

Master Gecko's Home Row

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A. Introduction

Master Gecko's Home Row provides a fun way to help students of all ages learn the basics of typing, develop typing speed and accuracy, and learn a variety of geography, science, and grammar facts. As the student will visit Master Gecko, complete a variety of typing lessons, and complete quests in order to help Master Gecko's friends. There are three primary levels of difficulty with fifteen lessons per difficulty level.

B. Objectives

1. To learn the names and locations of all keys on the keyboard.
2. To learn proper finger positions for each key on the keyboard.
3. To learn the fundamentals of typing method.
4. To develop typing speed and accuracy.
5. To learn a variety of geography, science, and grammar facts.
6. To develop spatial navigation skills.

C. Methods

Game Play

The primary object of this program is to learn the basics of typing with Master Gecko by completing quests and finding scrolls and help Master Gecko and his friends by decoding those scrolls. Upon entering the program, the student will have a choice of three different exercises. Refer to the "Game Interface" section below for more detailed explanations of the various program screens. "Keyboard Basics", the first exercise, teaches students correct finger positions for each key on the keyboard and allows students to learn typing at a slower pace. The second exercise, "Typing Tutor", asks the student to type a variety of exercises; in the Typing Tutor, students will be timed and their words per minute will be calculated. The third option, "Play Game", allows the student to pursue quests for Master Gecko, find scrolls, and decode those scrolls in order to help Master Gecko's friends. The student may select any of these exercises, as well as a difficulty level (Beginner, Intermediate, or Advanced) and a goal number of words per minute or keystrokes per hour. The student may also choose a lesson; beginning at Lesson 1 will start the students at the basics, while starting at Lesson 15 will enable the student to begin at a slightly more advanced level.

In "Keyboard Basics" and "Typing Tutor", the student will type the text that is on the screen; as the student completes the page, the next page will automatically appear. The letter the student should type is indicated by an arrow above the letter. If the student types the letter correctly, it turns blue; if the incorrect letter is typed, the

letter turns red and the correct letter appears above. Spaces (which should be typed using the space bar) are indicated by "_".

There are two ways to enter the Game Play portion of the program. The student may select "Play the Game" at the menu screen, or once initial exercises are completed in the "Typing Tutor" mode, he or she will be transported automatically to the Game Play section of the program. This section of the program combines typing skills with spatial navigation abilities. The student will maneuver a map in search of scrolls, which contain important messages that the student will type for Master Gecko. The lion is surrounded by four arrows facing up, down, left, and right. Each arrow is marked with a letter. To maneuver the lion around the screen, type the letter that corresponds to the arrow that points in the same direction you would like to go. For example, if there is a scroll on the screen directly above the lion, the student should type the letter that corresponds to the up arrow.

Once the student has located three scrolls, he or she will be transported to the typing tutorial screen and will be asked to type the contents of the scroll. The contents of the scroll may be an exercise designed to focus on specific typing skills, a short fact, or a detailed description of a concept of chemistry, grammar, or another academic subject. Once the student has finished typing the contents of the scroll, he or she should search for one of Master Gecko's friends. Once the student has found one of Master Gecko's friends, he or she will type another exercise or fact. After typing the fact for Master Gecko's friend, the student will be transported to the game play screen again; this time, the student should find Master Gecko, and the student will be rewarded for his or her good work.

If at any time the student would like a map to help maneuver around the screen, he or she may click on the "Menu" button in the upper left portion of the screen or type the "Return" or "Enter" button. Upon selecting "Menu" or hitting the "Return" or "Enter" key, the student will be transported to the Map screen. On this screen, the student can deduce his or her location on the screen in relation to the scrolls and Master Gecko's friends. The lion's, or student's, location is in pink, the area in which the scrolls can be found are in blue; the location of Master Gecko's friends can be found in yellow.

Game Interface

In Master Gecko's Home Row, the student will encounter four primary screens during game play. The first screen, the Menu screen, allows the student to select exercises and lessons. The second screen, the Typing Tutorial screen, features exercises to teach and reinforce typing skills. The third screen, the Game Play screen, asks the student to combine typing and critical thinking skills, by looking for scrolls and typing them for Master Gecko's friends. The fourth screen, the Map screen, helps the student navigate through the Game Play screen.

I. The Menu Screen

The Menu screen allows the student to access the primary facets of game play. To have the student begin one of the three exercises, have him or her click on one of the three buttons in the upper portion of the screen: "Keyboard Basics," "Typing Tutor," or "Play the Game". To select Beginner, Intermediate, or Advanced difficulty, the student should click on the scroll in the left portion of the screen. To set a goal words per minute, or the words per minute he or she would like to type, have the student click on the purple arrow buttons in the right portion of the screen, in the section labeled "Goal." To reference which keys will be taught in that lesson, look at the "Keys Covered" diagram in the lower right portion of the screen. To turn off the program's background music, the student should click on the "Music" button in the lower left portion of the screen. The red "Quit" button, located in the lower right portion of the screen, allows the student to quit the program at any time.



II. Typing Tutorial Screen

When the student selects "Keyboard Basics" or "Typing Tutor" from the Menu Screen, he or she will be transported to the Typing Tutorial screen. To return to the previous screen, the student should click on the "Back" button in the upper left portion of the screen. To pause the program so that no words per minute will be lost, have the student click on the "Pause" button in the lower left portion of the screen. The achieved words per minute and keystrokes per hour versus the goal words per minute and keystrokes per hour can be located in the lower left portion of the screen. To hear a general help message, the student can click on the "Help" button in the lower left portion of the screen. To turn off the program's background music, the student should click on the "Music" button. To turn off other sounds used by the program, click on the red button in the lower right corner of the screen.



III. The Game Play Screen

Upon selecting "Play the Game" at the Menu screen or completing initial exercises in the "Typing Tutor" mode, the student will be transported to the Game Play section of the program. A detailed explanation of how to navigate the lion throughout the screen can be found in the previous section. To refer to the Map screen, have the student use the "Return" or "Enter" key or click on the "Menu" button in the upper left corner of the screen.



IV. Map Screen

Upon clicking on the "Menu" button in the upper left corner of the screen or typing the "Return" or "Enter" key, the student will be transported to the Map screen. This screen helps the student assess his or her location on the Game Play screen in relation to Master Gecko's friends and the scrolls. The lion's location is in pink. The location of the scrolls is indicated by a blue square; the location of Master Gecko's friend is indicated by a yellow square. To return to the Game Play screen, the student may click on the "Back to Game" arrow button in the upper left portion of the screen. Clicking on the "Quest" button will remind the student what the current quest is; it is located just beneath the "Back to Game" button. To turn off the program's background music, the student should click on the "Music" button, located under the "Quest" button. To hear a general help message, the student may click on the "Help" button in the upper right portion of the screen. To return to the previous screen, the student may click on the "Exit" button in the lower left corner of the screen.



D. Tracking

The tracking function data is stored in a text file that can be accessed by most word processing programs. (Hint: For best results, change the font of your tracking output to a monospaced font, such as "Courier.")

The tracking function is automatically activated. You will be given the opportunity to access the tracking information when you exit the program. When the student is finished using the program, click on the "EXIT" button. On the next screen that appears, there are three options: SAVE, PRINT, and EXIT. To save the tracking information, click the "SAVE" button; when the dialogue box appears, name the file, and designate where you want to save it. To print the tracking information, click the "PRINT" button, and follow the directions of your operating system. To exit the program without saving the tracking information, click the "EXIT" button.



E. Teaching Suggestions

As you can see from the above descriptions, Master Gecko's Home Row can help students learn typing skills, increase their speed and accuracy, learn important facts, and help increase spatial navigation skills. The ways you use the program will vary depending on your students' needs and abilities. You should begin by determining the skills or information your students need to learn and practice.

If you would like to focus on having the student learn the beginning basics of typing, have the student play Lesson 1 of Keyboard Basics, using Basic difficulty. This portion of the program will allow your student to learn the keys and proper placement of fingers at his or her own pace, as the program will not measure words per minute, keystrokes per hour, or the percentage of accuracy. To introduce the student to the idea that their typing will be timed, have him or her use "Typing Tutor" at the lowest lesson and difficulty level. Once your students have become familiar with the basics of typing and finger placements, you may decide to advance them to higher difficulty levels and lesson numbers. Once the student has become very familiar with the basics of typing, you may wish to advance him or her onto the Game Play section of the program, without referencing the Typing Tutor portion first. The Game Play portion of the program combines spatial navigation and typing skills; at higher levels, the student will also learn important science, geography, and grammar facts.