

Mechanical Keyboards

Rob got into mech keyboards for his wrists, first and foremost. That's probably how most of us got there.

If you're having wrist pain at work, see if you can expense an ergonomic keyboard, because it's worth the investment and it's cheaper than worker's comp.

Rob's keyboard search

Keyboardio

- The keyboard he didn't get: the Keyboardio; it's cool, it's made of wood. "I didn't buy it because I wasn't sure I needed a keyboard made of wood, and I wasn't ready to go ortholinear."
- Worth looking at, but more importantly, find the blog posts by the guy behind the keyboardio—he has a series of posts about designing and making a keyboard in China, discussions of fabrication and missteps and complications.
- Started bringing his own keyboard to the cafe, that's what got him into the whole thing

Moonlander

- Hurt to use.
- Thumb keys weren't located well for him
- Ortholinear just wasn't working out.

The goal, always, is finding something that will work for *you*. If you're in pain, find something else.

Dygma

- Split keyboard with thumb keys
- Standard staggered layout

Search hints

Go to keyboard meetups! People bring their setups, you can try them out, see how you like something.

Try printing out examples from [splitkb](#)

Layers

- Additional input options via a mode switch; often completely modal, or accessible via

a function key

- Lets you reuse keys for different purposes

Examples of layers some folks have

- Layer for emoji
- Git commands
- Numpad
- Chorded inputs for movement

Thoughts on use

Often you need to play around, get used to how to use it best.

Keyboard features

Key count

There's a bunch of different common styles; you'll see phrases like 60%, "TKL" (Ten key-less), on the absurd side there's the 40%.

You can pick how much of a layout you want or not—if you don't use some set of keys, just pick a style that doesn't have it, or remap them to something useful.

Thumb keys

Clustered keys to make better use of your thumbs when typing!

- Seems weird normally.
- Thumbs are usually just the spacebar.
- Instead, you can have a whole bunch of functions on your thumb. Do you use a lot of a key in combination with other stuff? Maybe it needs to be on your thumb cluster.

Switch types

Dygma's website has a list of switches, but it's far from complete. There are a lot. Here's the broad categories:

- Clicky: separate "click" mechanism with a detent
- Tactile: small nub with a spring, similar to the clicky design but without the separate mechanism. Provides tactile feedback when the key's actuated without actually striking the bottom of the board body
- Linear: No nub; this is often used for gaming

- Silent linear: linear switches, with some form of dampening both to reduce noise and to reduce the shock from impact

Keyboard firmware(s)

QMK

ZMK

Colors!

RGB can be used to identify layers, function keys, looking cool.

Keycaps

- Drop, Aliexpress are both good places to find inexpensive sets. EBay can also work.
- “Jelly” keycaps offer a lot of shinethrough
- Keycaps are sized according to “units” (U) – most keyboards use keycaps with a pretty standard size
- MX style has a cross post, ALPS style with a rectangular post. low profile has two small stubs
- Profiles! Pick how you want to type; you might end up trying one and not liking it. The OEM layout is the one your standard desktop keyboard

For keycaps, consider Pimp My Keyboard - they offer various styles, lots of cool colorways.

Other folks’ keyboards

Paul’s Keyboards

Nyquist from keeb.io

Helix (bluetooth?)

Morgan’s Keyboards

- Cepstrum

Keyboards from beyond

Optimus from Art Lebedev

Other notes

Shift Happens: a book about keyboards

Try out the Kinesis keyboards, if you want something mostly close to normal.