

## Elementary School Visits

(Machine in case or on nearby surface, not on the tripod.)

### 1. Introduce yourself

I am \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a court reporter.

### 2. Explain what a court reporter is.

A court reporter is someone who writes down what people say and they have to be able to write as fast as people talk.

### 3. Question: How fast do you think people talk when giving a speech?

We're going to express it in words per minute. How many words per minute does the average person speak if they are talking to a group? [Take as many answers as the students are willing to give, repeating what each one said.]

Answer: The average person giving a speech speaks at 173 words per minute<sup>i</sup>! And many people talk even faster than that! For instance, the person who delivers the news might be speaking up to 250 words per minute!

### 4. Question: Most of you are learning how to type on a computer keyboard. How fast do you think the average person can type on a computer keyboard? Again, we're going to express it in words per minute. How many words per minute do you think the average person types? [Take as many answers as the students are willing to give, repeating what each one said.]

Answer: The average person types at 44 words per minute<sup>ii</sup>.

That leaves a big gap between the speed at which people speak – 173 words per minute – and the speed that you can write something down on a computer keyboard.

Question: So the big question is, how am I able to write down everything that is said as fast as they are saying it? (Show them your steno machine – make sure to hold it so the keyboard is facing the group.) I use this machine, which is called a shorthand machine.

Notice that it doesn't have as many keys as a computer keyboard. And it has no letters on the keys. My fingers rest on top of most of the keys, so I couldn't see the letters if I wanted to, and it's fast for me to write if I don't look at the keys.

### 5. Question: So, how does this keyboard work?

Demonstrate where your hands go.

Explain where the consonants are and where the vowels are. Explain how a word is formed. Work through placement of fingers for a few words (SAT, SET, SEAT). If you have passed out handouts with a keyboard on it, they can follow along.

6. What kind of jobs can you do if you have the ability to write on a shorthand machine as fast as people can talk?

Discuss the various careers: official court reporting, freelance reporting, CART captioning, and closed captioning.

Many of the students can relate to closed captioning: Ask them if they've ever been in a restaurant that has a television showing a sports game with the sound turned off, but you can read the words at the bottom of the screen. THAT'S closed captioning!

Additional topics to explore, time permitting:

- Decoding a steno message (handout).
- How long does training take?
- What kind of things do you learn in court reporting school?
- What other kind of skills do you need? Punctuality, pay attention to details, good English skills, like to read and/or learn new words. You can relate some of that to skills they are building as students right now.
- If you are comfortable with it, students always like getting a turn to put their hands on your machine and try it. If you have on-board translation, praise them when they get a word to translate!

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<sup>i</sup> <https://virtualspeech.com/blog/average-speaking-rate-words-per-minute>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.ratatype.com/learn/average-typing-speed/>