

Look, no hands!

Hands off is the best approach to computer training.

IN a general practice setting new staff need to be trained to use the practice management system, while new GPs and nurses need to be taught to use the clinical software program.

Practices should also regularly undertake training to up-skill all staff in the new features of a program and to make better use of program features.

Unfortunately, experience shows that in-house computer training in general practice is often done badly.

The technique that causes the most problems is when person A asks person B how

to perform a particular task on the computer. B leaps to the task, reaches over A, does a few rapid key strokes and mouse movements and then states: "You should be right now."

This is not a teaching technique. It simply demonstrates that B knows their stuff better than A.

You are probably aware of this 'technique' at home when you ask one of your children how to perform a particular function on the computer. They have no patience to walk you through the process. Instead, they take over the keyboard,

press keys and perform a thousand mouse moves and finish off by saying: "There, it's done like that, okay?" Of course, you dare not admit you still don't know how to do it.

Children rate as the second most appalling teachers, with spouses and colleagues running a close third and fourth.

By far the worst teachers are IT people. You may have been sitting at a computer when the IT guy (it's



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almost always a male) appears. If you ask a question, it takes less than a nanosecond for him to take control of the keyboard as you are told you need to do this, this and this. The end result is that almost no learning takes place.

There is a simple solution — adopt and enforce a 'hands-in-pocket rule'.

If you are the teacher demonstrating a particular feature, put your hands firmly in your pockets (or fold them) and walk your participant through the process. Under no circumstance touch the keyboard. You will probably get frustrated, but by persevering you will have much better learning outcomes.

If you are a learner seek-

ing assistance, insist that the teacher does not touch your keyboard. If it's an IT guy you may have to nail his hands to the bench.

Put this rule into practice at home as well.

I have run hundreds of computer training classes and I am often complimented on how patient I am. This tells me two things. First, I am using the hands-in-pocket approach and, second, few other trainers use this method.

In my classes if one participant reaches over to another participant's keyboard in an attempt to take over, I tell them, "We have a rule in this house; no one touches the keyboard while someone else is sitting at the keyboard." ●