

KEYBOARDFIELD OF THE INVENTION

The following invention relates to keyboards, and more particularly though not exclusively to a keyboard formed in two or more mutually pivotable segments.

PRIOR ART

Known keyboards of the type used at a computer terminal for example, comprise a unitary board onto which a plurality of alpha numeric keys are attached. It is a disadvantage of such known keyboards that the wrists and/or arms and shoulders of an operator must be contorted into a configuration which is stressful to the user after prolonged use of the keyboard. This problem is brought about by the fact that the hands of the user must be turned outwardly by pivoting of the wrists relative to the forearms.

Discomfort to the user caused by pronation of the wrists is also a problem. It is desirable to reduce pronation and aim for supination of the wrists.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

It is the object of the present invention to overcome or substantially ameliorate the above disadvantages.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

There is disclosed herein a keyboard having mounted thereon a plurality of keys, the keyboard comprising at least two segments which are mutually detachable and/or pivotable and wherein each segment of the keyboard has mounted thereon some of said keys.

Typically, the keyboard comprises two mutually pivotable segments which are attached to one another at a top end of the keyboard by way of a hinge means such that a bottom end of the keyboard may spread apart in a substantially horizontal plane.

Advantageously, the hinge means is adapted to allow pivoting in both horizontal and vertical planes such that said two segments of the keyboard may reside in different planes, such that the center of the keyboard is raised so as to reduce pronation and therefore decrease tension in the wrists and forearms of a user.

Generally, said hinge means is a ball and socket joint.

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Advantageously, a support means ² is provided generally below the ball and socket joint so as to maintain the central region of the keyboard at a raised preselected level.

Beneficially, a number pad region of the keyboard is pivotable relative to one of said segments such that the number pad region may reside in a plane other than the plane of said segment to which said number pad is hinged.

Typically, the keyboard is divided into segments which coincide with generally accepted keyboard areas.

The present invention provides means by which wrists of an operator need not be contorted as they would be in use of a conventional keyboard.

In order to electrically connect the keys of one segment of the keyboard to the other, a cable or any suitable contact means may be provided between the two segments.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A preferred form of the present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Fig. 1 is a schematic plan view of a keyboard, and

Fig. 2 is a schematic elevational view of the keyboard of Fig. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In the accompanying drawings there is schematically depicted a keyboard generally indicated by reference numeral 1. Keyboard 1 comprises separate segments 2, 3 and 4 each having mounted thereto a plurality of keys 5.

Segments 2 and 3 of keyboard 1 are mutually attached by means of hinge 6 which may provide one or more degrees of freedom of relative movement between segments 2 and 3. Hinge 6 in the preferred embodiment is of ball and socket type construction.

Segment 4 of keyboard 1 which has mounted thereon numerical keys 5 is attached to segment 3 of hinge 7. Hinge 7 may extend along line 8 illustrated in Fig. 1 so as to provide 1 degree of relative movement between segments 3 and 4. Alternatively, a ball and socket type joint as employed between segments 2 and 3 may be located at either an upper or lower end of line 8 in Fig. 1.

It should be appreciated that segments 2 and 3 of keyboard 1 may pivot with respect to one another while each remaining in a single plane.



As depicted in Fig. 1, now, a center region of keyboard 1 is raised³ above the level of a desk on which the keyboard is supported.

Segments 2, 3 and 4 of keyboard 1 may be completely detached from one another to provide an additional degree of freedom of relative positioning therebetween.

Should an operator of the keyboard not be comfortable with a hinged apart orientation of the keyboard, it may simply be returned to a conventional configuration.



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Claims:

1. A keyboard having mounted thereon a plurality of keys, the keyboard comprising at least two segments which are mutually detachable and/or pivotable and wherein each segment of the keyboard has mounted thereon some of said keys.
2. The keyboard of claim 1 comprising two mutually pivotable segments which are attached to one another at the top edge of the keyboard by way of hinge means such that a bottom edge of the keyboard may spread apart in a substantially horizontal plane.
3. The keyboard of claim 2 wherein the hinge means is adapted to allow pivoting in both horizontal and vertical planes.
4. The keyboard of claim 2 wherein said hinge means is a ball and socket joint.
5. The keyboard of claim 2 wherein a support means is provided generally below the hinge means so as to maintain a central region of the keyboard at a raised preselected level.
6. The keyboard of claim 1 wherein a number pad region of the keyboard is pivotable relative to one of said segments such that the number pad region may reside in a plane other than the plane of said segment to which said number pad region is hinged.
7. The keyboard of claim 1 being divided into segments which coincide with generally accepted keyboard areas.

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