Using Gamification Techniques to Increase Learner Comfort with Typing (D1):

Computer keyboards intimidate many learners. Increasing learner comfort with using keyboards is a critical first step in nearly any digital literacy curriculum since keyboard use and comfort is critical in accessing digital content. This guide plots one method of using gamification techniques to increase user comfort with typing.

Supplies:

- Progress sheets
- Whiteboard and markers
- A laptop
- Dice

Pre-activity:

Learners and instructors discuss their experiences using computer keyboards and/or learning to type. Individual learners are given a progress sheet and are asked to assign a number between 1-10 representing their comfort using a keyboard. This progress sheet will allow users to track their progress throughout the unit.
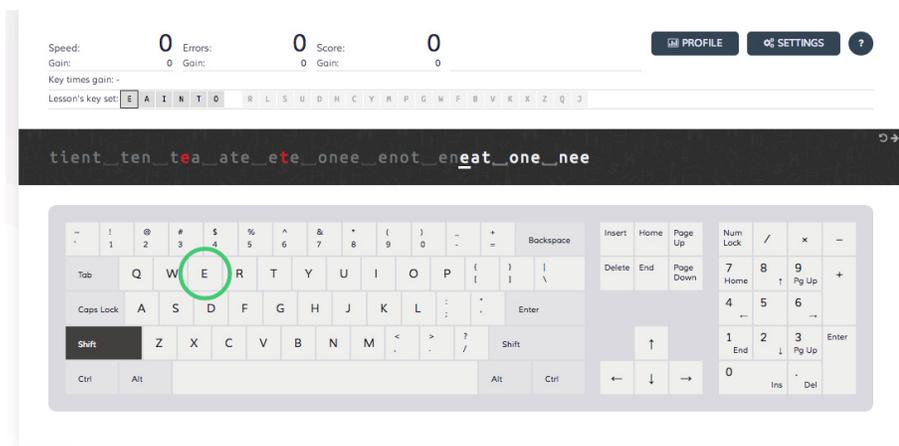
Activity:

- **Step 1:** Users and instructor spend 5-10 minutes brainstorming words that might appear in a story. These words are written down on a whiteboard. Try to generate as many words as possible during this portion of the activity. If users are having difficultly coming up with words, add some of your own to help provide ideas. Make sure articles and prepositions are included on the list.

- **Step 2:** Learners will take turns rolling a dice. Whatever number they roll, they will have to type that number of words from the board into a document (i.e. if they roll a 2, they will selected two words from the board and type them). The goal of this activity is to try to create a somewhat coherent story from the words on the board.
  - Learners can add punctuation where they see fit.
  - Learners can be allowed to repeat words if the instructor thinks it necessary.
  - Depending on the size of the group, learners can cycle through this activity multiple times.
- **Step 3:** Once all of the words have been used in the story, the instructor reads the story to the group.

Post-activity:

Have students spend 20 minutes at the end of each class using the website http://www.keybr.com/. This website gamifies learning how to type by providing juicy feedback for typing speed, number of errors, and progress over time. Each time after learners use keybr, have them record on their progress sheets their fastest speed and lowest number of errors. Tracking these numbers will allow them to see their progress over time.

www.keybr.com

Gamification Philosophy:

The goal of this activity is to take an intimidating activity (learner's lack of comfort using a keyboard), and to focus on making this activity part of an enjoyable group experience. Having the group generate possible words takes pressure off of individual learners having to think of things on the spot and also produces funny or serendipitous connections during the activity. By having the dice determine the number of words each user has to type, the activity creates a game that in the learner's eyes can be won (rolling a 1 and not having to type many words) or lost (rolling a 6 and having to type a lot of words). Learners will enjoy watching their peers win or lose.

Producing a story from the words gives the activity a sense of purpose and also gives the activity a (hopefully) funny way to conclude.

The post activity directs learners to use a gamified typing website to track their individual progress. Using the progress sheet allows learners to track progress over time. Instructors should consider providing juicy feedback for progress milestones. Instructors might also consider using a leaderboard to incentivize learners to regularly practice typing using keybr.

Ready for more?

Be sure to check out the companion pieces to this learner exercise:

- "Gamification and Adult Literacy: Investigating the history, impact and execution of gamification principals in adult education", a full report outlining the use of gamification across multiple platforms, including adult education

- "Gamification Essentials for Educators", a tip sheet that summarizes the key learnings of the above report for adult literacy practitioners

Both of the above documents, and this learner exercise, are available online at www.llsc.on.ca

Sample Progress Sheet:

Date:	Speed:	Errors:	Comfort: