

Typewriting and Handwriting

Tools of the Trade · By Simon Townsend · 2 min read

Student problems with typewriting and handwriting

I can't believe it, but in today's world about two students a year say they wish to do the course in handwriting.

Not even a typewriter. This is heartbreaking for me as a tutor.

And about six students a year say they want to do the course using a typewriter. Typewriters are antiques.

But HANDWRITING? Please, NO !!!

A typewriter has no place in the life of a professional freelance journalist.

Many important editors have NEVER used a typewriter. They grew up typing only on computers. They view freelancers using typewriters as "odd".

Anyway, what well-paid job today can be done completely without the use of a computer? For years I used to urge my students to never submit anything to me or to an editor in handwriting.

I used to say: "At the very least use a typewriter."

Now times have moved on, and the very few freelancers who use typewriters brand themselves as "amateur".

Pages of a typewritten article can NEVER look as clean, readable and well organised as a computer-typed article.

A computer-typed article can be mistake free, but a typewritten article will always have mistakes. And with that ugly "white out" covering the mistakes, you draw attention to the fact that there were mistakes.

However, appearance is a minor matter. What's far more important are these three facts.

- 1.) Without a computer you cannot make a disk to send your editor.
- 2.) You cannot email your article to your editor. Emailing words is the fast, cheap, efficient and acceptable method of delivering words to your target publication.
- 3.) Without a computer-and-modem, you cannot access the internet, the greatest research tool in the world.

Students write to me and say: "Yes Simon, I know what you say is true, but I just can't afford a computer."

Well, who can?

Who can afford a phone, car, refrigerator or electricity? I can't, you can't. The point is . . . there are tools in life each of us refuse to do without. Somehow we find a way to pay high prices for the goods and services we give priority to. All students have to regard a computer like this.

I often suspect that students are not being entirely truthful with themselves, and perhaps what they mean is: "I'm putting off buying a computer because I'm scared of the learning I'll have to do?learning the computer, learning the internet, learning email."

As the loyal and faithful tutor, I will work with students' words chipped into stone or scrawled on the back of an old envelope.

I'm here to assist students in whatever way they want me to help them.

If a student handwrites articles in faint pencil on used serviettes, I shall work with that.

It's the student's decision. But I always urge them to get a secondhand computer immediately (some are as cheap as \$250), or learn how to use one at a friend's, at the library, at an internet cafe, at work, wherever.

But I always say: don't linger back in the shadows of the 1970s with typewriters.

This is the 21st century and only computers are acceptable.

Students can buy books on teach-yourself typing, or a cheap or free typing course to load into their computers.

I urge them to go to the internet and download FREE typing programs such as www.easytype.com or www.typingpal.com or www.learn2type.com

I was a touch typist at age 11, and insisted my kids do 10 minutes touch typing practice morning and night, a fact they send me up for, but at least they can type well, and they're not even journalists.

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