

<b>Illiteracy at 7</b>	<b>Diskors ta' l-Istudenti</b>	<b>Strengths and Weaknesses of Small Islands</b>	<b>Trade Schools in Gozo</b>	<b>Theses by Gozitan Students</b>
<b>Profile: Joe Xuereb, sculptor</b>	<b>Aspects of Health of the Gozitan people</b>	<b>Tourists in Gozo</b>	<b>Il-Gwardjani Lokali</b>	<b>Book Profile: The Maltese Migrant Experience</b>
<b>Book Profile: The Placenames of the coast of Gozo</b>	<b>Mini-Medicine in Gozo</b>	<b>Poems</b>	<b>Typing Maltese Characters</b>	<b>Front Cover</b>

Those pioneers who invented our Maltese orthography never knew what a Pandora's box they had created. Those of us who spend a considerable part of our time on a computer keyboard know from hard experience the difficulties encountered in writing Maltese. Typing Maltese can easily take twice as long as typing the same message in English. The reason is the lack of user-friendliness of keyboard and software. Even with the recent facilities provided with the popular fonts such as Times New Roman or Arial, one often has to press three keys at a time to produce letters like C, G, H, or Z. The alternative seems to be the use of dedicated keys which lie at awkward positions on the keyboard, necessitating visual control, with consequent loss of time and efficiency.

Some quick calculations on the rate of usage of these characters confirm the finding known to any typist that 27 per cent of Maltese words need the introduction of an extra key-stroke to produce the desired Maltese character (see figure). This not only slows us down considerably, and encourages us to use a foreign language. It also increases the chances of making spelling mistakes, especially in view of the fact that there is no such thing as a Maltese speller.

I bring this to the attention of our readers in the hope that someone might be interested enough in devising a more user-friendly keyboard for those of us who feel that the use of our national language should be

encouraged.

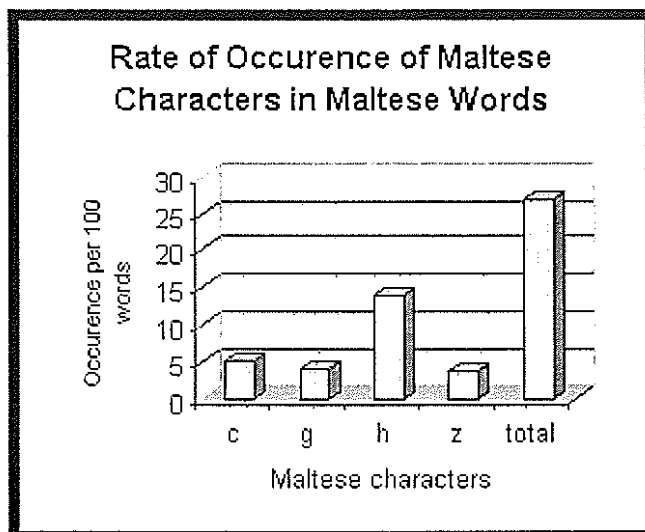
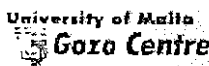


Figure: Frequency of use of individual Maltese characters. The frequency of use varies from just under 5 per 100 words for characters like "c" and "z" to a high of 14 per 100 words for the letter "h". This makes a total of over 25 extra strokes per 100 words.

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