

Numeric Keypad and Calculator Best Practices

Speaker: Shirley Reid

One of the first things you need to know when learning the 10 key adding machine is that the 4-5-6- is your “home row” of the keypad. The “5” is your “base” key – it has a sensory bump on it, to enable you to place your hand into the correct keying position without looking. Do this several times to get the feel for the keypad.

The keypad is in a rectangular shape with nine keys in three rows. Numbers 1-3 are the lowest row, then 4-6 in the middle, and 7-9 at the top. The 10th key is the 0, which is a reach down with your thumb.

You are going to feel the effect of repetitive motion as you begin 10-key practice. Be sure to keep your wrist straight, and fingers curved over the keys. Don’t rest your wrist on the table – use a wrist support if necessary while you are gaining hand strength. Take regular breaks to help avoid carpal tunnel syndrome.

Your goal should be to build speed and accuracy without looking at the keys. When you learned how to drive, you probably looked down at first to make sure you were pressing the gas pedal or the brake. But gradually you stopped looking because you knew by touch which pedal was being pressed. You can do the same thing with your fingers. You can easily memorize the reaches and key locations – but you have to force yourself not to look! Practice makes perfect – you have to dedicate time to develop this skill.

- Your index finger is responsible for the 7, 4, and 1.
- Your middle finger is for the 8, 5, and 2, as well as the “/”
- Your ring finger is for the *, 9, 6, 3 and “.”
- Your little finger is for the -, +, and Enter keys
- Your thumb runs the “0”

I find it helpful when adding a column of numbers to use my left hand to keep track of where I am on the sheet, as my right hand is entering the numbers (by touch...don’t look).

Always make sure to clear the register on the calculator between the columns of numbers. You’ll enter the column of numbers, take a total, press the total again to clear the register, and then begin the second column.