AS 2708—1991

Australian Standard®

Typing speed tests

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The following interests are represented on Committee MS/16:

ACT Institute of TAFE

Australian Council of Independent Business Colleges

Catholic Education Office, Sydney

Commercial Education Society of Australia

Department of Employment, Industrial Relations and Training (TAFE), Tas.

Department of Technical and Further Education, N.S.W.

Department of Technical and Further Education, S.A.

Department of Technical and Further Education, W.A.

Education Department of Victoria

Ministry of Education, Vic.

National Association of Personnel Consultants

Northern Territory University

Pitman Examinations Institute

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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee on Typing and Shorthand Tests to supersede AS 2708—1984.

The Standard provides a test method which facilitates the comparison of individual typing speeds. Allowance is now made, when counting errors, for the use of word processing software which automatically justifies line length. The procedure for calculating typing speed has also been clarified.

The need for the Standard stemmed from the fact that, although many employers hire staff or award pay increases on the basis of typing speed, the tests to determine typing speed have in the past varied widely, producing results which are not comparable. As a consequence, many employers conducted their own speed tests. However, it must be recognized that speed is not the only indicator of a typist's capability.

In preparing this edition, the committee agreed to retain the accepted practice of expressing typing speed in words per minute, where a word is a standard unit consisting of a specific number of keystrokes. The number of keystrokes that should constitute a standard typing word, however, was an issue that provoked considerable discussion during the development of both the previous and current editions.

Research conducted by L. J. West[1], D. J. Perry[2] and B. S. Ober[3] indicated that the average word, including spaces and punctuation marks, in written American business language contained respectively 5.97, 5.83 and 6.13 keystrokes. A study by the committee of 300 current Australian shorthand test passages, which had an average of 5.6 keystrokes per word, tended to support the assumption that Australian business language also had closer to 6 keystrokes per word than the commonly accepted 5. If a speed test was intended to measure actual typing speed, then the standard typing word should resemble as closely as possible the average word in current business language, i.e. 6 keystrokes.

On the other hand, many argued that the main purpose of a standard speed test was not necessarily to provide an accurate measure of speed, but rather to provide an effective ranking method. In that case, the unit of measurement used was not as important as the fact that the unit should remain constant for each test. Also, considerable resources, both written and financial, have been invested in the development of a body of work based on the 5-stroke standard word. Finally, the 5-stroke standard word has been accepted both internationally and in Australia for many years. On these grounds, the committee acknowledged that to introduce a 6-stroke standard word in Australia, at this time, might cause unnecessary complications.

However, it should be noted that although the Standard retains a 5-stroke standard typing word, results achieved using this test method will not be comparable with results achieved using other test methods, because the keystrokes themselves are counted differently.

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1 WEST, L.J. The vocabulary of instructional materials for typing and stenographic training—research findings and implications. *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal,* 1968, vol. 10, no 3, pp 13-25.

2 PERRY, D.J. *An analytical comparison of the relative word-combination frequencies of business correspondence with phrase frequencies of selected shorthand textbooks,* vols I and II. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1968.

3 OBER, B.S. The difficulty level of typewritten copy in industry. *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal,* 1983, vol. 25, no 1, pp 1-8.

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FOREWORD

Modern technology has necessitated several changes in the previously accepted rules of speed tests. The most obvious of these is the change from the concept of a speed test as a test in which error correction was not permitted to a test where corrections are encouraged on certain types of machines.

The change was brought about by the rapid replacement in the workplace of manual and electric typewriters by electronic machines, such as word processors, which allow quick and imperceptible correction of errors. So that the test is standard regardless of the machine used, and because the distinction between word processors and typewriters is blurred, this Standard allows any method of correction to be used during a speed test.

Although the Standard does not enable comparisons to be made between speeds achieved on different types of machines, e.g. word processors and manual typewriters, it will enable employers to confidently compare speeds achieved by different persons on a particular type of machine.

Since the purpose of the Standard is to provide an effective ranking method, the duration of the test has been set at the minimum level necessary to achieve reliable results. Experience has shown that when people are ranked on the basis of 5-minute and 10-minute tests, the same persons are at the top of the scale in each case.

Reliability is also behind the separation in the Standard of the two distinct qualities, speed and accuracy. The practice in the past of combining the two figures in a net score could be misleading to an employer in that it fails to distinguish between a fast, inaccurate typist and a slow, accurate typist.

Finally, examining bodies using this Standard should recognize that the Standard is a method only. The responsibility for designing, conducting, scoring and certifying speed tests remains with the examining body.

STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

Australian Standard
Typing speed tests

SECTION 1 SCOPE AND GENERAL

1.1 SCOPE This Standard sets out a method for the conduct, assessment and certification of typing speed tests conducted in the English language.

It does not deal with tests in the theory or application of typing skills.

1.2 APPLICATION This Standard is intended for use by all bodies which conduct tests of typing speed.

1.3 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS The following documents are referred to in this Standard:

AS
1837 Code of practice for application of ergonomics to factory and office work

2713 Lighting and the visual environment for screen based tasks

3590 Screen based workstations
3590.2 Part 2: Workstation furniture

SAA
HB10 Occupational overuse syndrome—Preventative guidelines

AGPS
Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers (Commonwealth Style Manual)

1.4 DEFINITIONS For the purpose of this Standard, the definitions below apply.

1.4.1 Examining body—an institution or group which devises, administers, assesses and certifies typing speed tests in accordance with this Standard.

1.4.2 Pica—a unit of measurement for printer's type. One pica is approximately equal to 4.2 mm.

1.4.3 Pitch—the number of characters in every 25.4 mm of type.

1.4.4 Point—a unit of measurement for printer's type. One point is approximately equal to 0.35 mm.

1.4.5 Signs—all non-alphanumeric symbols on a typewriter keyboard with the exception of the punctuation marks, namely comma, hyphen, apostrophe, full stop, quotation mark, colon, and semicolon.

1.4.6 Speed—measurement of the rate of typing in standard typing words per minute.

1.4.7 Standard typing word—a nominal unit used in the measurement of typing speed. One standard word is equal to 5 keystrokes.

1.4.8 Typewriter—any keyboard which can be used to print characters on paper, such as a manual, electric or electronic typewriter, text editor, word processor, computer operating as a word processor, or any similar device.