Name: _____ Date: _____

Live Captioners and the Chord Keyboard

Circle group

At a live news show or a class lecture, words show up on a screen almost as fast as they are spoken. A real-time captioner often does this work. The tool is not an ordinary keyboard. It is a stenotype machine. It has far fewer keys than a regular keyboard.

The captioner does not press one key for each letter. Instead, the captioner presses several keys at once, like a pianist playing a chord. One chord can mean a whole syllable or a whole word. The keys match the sounds of English, so the captioner writes by sound, not by spelling. Most people who type on a regular keyboard cannot keep up with fast talkers. A trained captioner can.

Then software turns the chords into plain words. It uses a personal dictionary. The captioner builds this dictionary over many years. Before a big event, the captioner learns how odd names sound and adds them to the dictionary. Then the names show up right on the screen.

This work helps many people. Viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing need captions to follow what is said. Captions also help people in noisy places. Captioners must listen and write for a long time, so they often work in teams and take turns.

Questions

1. What machine do real-time captioners use?

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_____

2. How is a chord different from typing on a regular keyboard?

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_____

3. What does the software do with the chords?

_____

_____

4. Why does a captioner add odd names to the dictionary before an event?

_____

_____

5. Who needs captions to follow what is said?

_____

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6. Why can a captioner keep up with fast talkers when most typists cannot?

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_____

7. Why do captioners often work in teams and take turns?

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Words to know

captioner: a person who writes out spoken words so they can be read on a screen
stenotype: a small machine that writes words by pressing several keys at once
chord: several keys pressed at the same time
syllable: one beat of a spoken word, like the two parts of ta-ble

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Live Captioners and the Chord Keyboard

Triangle group

At a live news broadcast, a city council meeting, or a classroom lecture, words appear on a screen almost as fast as they are spoken. The person making that happen is often a real-time captioner, and the tool is not an ordinary keyboard. Captioners use a stenotype machine, which has far fewer keys than a regular keyboard and a very different layout.

Instead of pressing one key for one letter, the captioner presses several keys at once, the way a pianist plays a chord. One chord can stand for a whole syllable or even a whole word. Because the keys are grouped to match the sounds of English, a captioner writes what the speaker says by sound, not by spelling. A person who types on a regular keyboard can rarely keep up with fast speech, but a trained captioner can follow even the quickest talkers.

Software then turns the chords into ordinary words. It relies on a personal dictionary that each captioner builds over years of work, matching chords to words. Before a big event, a captioner studies the program, learns how unusual names are pronounced, and adds those names to the dictionary so they appear correctly on the screen.

The work matters for many people. Viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing depend on captions to follow what is said, and captions also help people watching in noisy places or learning a new language. Captioners must stay focused for long stretches, listening and writing at once, and they often work in teams that take turns so that no one tires. Their accuracy lets everyone share the same moment.

Questions

1. What machine do real-time captioners use?

_____

_____

2. How is writing with a chord different from typing on a regular keyboard?

_____

_____

3. What does the software do with the chords?

_____

_____

4. Why does a captioner add unusual names to the dictionary before an event?

_____

_____

5. Who depends on captions to follow what is said?

_____

_____

6. Why can a captioner keep up with fast speech when most typists cannot?

_____

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7. Why do captioners often work in teams that take turns?

_____

_____

Words to know

captioner: a person who writes out spoken words so they can be read on a screen
stenotype: a small machine that writes words by pressing several keys at once
chord: several keys pressed at the same time
syllable: one beat of a spoken word, like the two parts of ta-ble
accuracy: being correct and free of mistakes

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Live Captioners and the Chord Keyboard

Square group

At a live news broadcast, a city council meeting, or a classroom lecture, words appear on a screen almost as quickly as they are spoken. The professional responsible is frequently a real-time captioner, and the tool involved is nothing like an ordinary keyboard. Captioners rely on a stenotype machine, which has far fewer keys than a regular keyboard and an entirely different layout designed for speed.

Rather than pressing one key for each letter, the captioner presses several keys simultaneously, much as a pianist plays a chord. A single chord can represent a whole syllable or even a complete word. Because the keys are grouped to correspond with the sounds of English, a captioner writes what a speaker says by sound instead of by spelling. A person who types on a standard keyboard can rarely keep pace with rapid speech, whereas a well-trained captioner can follow even the fastest talkers without falling behind.

Specialized software then converts the chords into ordinary words. It depends on a personal dictionary that each captioner builds patiently over years of work, matching chords with the words they stand for. Before a major event, a captioner studies the program in advance, learns how unusual names are pronounced, and adds those names to the dictionary so that they appear correctly on the screen.

The work matters to a great many people. Viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing depend on captions to follow what is being said, and captions also assist people who are watching in noisy places or learning a new language. Because captioners must stay sharply focused for long stretches, listening and writing at the same moment, they often work in teams that take turns so that no one becomes exhausted. Their accuracy allows everyone to share the same moment.

Questions

1. What kind of machine do real-time captioners rely on?

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_____

2. How does writing with a chord differ from typing on a standard keyboard?

_____

_____

3. What does the specialized software do with the chords?

_____

_____

4. Why does a captioner add unusual names to the dictionary before a major event?

_____

_____

5. Who depends on captions to follow what is being said?

_____

_____

6. Why can a captioner keep pace with rapid speech when most typists cannot?

_____

_____

7. Why do captioners often work in teams that take turns?

_____

_____

Words to know

captioner: a person who writes out spoken words so they can be read on a screen
stenotype: a small machine that writes words by pressing several keys at once
chord: several keys pressed at the same time
syllable: one beat of a spoken word, like the two parts of ta-ble
accuracy: being correct and free of mistakes

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Live Captioners and the Chord Keyboard

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Live Captioners and the Chord Keyboard

Easier · 212 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5

1. A stenotype machine.
2. The captioner presses several keys at once, not one key for each letter.
3. It turns them into plain words.
4. So the names show up right on the screen.
5. Viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing.
6. One chord can mean a whole syllable or word, and the keys match the sounds of speech.
7. Listening and writing for a long time is tiring.

Triangle: Live Captioners and the Chord Keyboard

This passage · 271 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 9.3

1. A stenotype machine.
2. The captioner presses several keys at once instead of one key for each letter.
3. It turns them into ordinary words.
4. So the names appear correctly on the screen.
5. Viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing.
6. One chord can stand for a whole syllable or word, and the keys match the sounds of speech.
7. Listening and writing at once for long stretches is tiring.

Square: Live Captioners and the Chord Keyboard

Harder · 299 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 11.3

1. A stenotype machine.
2. The captioner presses several keys simultaneously instead of one key for each letter.
3. It converts them into ordinary words.
4. So that the names appear correctly on the screen.
5. Viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing.
6. A single chord can stand for a syllable or word, and the keys correspond with the sounds of speech.
7. Listening and writing at the same moment for long stretches would leave one person exhausted.