

5 How to use the keyboard

Introduction

The Electron keyboard works rather like an ordinary typewriter keyboard. The main difference is that when you press a key, instead of letters appearing on a sheet of paper, they appear on your television screen.

The small white flashing line you can see on your TV screen is called the cursor and it shows where the next character to be typed will appear on the screen.

One thing to bear in mind which the keyboard doesn't make obvious – the keys which produce the letters of the alphabet

Q W E R T Y U I O P
A S D F G H J K L
Z X C V B N M

can be made to produce small letters as well as capital letters.

As you can see, virtually all the keys have more than one character/word printed on them – some even have three! There are four keys on the keyboard whose purpose is to sort out which one appears on the screen when you press a particular key. These are

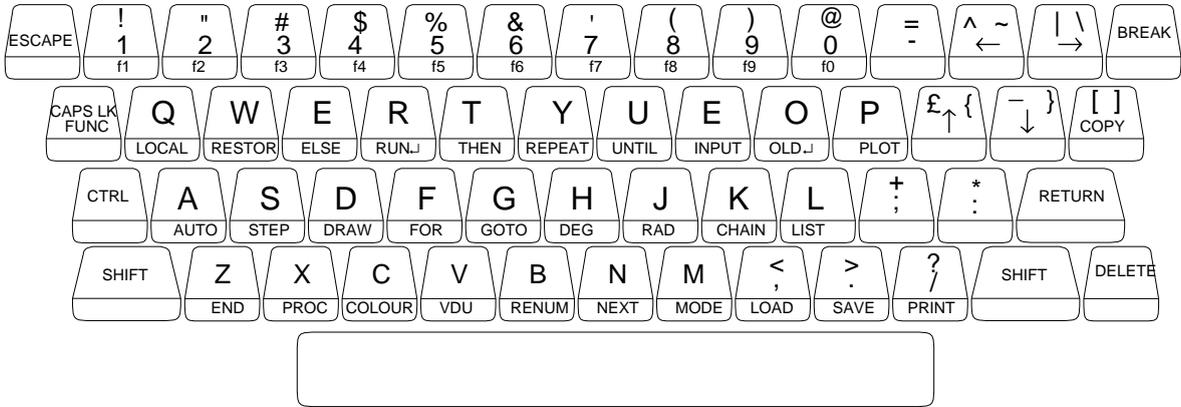
SHIFT – there are two of these keys

CTRL

CAPS LK / **FUNC** – this is one key, which is normally 'FUNC' but is 'CAPS LK' when used with the **SHIFT** key.

These keys are used in various combinations to give you the character or word you want to appear on the screen, and this is described shortly.

The **BREAK** key clears the screen and prepares the computer for entering a new program. Any program lines already entered will be deleted (but can be recovered by using the **OLD** command – see chapter 25).



FUNC

A lot of keys have light brown characters marked on the front, such as GOTO, RUN, f7 etc. Press the **FUNC** key and hold it down: at the same time, press the key with PRINT marked on the front. The word **PRINT** appears on the screen. Try pressing the **FUNC** key with some of the other keys with light brown writing on them.

You probably noticed that the keys marked 'f0' to 'f9' won't do anything when you press them. This is because they are 'user definable' keys which means that you can choose what they will do when they are pressed. How you define them is described in chapter 24.

If you have never come across the computer language called 'BASIC', you may wonder what the point is of being able immediately to display these words on your TV screen. The answer is simple; the Electron computer understands and uses the 'BASIC' language, and these words are the most common 'keywords' (or commands) in this language, so rather than having to keep on typing these out in full, you can simply press the **FUNC** key and the relevant character key. This saves a lot of time when typing lengthy programs into the computer.

The arrow keys and the COPY key

These are five keys in the top right area of the keyboard which have three black symbols marked on them (four of the keys have arrows on them, and one of them the word (COPY)). First of all, here is how to select which symbol you want from any of these keys:

For example the key marked



Key by itself selects left arrow (which moves the cursor)

SHIFT and key selects ^ and produces it on the screen

CTRL and key selects ~ and produces it on the screen

What the arrow and COPY functions do

If you press any of the keys marked with arrows, the cursor moves in the direction of the arrow, and leaves a square block where it was before it moved.

If you now press the **COPY** key, both the 'line' cursor and the 'block' cursor move across the screen, and every character above the 'line' cursor is copied to where the 'block' cursor is. This is a very useful facility for editing programs: the idea is to copy the line with a mistake in it onto a fresh line, and correct the mistake(s) while you're doing it. Editing programs using this facility is described in chapter 7.

Summary

1. CAPS LOCK off (yellow light off)
Small letters and bottom black characters
2. CAPS LOCK on (yellow light on)
Capital letters, otherwise as above
3. CAPS LOCK on (yellow light on) **SHIFT** with **key**
Small letters and top (left) black characters
4. CAPS LOCK on or off **FUNC** with **key**
BASIC keywords, as indicated on the front of the keys, are produced
5. CAPS LOCK on or off **CTRL** with **key**
Selects top right hand character from keys with three black characters marked on them.

Note: See Appendix A for a list of VDU control codes which can be generated by pressing **CTRL** and some of the other keys on the keyboard.