

# Learn new tricks to make word processing work for you

By Bruce A. Love

I don't like making my fingers work harder than they have to. Unfortunately, I do a lot of work on the computer, so this sort of "manual labor" is hard to avoid. Fortunately, computers follow directions well, and are eager to make our lives easier if we give them the right instructions. After mastering the tricks described below, your fingers will be thrilled that their burdens have been eased!

Most people who use a PC, use Microsoft Word for their word processing needs. MS-Word has features many users don't know about, including alternative ways to select, copy, cut, and paste. These shortcuts will make your word processing experience more enjoyable.

New users rely on the pictures on the toolbars to remind them of the functions the buttons perform. If we allow our mouse pointer to rest on an icon for a second, a text box appears announcing its function. However, it takes time to stop typing, grab the mouse, point to the icons, and click, every time we want to cut, copy or paste. If you learn shortcut keystrokes, your hands may not have to leave the keyboard.

"Shortcut keystrokes" are easy to learn. If you have ever noticed the dropdown lists from your menu bar (at the top of most applications), you may have noticed terms like Ctrl+X, Ctrl+C, etc., to the right of commands such as "Cut," "Copy," and "Paste." These terms are the equivalent keystroke commands to perform those actions. For example, Ctrl+C, activated by holding down the Control Key while hitting the lowercase "C," will copy selected text. Go through your menu bar and see how many shortcut keystrokes you can memorize. Start with the "Cut," "Copy," and "Paste" commands. They will save you time as you type!

To select text to cut or copy, try these tricks: double click a word to select it, or triple click it to select the entire paragraph. Click in the margin to the left of any line to select just that line. Once selected, you can cut, copy, or drag the selection (using your mouse) to any other place in your document.

I often have a half dozen or more documents open simultaneously while I work. To move from one document to another, most of us grab for the mouse, point to "Window" on the menu bar, and click the document we want to see. The next time you are tempted to do this, try Ctrl+F6 (hold down the control key and hit the F6 Function Key). This toggles between all open documents.

I don't know about you, but the number of recently used documents, shown on the File dropdown menu, never seems long enough. You can increase the number of recent items shown to 9, by selecting the "Tools" menu, then "Options," then the "General" tab. Make sure "Recently Used File List" is checked, and change the "entries" value to nine. By the way, while you are on the "Options" window, click on the "Edit" tab, and check the "use the INS key for paste" and click "OK" to close the dialog box. This will give you another method to paste, but more importantly, it will eliminate the possibility of activating the destructive typeover setting of that key.

My wife has one of those names that everyone mispronounces on their first attempt. It is spelled like "Karen" but has the dots over the "a." That "ä" can be inserted as a symbol in MS-Word, but finding that symbol each time we write her name can be a chore. By clicking "Macro" on the Tools dropdown menu, and selecting "record Macro," we were able to permanently record the correct spelling of her name one time, and instruct our computer to type her entire name each time we use the key combination, Alt+K. This trick can be used to type entire company names, and perform many other advanced actions.

Have you ever accidentally hit the Caps Lock key while typing a large portion of text? There's an easy remedy! Select the affected text, hold down the Shift key, and hit the F3 function key (Shift+F3) to toggle between all caps, all lowercase, and sentence case.

Our last trick of the day is totally useless, but fun. In a new document type in "=rand(100,99)" without the quotes, and hit Enter. Go ahead, you can trust me!

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