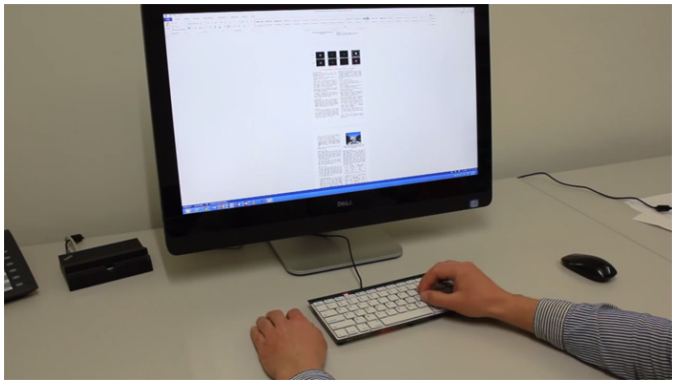
Gesture control-enabling PC accessories might not be news but a recent Microsoft take on the technology looks interesting-- a keyboard with an embedded array of low-resolution IR proximity sensors.



Dubbed "Type-Hover-Swipe in 96 Bytes", the prototype does not require users' fingers to be more than 1cm above the keyboard, meaning one can easily integrate gesture control with regular typing. This makes it more usable than the Leap Motion, which requires users to hover their hands around 30cm above the device.

A 16 x 4 grid of low-resolution IR sensors hidden between the keys provides gesture data Microsoft describes as coarse (it is only 64 pixels of data) yet fast and accurate enough for fairly complex commands. A demo video shows swiping, pinch-to-zoom and even virtual steering wheel controls, all enabled by a combination of fast frame rate (over 300Hz) and "motion signature" gesture-detection algorithms.

It all sounds rather promising, even if Microsoft does not actually have plans to produce the keyboard. But who knows, with enough interest and further refinement such a device might manage popularise PC gesture control.

Watch Type-Hover-Swipe in 96 Bytes Demo

Go Type-Hover-Swipe in 96 Bytes: A Motion Sensing Mechanical Keyboard