dexterity to press on individual keys. Fortunately there are many alternatives to the standard keyboard that can be used to suit various user needs. Below are a selection of both low and high tech alternatives that are available.

Low tech alternatives

Kid Glove

<http://www.keytools.co.uk>

The Kid Glove Keyboard includes a keyboard within a plastic glove. The glove is available in a choice of four visual contrasts - black on white; black on yellow; white on black. The glove is a soft flexible cover that can be easily removed and cleaned.



Bigkeys Keyboard

<http://www.bigkeys.com/>

BigKeys keyboards are simplified computer keyboards with keys tops that are 1-inch square. Both ABC and QWERTY layouts available. Easy-to-read key labels that have large black printing on bright-white or bright-yellow, or multicolor keys.



National Assistive Technology Training Service Advice and Information: tel: 01 8714000 email: sdeakin@enableireland.ie web: www.enableireland.ie

Compact keyboard

Compact keyboards have the advantage that they take up less room which is an advantage where space is limited such as a user's wheelchair tray. They also require less of range of extended movement in order to reach all the keys. The num pad is usually incorporated within the other keys with the use of a special function key. Because of their compact size they are useful for one handed typing.



Compact Keyboard with Roller or Touchpad

There are also pointing options with the compact keyboard that incorporate either a rollerball or touchpad.



Flexible Full Sized Keyboard

<http://store.grandtec.com/virinkey.html>

Flexible keyboard are usually made from silicone material. Because they can be folded or rolled it makes them very portable. They are impervious to liquids and robust and so can be used in harsh environments.



Large print and High Contrast Keyboards

<http://www.inclusive.co.uk/>

These are standard keyboard with extra large print on the keys, making it very suitable for users with a visual impairment.



Intellikeys Keyboard

<http://www.intellitools.com/>

The IntelliKeys USB is an overlay keyboard. Overlay keyboards have no preset keys but consist of a flat grid of unmarked keys. Placing an overlay on to the keyboard identifies the keys. The Intellikeys keyboard comes with a number of standard overlays that provide various different layouts for both keyboard and mouse control. It is also possible to customize a keyboard layout to suit the user needs and the application being used.



Maltron One Hand Keyboard

<http://www.maltron.com/>

Maltron keyboards have been developed for those who need to perform keyboard operations with one hand. The shape of the keyboard matches the natural hand movement and the key arrangement minimizes finger movement. Both a right and left and dual hand versions are available.



Matias 508 Keyboard

<http://www.508keyboard.com/>

The Matias 508 Keyboard™ is a standard desktop keyboard that has been enhanced to allow both one-handed and two-handed touch-typing.

For one handed typing you place your hand where it would normally be if you were touch-typing - that takes care of that half of the keyboard. To type the letters of the other half, you hold down the space bar with your thumb and do the same finger movement that you would normally do with the other hand.



Kenesis Keyboard

<http://www.kinesis-ergo.com/>

The Kinesis keyboard is an ergonomic keyboard that has been designed to reduce the known risk factors associated with repetitive stress injuries. It is contoured for a natural hand position and has a QWERTY layout.



Cording keyboard

CY-key

<http://www.bellaire.co.uk/>

A chorded keyboard is a keyboard where the user selects characters or commands formed by pressing several keys together. Used with one hand.



High tech alternatives

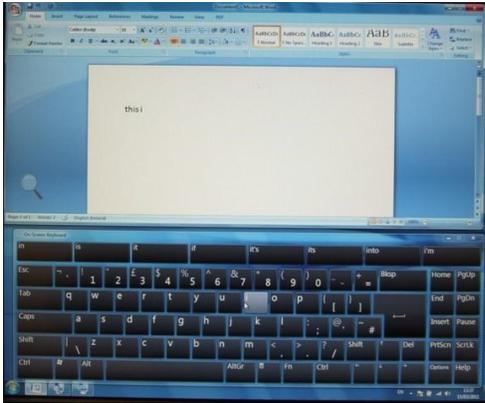
Eyegaze



With an Eyegaze system a user can directly select a character by gazing at the letter. Typically used with word prediction.

Onscreen Keyboard

Onscreen keyboards are virtual keyboards on the computer screen. Usually they can be resized and moved around the screen. They are typically used with word prediction to assist typing. They can be directly accessed if used with a touch screen or alternatively a pointing device can be used to select the characters.

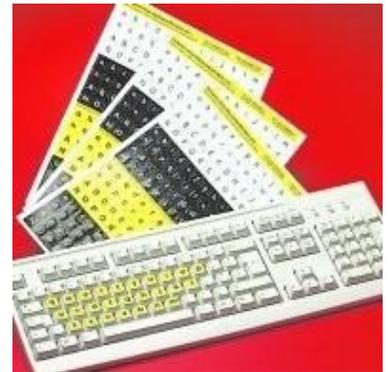


Accessories for keyboards

Alphabet Keyboard Stickers

<http://www.inclusive.co.uk/>

Can be placed on the key tops of a keyboard to enhance the label or emphasis certain keys. Comes in upper and lower case and in a range of colours



PS2 to USB Adaptor

To convert older style keyboard connector into a USB connector for connecting into modern computer.



Keyboard rest

Using a keyboard rest the angle to can be adjusted to suit the user



Wrists rest

<http://www.kos.ie>

Wrists rests are designed to kept your hand in a natural position, reducing risk of CTS (Carpal Tunnel Syndrome).

