

# Windows & Macintosh Keyboard Shortcuts

By Eduardo De León  
*eduardo.deleon@nyu.edu*

Whether you're using your computer for work or fun, keyboard shortcuts can help save you a lot of time. Many frequently executed commands and actions have keyboard combinations (keyboard shortcuts) associated with them that allow you to activate them without opening any application menus. If your hands are already on the keyboard, moving them to the mouse will take you longer than simply pressing a few keys.

This article presents some potentially timesaving keyboard shortcuts for Windows and Macintosh (OS X 10.3 and above, unless otherwise indicated) that, with a little practice, can help improve your productivity and the speed with which you use your computer. The lists below may seem a little intimidating at first, but if you start by using one or two new shortcuts each week, they'll soon become a natural part of your computer use. To assist you, these key-

board shortcuts are usually printed next to the commands and actions in each application's menus as well.

Before we continue, though, be advised: the faster you work on your computer, the more opportunity there is to make a mistake. Experiment with these shortcuts yourself to ensure that you know what each one does before you start using it in your everyday work.

## USING KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Keyboard shortcuts usually involve the use of either the Windows or Ctrl keys (on Windows computers) or the Command key (on Macintosh) in combination with other keys, though some shortcuts can be activated with a single key. The Windows and Ctrl keys are located to the left of the space bar, near the Alt key. The Windows



key has the Windows icon on its surface (icon at left). On Macintosh,

the Command key is the first key to the right of the option key and has the Apple icon on its surface (see below).



A keyboard shortcut requires that you hold down the Windows, Ctrl or Command key while pressing the indicated key(s). For example, the Windows+D shortcut requires that you press the Windows key and the D key simultaneously, or hold down the Windows key while pressing the D key; this shortcut will not work if you press the D key first, or neglect to hold down the Windows key while pressing the D key. If additional keys are listed, pressing all of the keys simultaneously or while the Windows, Ctrl, or Command key is held down will perform the specified action.

## WORKSPACE INTERACTION (MOVING AROUND)

When you use your computer, there are some interface features that will always be available to you, regardless of which program is open or currently active. These features help you to better interact with your computer and manage your work.

### Moving Around (Windows)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Show the desktop	Windows + D	Toggles between minimizing all open windows to show the desktop and restoring those windows.
Minimize	Windows + M	Minimizes all open windows.
Switch between open applications	Alt + Tab	Switch between open applications (Alt + Shift + Tab to switch backwards).
Search	Windows + F	Opens a window that enables you to search for files or folders on your computer.

## Moving Around (Windows) Continued

Lock screen	Windows + L	Locks your computer and displays the “Welcome” or login screen (or Novell login screen).
Open System Properties	Windows + Pause	Displays the System Properties window.
Open Task Manager	<i>Windows 2000/XP:</i> Ctrl + Shift + Escape <i>Windows 98/ME:</i> Ctrl + Alt + Delete	Displays the Task Manager window.
Open Run...	Windows + R	Opens the <i>Run...</i> prompt to open executable commands or programs, paths, or directories on your computer, or to open URLs.
Force quit	Ctrl + Alt + Delete	Forces an application to quit when unresponsive.

## Moving Around (Macintosh)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Show the desktop	F11	Toggles between minimizing all open windows to show the desktop and restoring those windows. (This feature is also called “Exposé,” see below.)
Show all windows	F10	Toggles between highlighting all windows in the currently active application and the normal view. (Also called “Exposé.”)
Show open windows in all applications	F9	Toggles between highlighting all open windows in all applications and the normal view. (Also called “Exposé.”)
Switch between open applications	Command + Tab	Switches between open applications (Command + Shift + Tab to switch backwards).
Search	<i>OS X 10.4 and above:</i> Command + Space <i>OS X 10.3 and below:</i> Command + F	Searches for files on your computer with Spotlight (OS X 10.4 and above) or Finder (OS X 10.3 and below).
Force quit	Command + Option + Escape	Forces an application to quit when unresponsive.

## EXPOSÉ (MACINTOSH)

Mac OS X 10.3 and above offer a feature called Exposé. As described above, this feature allows you to hide all windows and show the desktop, show all windows in the current application, or show all open windows in all open programs. It has its own preference pane in the System Preferences window, and can be triggered by keyboard strokes or mouse events.

## IN DIALOG BOXES

Programs often communicate with you to get your input and inform you about different actions that have been taken or events that are about to take place. The computer usually does this through dialog boxes (much as real-life dialogues help you communicate with others). Following are some keyboard actions that you can use to work with dialog boxes.

### In Dialog Boxes (Windows)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Accept	Enter	Accepts the default action (the button that is outlined).
Cancel	Escape	Cancels the current dialog.
Move through items	Tab	Moves sequentially through all selectable items (Shift + Tab to move backwards).

### In Dialog Boxes (Macintosh)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Accept	Return	Accepts the default action (the blue button that is pulsing).
Cancel	Escape or Command + . [Period]	Cancels the current dialog.
Move through items	Tab	Moves sequentially through all selectable fields.

## IN WINDOWS EXPLORER OR THE FINDER

In Windows, one way to interact with files, folders, discs, and other volumes is through Windows Explorer. In Macintosh, this interaction takes place through the Finder. Below are some keyboard shortcuts that apply when navigating these interfaces.

### In Windows Explorer (Windows)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Copy	Ctrl + C	In the Explorer, copies the selected file(s) or folder(s) to the clipboard. (In a text field, this shortcut copies selected text to the clipboard. <sup>1</sup> )
Cut	Ctrl + X	Cuts the selected file(s) or folder(s). (Often used in conjunction with the Paste command, below.)
Paste	Ctrl + V	In the Explorer, pastes the copied file(s) or folder(s) to the current location. (In a text field, this shortcut pastes copied text from the clipboard to the current location.)
Select (contiguous)	Shift + Click (or drag while holding the right mouse button)	Selects multiple, contiguous items. If you right-drag, Windows will prompt you about which action to take when the right mouse button is released.
Select (non-contiguous)	Ctrl + Click	Selects multiple, non-contiguous items.

### In the Finder (Macintosh)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Copy	Command + C (or drag while holding Option)	In the Finder, copies the selected file(s) or folder(s) to the clipboard or to the destination (if using the drag option). (In a text field, this shortcut copies selected text to the clipboard.)
Paste	Command + V	In the Finder, pastes the copied file(s) or folder(s) to the current location. (In a text field, this shortcut pastes copied text from the clipboard to the current location.)
Select (contiguous)	Shift + Click	Selects multiple, contiguous items.
Select (non-contiguous)	Command + Click	Selects multiple, non-contiguous items.

## DRAG & DROP

Both Windows and Macintosh offer a feature known as “drag and drop.” It allows you to drag an item’s icon and drop it into a context-specific area in order to perform an implied action on that item. For example, in Mac OS X, dragging a document onto a printer will print the document. Dragging a document’s icon and dropping it onto a program’s icon will open the document with that program. To do this, simply click on an item and hold down the left mouse button, then move the mouse to the target area (e.g., the printer icon) and release the mouse button. There are some limitations (e.g., a program may not know how to handle a specific kind of document), but the use of drag and drop can often come in handy.

## IN MOST PROGRAMS

Certain concepts or features are available in almost every program. For example, the concept of “copy and paste” is applicable not only in Windows Explorer and the Mac OS X Finder, but also in many other applications. Following are some keyboard shortcuts that can be used in almost any program.

### In Most Programs (Windows)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Copy	Ctrl + C	In a text field, copies the selected text to the clipboard. In Windows Explorer, copies the selected file(s) or folder(s) to the clipboard.
Cut	Ctrl + X	In a text field, cuts the selected text. In Windows Explorer, cuts the selected file(s) or folder(s) and copies it to the clipboard.

1. The clipboard is a temporary storage location for copied files or folders.

## In Most Programs (Windows) Continued

Paste	Ctrl + V	In a text field, pastes the copied text from the clipboard to the cursor location. In Windows Explorer, pastes the copied file(s) or folder(s) to the current location.
Print	Ctrl + P	Prints the current document or browser window.
Close program	Alt + F4	Closes (quits) the currently open application.
Close window	Ctrl + F4	Closes the front-most window without exiting the current program.
Save	Ctrl + S	Saves the current document.
Create new	Ctrl + N	Opens a new window in the current program (e.g., a new browser window or new document).
Shortcut (or contextual) menu	Right-Click	Displays more options for the selected item in a new menu.

## In Most Programs (Macintosh)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Copy	Command + C	In a text field, copies selected text to the clipboard. In the Finder, copies the selected file(s) or folder(s) to the clipboard.
Cut	Command + X	Cuts the selected text and copies it to the clipboard.
Paste	Command + V	In a text field, pastes copied text from the clipboard to the cursor location. In the Finder, pastes the copied file(s) or folder(s) to the current location.
Print	Command + P	Prints the current document or browser window.
Close program	Command + Q	Closes (quits) the currently open application.
Close window	Command + W	Closes the front-most window without exiting the current program.
Save	Command + S	Saves the current document.
Create new	Command + N	Opens a new window in the current program (new browser window, new document, etc.).
Open	Command + , [Comma]	Opens the application's Preferences.
Cancel action	Command + . [Period]	Cancel the current window.
Shortcut (or contextual) menu	Right-Click or Ctrl + Click (for single-button mouse)	Displays more options for the selected item in a new contextual menu.

## WHEN EDITING TEXT

There are many keyboard shortcuts that can facilitate common functions associated with editing text in popular programs such as Microsoft Word and NotePad. Some of the most useful ones follow.

### When Editing Text (Windows)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Copy	Ctrl + C	Copies the selected text to the clipboard.
Cut	Ctrl + X	Cuts the selected text and copies it to the clipboard.
Paste	Ctrl + V	Pastes the copied text from the clipboard to the cursor location.
Go to next word	Ctrl + (L or R Arrow)	Moves the cursor to the next word (Ctrl + Shift + Arrow to select the word)
Delete previous word	Ctrl + Backspace	Deletes the entire word before the cursor.

## When Editing Text (Windows) Continued

Action	Shortcut	Description
Delete next word	Ctrl + Delete	Deletes the entire word after the cursor.
Beginning of line	Home	Moves the cursor to the beginning of the current line.
End of line	End	Moves the cursor to the end of the current line.
Beginning of document	Ctrl + Home	Move the cursor to the beginning of the current text document.
End of document	Ctrl + End	Moves the cursor to the end of the current text document.

## When Editing Text (Macintosh)

Action	Shortcut	Description
Copy	Command + C	Copies the selected text to the clipboard.
Cut	Command + X	Cuts the selected text and copies it to the clipboard.
Paste	Command + V	Pastes the copied text from the clipboard to the cursor location.
Go to next word	Option + (L or R Arrow)	Moves the cursor to the next word (Option + Shift + Arrow to select the word).
Delete previous word	Option + Delete	Deletes the entire word before the cursor.
Delete next word	Option + Del	Deletes the entire word after the cursor (Del key not available on all keyboards)

## MAC OS X VISUAL CUES

Mac OS X provides an easy way for you to tell whether you have or haven't saved changes to a document. The left-most button on the upper left corner of the document window (usually a red button) will show a dot in the middle if there are changes to the document that have not yet been saved. If that button does not have a dot inside it, then changes to the document have been saved, or no unsaved changes have been made to the document. This applies to most applications in Mac OS X.

## CUSTOM KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

### Windows

Windows allows you to open a shortcut to any document or program with a keyboard shortcut of your own choosing. To do so, create a shortcut to the program and place it on the desktop.<sup>2</sup> Right-click on the shortcut icon and select Properties. Place the cursor in the "Shortcut key:" field and press a key (or key combination) on the keyboard. Then click Apply and OK. In the future, pressing that key or key combination will automatically launch that program. This can be a

handy way of launching frequently-used programs without having to search for its icon on your computer's (potentially cluttered) desktop.

One example of how I use these desktop shortcuts is to launch Microsoft Outlook. I configured the shortcut so that when I press Ctrl + Alt + O, Outlook is immediately launched; I chose O for Outlook because it is memorable, but I could have used any combination of keys. I also set up Ctrl + Alt + F to launch Firefox (web browser), Ctrl + Alt + I to launch iTunes, and so on.

Another way I use desktop shortcuts is to open frequently-used folders. For example, to open the My Documents folder, I press Ctrl + Alt + 1; I selected 1 because it is close to the Ctrl and Alt keys and is therefore easier to press and My Documents is my most frequently-used folder. I use the key combination Ctrl + Alt + 2 to open my Projects folder, which is where I keep documents I am currently working on, and is my second most frequently used folder. And so on.

### Macintosh

Mac OS X allows you a great deal of freedom in creating keyboard

shortcuts. To view or edit existing keyboard shortcuts, and to create new ones, open the Keyboard & Mouse section in the System Preferences (Apple > System Preferences > Keyboard & Mouse). Additional keyboard preferences are available in the Universal Access section (Apple > System Preferences > Universal Access).

## CONCLUSION

Keep in mind that there are many other keyboard shortcuts that are not as universal as the ones mentioned here. Look up the keyboard shortcuts in each of your applications to explore your options. Many common actions have the same keyboard shortcuts in different applications, but there are exceptions, and some actions that are unique to an application may have a unique keyboard shortcut.

Remember: If you use a command or action often, you will likely benefit from learning its corresponding keyboard shortcut (or creating one if it doesn't already exist)!

---

*Eduardo De León is a Team Leader at the ITS Client Services Center.*

2. Please note the difference between Windows shortcuts and keyboard shortcuts. A Windows shortcut provides a pointer to make it more convenient to open a specific file or program; keyboard shortcuts involve a key or key combination that activates an action, as described in this article.