

## Keys (DOG EAR)

Written by Administrator

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e've all seen it. The writer of the 40's rattling on his typewriter, clickityclickityclick – ding! Zip! Over and over and then, rrrrrriiip! Onto the stack, another page ratcheted in, and away! Right?

That image of the hard-paced typewriter jockey only holds amongst those who never used one. The entire illogical setup of our QWERT keyboards is because the keys jam if you go too fast. And then, ever fumble, every typo, every mistake, you have to go into full stop and white-out or white-ribbon your fix in.

Years back, when stunning break-out authors were making their way onto the New York Times bestseller list, I was working in a lumber yard and hacking together a newsletter called *The Adventurer's Club*. We had several people DM role-playing games, getting the moves through snail mail, writing out a page or two to describe how the action had progressed, and generally leaving cliff-hangers all over the place. But typing a couple of pages – slow work on an old typewriter. As mentioned, it was very careful typing and very painful correction.

Which makes me wonder – as a writer – how we've changed in our writing techniques. When I write now, as I enter each paragraph, I have a vague idea of where it's going. I'll ramble in, write it out, and keep track of pacing and intent. If I don't like it, I'll backspace out the clunky stuff and try it a different way. Or perhaps a thought will strike, a better word, a more flowing passage. Sometimes I might even break the paragraph in two, separating two points into their own owning bodies. I might even move that paragraph (or even a section of them) lower or higher, or insert pacing or description before it even occurs. It's very free form and very unstructured.

But think about doing this on a typewriter.

I'm sure that writers either paused to think it carefully out, to come up with the proper form and prose before touching a key. Or they'd write like mad and then, with that stubby red pencil, go back and slaughter their chapter, slashing arrows, striking across words, writing “no! No!

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NO!" in the margins. It must have been very messy.

I'd like to know how some of our classics might have been changed if it wasn't such a hack-saw editing process. Would Hemingway circle around and around in his focus, cleaning as he went and improving on the move? How would things be if you didn't have to weigh the cost of not-quite-wording against whiting out a set of words, carefully aligning the manuscript page, and then typing in the new passage.

Even in writing this, I've doubled-back a couple of types, throwing out something that didn't work right. That Hemingway mention above – I'm not sure if I'll keep it. It's too isolated, a specific author reference, no others mentioned. Maybe before I post this up, perhaps I'll change it. Of course, if I do, this paragraph will have to come out.

Yes, it might be more romantic to think of the driven writer rattling away on his Imperial. But damn, Word is sure easier to use.

**&gt;&gt;&gt;IT&rsquo;S EASIER, SO MUCH EASIER. I WAS ABLE TO FUCUS ON MY STORIES, MAKING THEM EVEN BETTER. HAVE A LOOK. BUY ONE. RIGHT HERE!&lt;&lt;&lt;**