

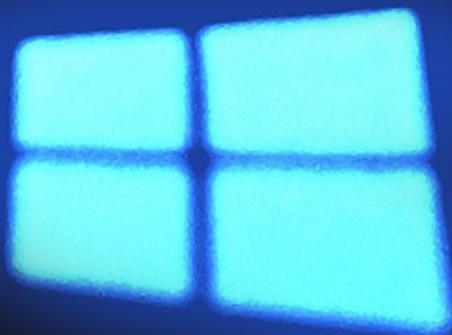
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WINDOWS SHORTCUTS

101

THE ULTIMATE KEYBOARD SHORTCUT GUIDE

BY BEN STEGNER



Windows Shortcuts 101 – The Ultimate Keyboard Shortcut Guide

Written by Ben Stegner

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Table of contents

Why Bother with Shortcuts?	5
Universal Windows Shortcuts	7
Most Common and Useful Shortcuts	7
Cut, Copy, and Paste	7
Select All	8
Undo & Redo	8
Delete Routines	8
Save, Open, and Print Files	8
Close Windows and Tabs	8
Search Documents	8
Move Between Windows, Tabs, and Monitors	9
Open File Explorer & System Properties	10
Show Desktop	10
Minimize & Maximize Windows	10
Lock System	11
Open Security Screen & Task Manager	11
Windows 8/8.1 Shortcuts	12
Open Charms Bar & Search	12
Access System Tools	12
Snap Windows	13
Open Modern App Command Bar	13
Windows 10 Shortcuts	14
Snap Windows	14
Open Task View	14
Open Settings App	15
Navigate Command Prompt	15
Specific Software Shortcuts	16
All Browsers	16
Switch and Open Tabs	16
Open Links	16
Go Back and Forth, Refresh, and Stop Loading	16
Go Home	16
Send	16
Zoom In or Out	17
Address Bar Shortcuts	17
Navigate Menus	17
Other Programs	17

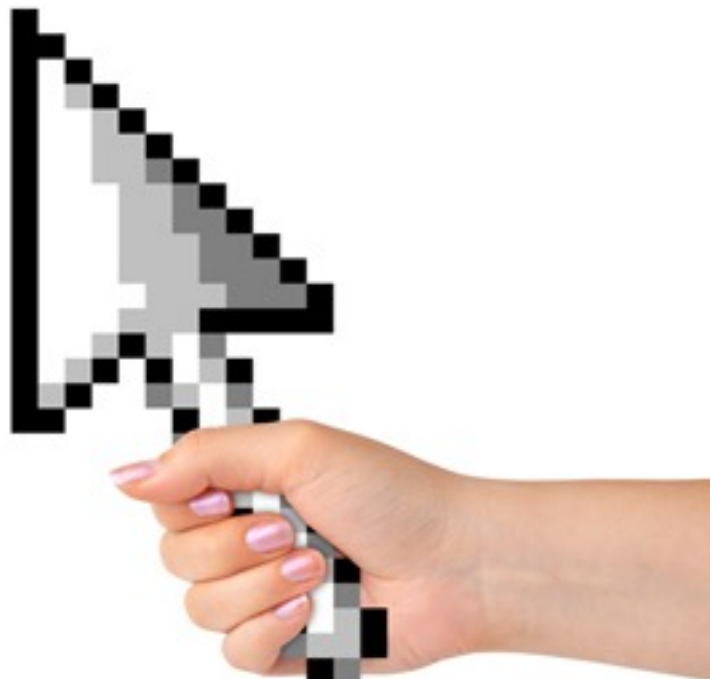
Type Special Characters	18
Make Your Own Shortcuts	19
Launch a Program with a Shortcut	19
Get Some Help from Another Program	19
When Shortcuts Go Bad	20
There are Shortcuts in Life	21

People love taking shortcuts in all aspects of life; computers are no exception. Shortcuts, particularly ones performed by keyboard, can save you hours of time once applied properly. We've rounded up some of the most common keyboard shortcuts in the past, but today we're here to produce the ultimate guide on Windows shortcuts.

After examining how useful shortcuts can be, we'll first look at universal shortcuts that perform the same function in pretty much every program you could use. We'll dive into specific programs after that, and finish up with a selection of alternative tricks. Stay on board and you'll be mastering these tricks in no time!

Why Bother with Shortcuts?

If you're not accustomed to using them, keyboard shortcuts might seem like a waste of time. After all, you can use your mouse to make selections, use the toolbar options (like File, Edit, and Tools), launch programs, and navigate websites. In actuality, though, a mouse isn't required to use your computer at all; you could get around with just a keyboard if you had to.



Consider this: you probably only have one hand on your mouse (if you use a two-handed mouse, I'd love to see pictures). Keeping that other hand on the keyboard and learning some keyboard shortcuts is an excellent idea; your spare hand probably isn't doing anything else productive! If you were writing a paper in Word and took ten seconds to save the document every five minutes by manually clicking **File > Save**, you'd be spending two minutes of every hour just saving! A quick tap of **Control + S** takes a fraction of a second and doesn't take your hands (and mind) away from typing like using the mouse does.

Now, you don't have to get carried away. If your memory isn't capable of remembering hundreds of shortcuts, that's okay! Aside from exercising your mind, focusing on just a few common shortcuts and integrating them into your daily use will soon make them second nature. Once you're not even thinking about doing it anymore, add a few more to your repertoire, and keep the cycle going! Keep in mind that not every shortcut is worth using for every person, either. If you never play music on your computer, you're not going to use fast-forward shortcuts, so skip those!

To be clear, this guide is written for Windows keyboards. The keys on a keyboard shouldn't cause any ambiguity, but just for the sake of consistency:

- All keys will appear in **bold** and keyboard combinations will appear in ***bold, italic font***.
- Keyboard shortcuts that need to be pressed at the same time will use a **+** symbol (e.g. ***CTRL + S***).
- Combinations that need to be pressed one after another will use a **>** (e.g. ***CTRL > T***).
- As we go, I'll be sharing various strategies for committing shortcuts to memory, including subliminally bolding letters of commands that match their shortcuts. If you don't find these helpful, glaze over them!
- The **SHIFT** key is used as a "reverse" function for many key combinations. For example, **SPACE** will jump down a set amount on a web page, so ***SHIFT + SPACE*** will move back up that same amount. A note will be made when this applies to a shortcut.
- **Control** will be abbreviated as **CTRL**.
- **Windows Key** is abbreviated as **WIN**.
- **LEFT**, **RIGHT**, **UP**, and **DOWN** refer to the arrow keys.
- Remember that no two keyboards are the same; some laptop keyboards may have **Function (FN)** keys that perform their own functions on the **F1-F12** keys.



Universal Windows Shortcuts

Of course these aren't guaranteed to hold 100% of the time, but there are some shortcuts that will be identical in almost every corner of Windows or any program you use. Most of these have been around forever, so you might be familiar with a handful already. Many of these basic shortcuts also conveniently have key combinations that match their function (such as **CTRL + S** for **S**ave), making them a cinch to learn.

Download: [Windows Keyboard Shortcuts Cheat Sheet](#)

Most Common and Useful Shortcuts

WIN will open the Start menu on Windows 7 and 10 and allow you to start typing a search term immediately; the speed even rivals [keystroke launcher Launchy](#) if you don't mind the basic functionality.

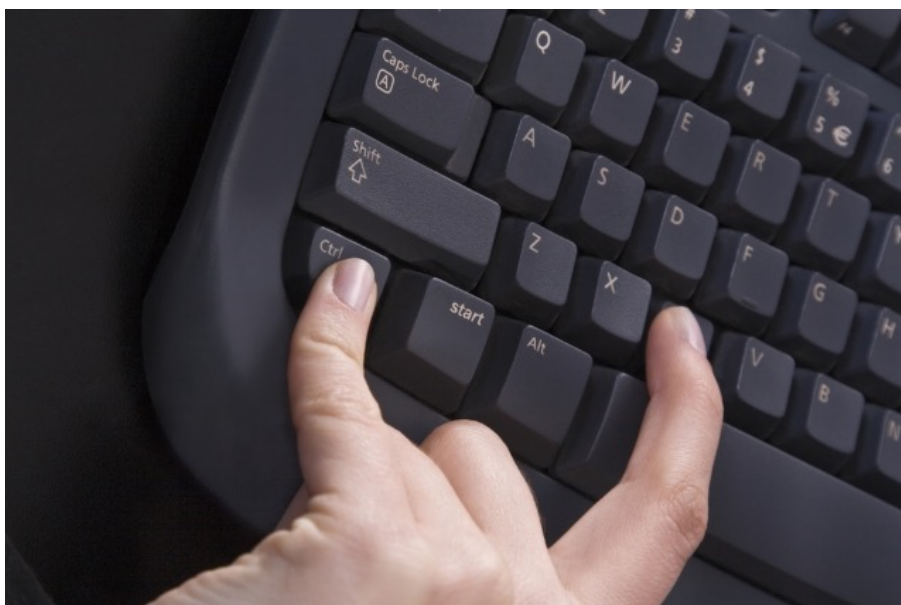
You'll find this much faster than manually mousing over to the Start button and then having to type. Those on Windows 8 or 8.1 will be taken to the Start screen with this key – though you can easily [bring back the old Start menu with some free tools](#).

Probably the most ubiquitous of our study are the [shortcuts that deal with text editing](#):

Cut, Copy, and Paste

- **CTRL + X** to cut highlighted text (remove it and place it on [the clipboard](#))
- **CTRL + C** to copy text (place a copy of the text on the clipboard)
- **CTRL + V** to paste text (copy the clipboard to the cursor position)

These shortcuts located all in a row on the [standard QWERTY keyboard](#), making them easy to locate. To keep them straight, think of **X** as making a cut, **C** standing for copy, and then **V**, the only one left, is the arrowhead pointing downwards for dropping or inserting what was saved to the clipboard! Don't forget that copy-pasting works for more than just text; images are fair game, as well.



Select All

To select everything in the current space, use **CTRL + A**. If you're typing in a textbox in Chrome, for example, this shortcut will select all the text you've typed. If you click any old point on a page, you'll select every element, including images and other formatting.

Selecting all is most useful when you're trying to work with a bunch of files at once, or perhaps to grab everything you've just typed and re-use it elsewhere. Manually dragging the mouse over the selection is much slower.

Undo & Redo

CTRL + Z will undo any action and is your best friend when doing any sort of work on your computer, especially tasks prone to errors such as image editing or formatting a document. Its counterpart, **CTRL + Y**, will redo a previously undone action. Use these two regularly and your mistakes will be vanquished in an instant!

Delete Routines

When typing, instead of using **Backspace** to delete one character at a time, use **CTRL + Backspace** to delete entire words at once. This also works with **CTRL + DEL** to delete one word in front of the cursor.

Save, Open, and Print Files

Use **CTRL + S** to save whatever file you're working on – and do it often so you don't lose your work! In a browser, this can also be used to save a page for offline viewing.

CTRL + O will open a file into whatever program you're using.

Keeping in the **CTRL** family, **CTRL + P** is the universal command to print. Many folks are striving to go paperless, but most of us need to print for work or perhaps that relative who still doesn't have a computer. Those who print websites often should utilize tools to make printing web pages more presentable so you're not printing a bunch of ads and other useless material. Ink is expensive!

Close Windows and Tabs

We'll talk about using shortcuts to open programs in Windows, but you can just as easily close out of your work with a few taps. Try **ALT + F4** to close any window (identical to clicking the X in the top-right corner) or **CTRL + F4** to close out just the current tab. Alternatively, **CTRL + W** will also close your tab.

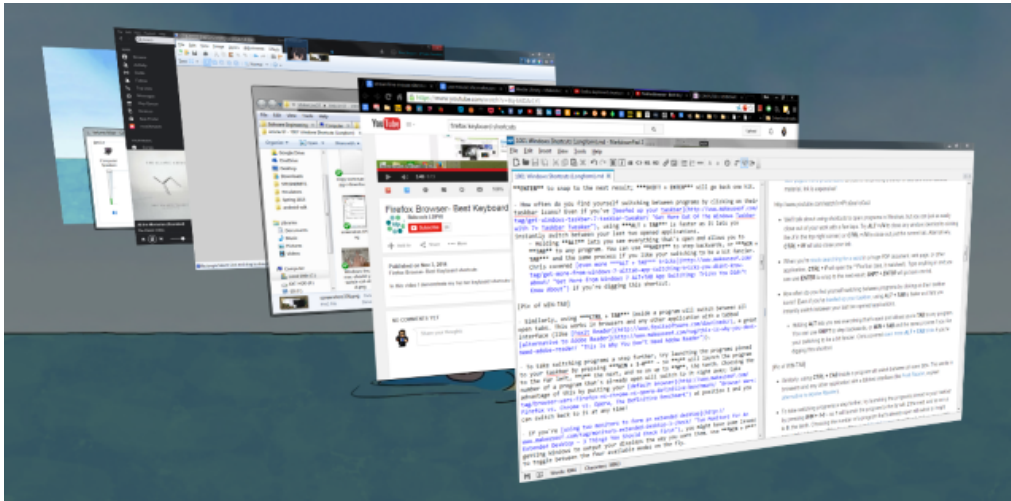
Search Documents

When you're stuck searching for a word in a huge PDF document, web page, or other application, **CTRL + F** will open the Find bar (see, it matches!). Type anything in and you can use **ENTER** to snap to the next result; **SHIFT + ENTER** will go back one hit.

Move Between Windows, Tabs, and Monitors

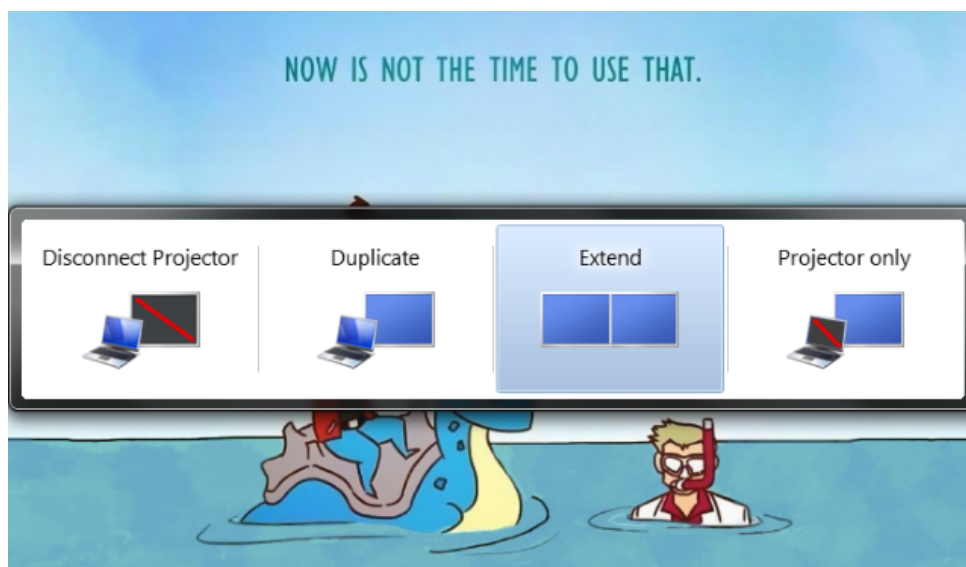
How often do you find yourself switching between programs by clicking on their taskbar icons? Even if you've beefed up your taskbar, using **ALT + TAB** is faster as it lets you instantly switch between your last two opened applications.

Holding **ALT** lets you see everything that's open and allows you to **TAB** to any program. You can use **SHIFT** to step backwards, or **WIN + TAB** and the same process if you like your switching to be a bit fancier. Chris covered even more ALT + TAB tricks if you're digging this shortcut. Note that in Windows 10 **WIN + TAB** will open the virtual desktop screen (see below).



Similarly, using **CTRL + TAB** inside a program will switch between all open tabs. This works in browsers and any other application with a tabbed interface (like Foxit Reader, a great alternative to Adobe Reader).

To take switching programs a step further, try launching the programs pinned to your taskbar by pressing **WIN + 1-0** – so **1** will launch the program to the far left, **2** the next, and so on up to **0**, the tenth. Choosing the number of a program that's already open will switch to it right away; take advantage of this by putting your default browser at position 1 and you can switch back to it at any time!



If you're using two monitors to form an extended desktop, you might have some issues getting Windows to output your displays the way you want them. Use **WIN + P** to toggle between the four available modes on the fly.

Open File Explorer & System Properties

Using Windows Explorer lets you browse all the files on your machine; one of the places you probably end up most is the Computer page to view your attached drives and devices. Get there instantly with **WIN + E**.

Those that perform tech support for family and friends often need information about their loved ones' systems, such as whether their copy of Windows is 32-bit or 64-bit. Pressing **WIN + PAUSE/BREAK** will bring up the System Properties panel with basic information about your PC that you can share with whoever is helping you.

Show Desktop

When you have tons of windows open and need to access a file on your desktop (or just want to admire an awesome wallpaper), press **WIN + D** to instantly show the desktop. You can tap it again to get back to where you were.



Minimize & Maximize Windows

Similarly, if you need to clear your mind from the insanity of work for a minute, pressing **WIN + M** will quickly minimize all open windows. Once you're ready to get back in the action use **SHIFT + WIN + M** to get everything back open.

Lock System

You've read plenty about [securing your computer](#), but none of your measures will do much good if your system is accessible to anyone who walks by! To quickly lock your computer as you stand up to walk away, use **WIN + L**. If you've ever had someone leave a goofy Facebook update for you when you're away from your computer, you'll appreciate this one.

Open Security Screen & Task Manager

One shortcut as old as Windows itself that most people resort to when their system freezes up is **CTRL + ALT + DEL**. In modern versions of Windows, this will bring up the Windows security screen that lets you change your password or log off, among other things.

The program you're probably looking for is the Task Manager, which is directly accessed by the **CTRL + SHIFT + ESC** combo. Once you're there, be sure you know what's going on with our [guide to the Task Manager](#).



Windows 8/8.1 Shortcuts

Windows 8 and 8.1 (which makes significant improvements over Windows 8 – it's important and free, so grab it now!) include their own set of key combos that might not apply in Windows 7 or earlier. Here are some shortcuts you'll want to know if you're rocking Windows 8.

Download: [Windows 8 Keyboard Shortcuts Cheat Sheet](#)

Open Charms Bar & Search

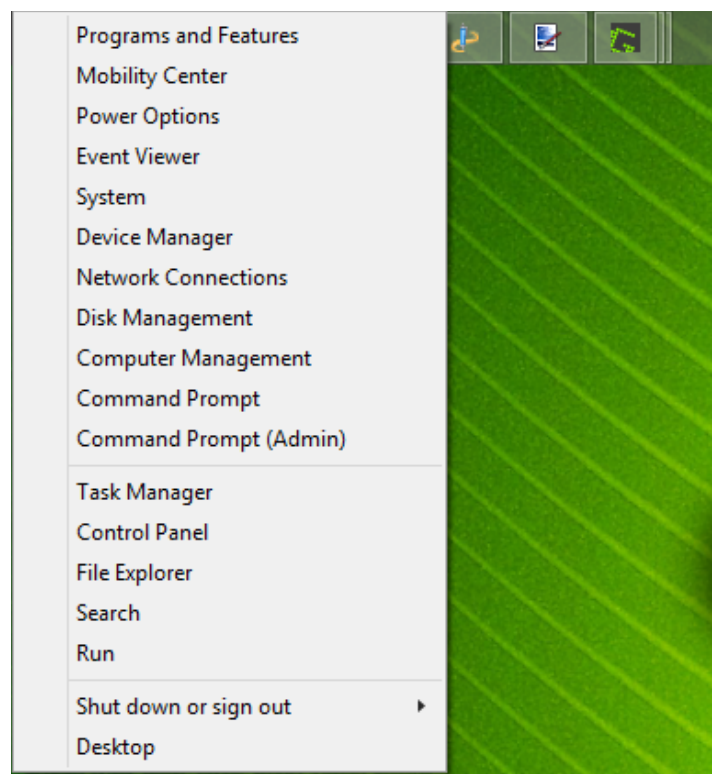
WIN + C will open the Charms bar, the central hub for searching, sharing, and accessing settings. You can use swipe gestures in Windows 8 to get there as well, but those can be annoying and activate by accident.

Since you can't just tap **WIN** and start searching like in Windows 7, use **WIN + Q** to open the Search charm from anywhere. This lets you search for files, settings, and even the Web if you like.

Other important Charm items have shortcuts too: **WIN + I** will jump you to Settings, **WIN + W** lets you start searching settings (great if you need to find a buried Control Panel item).

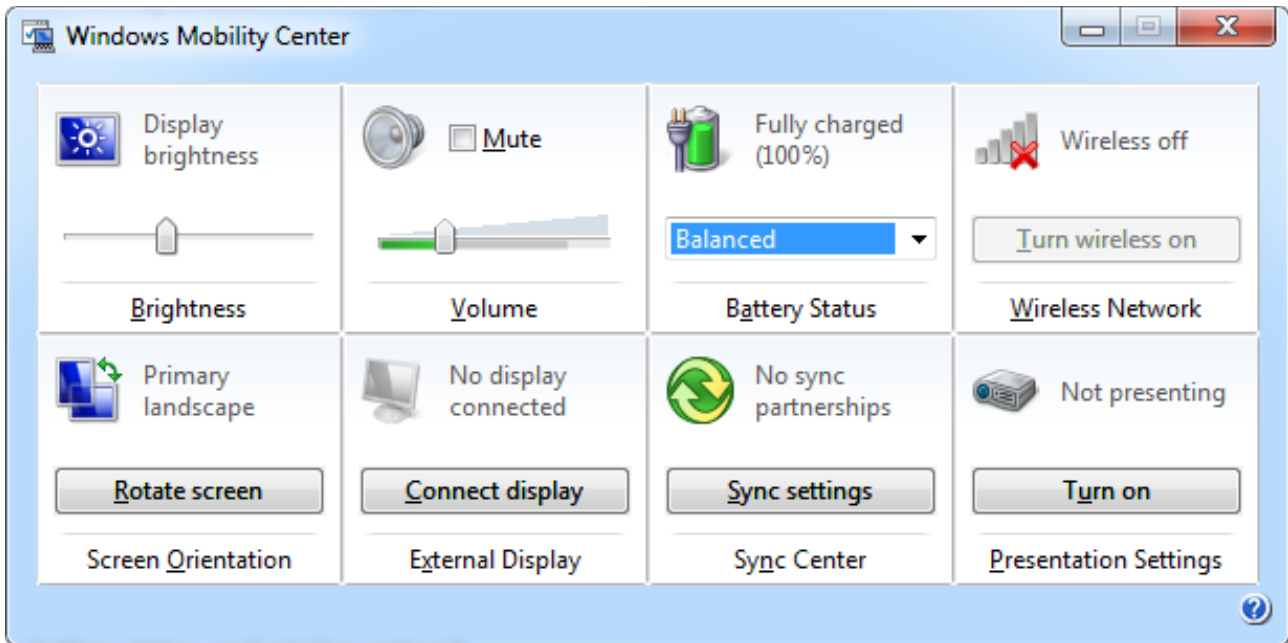
Access System Tools

WIN + X launches Windows Tools, a useful menu containing shortcuts to common utilities like the Control Panel, Device Manager, or Programs menu. Since the Start menu that used to hold all these shortcuts was removed in Windows 8, this group of commands is quite convenient. Should you find yourself using this frequently, expanding the Windows Tools menu with a third-party program is a good plan.



On Windows 7, this menu doesn't exist, so **WIN + X** brings up the Windows Mobility Center instead. It's still useful, especially on laptops where you change settings like screen brightness, volume, and display mode frequently.

Read: [Guide to the Windows 7 Mobility Center](#)



Snap Windows

You can snap windows to either side of your screen (an [Aero feature](#) left in Windows 8) for dual-pane working; using **WIN + . (Period)** snaps the current App to the right side of the screen and **WIN + SHIFT + . (Period)** throws it to the left.

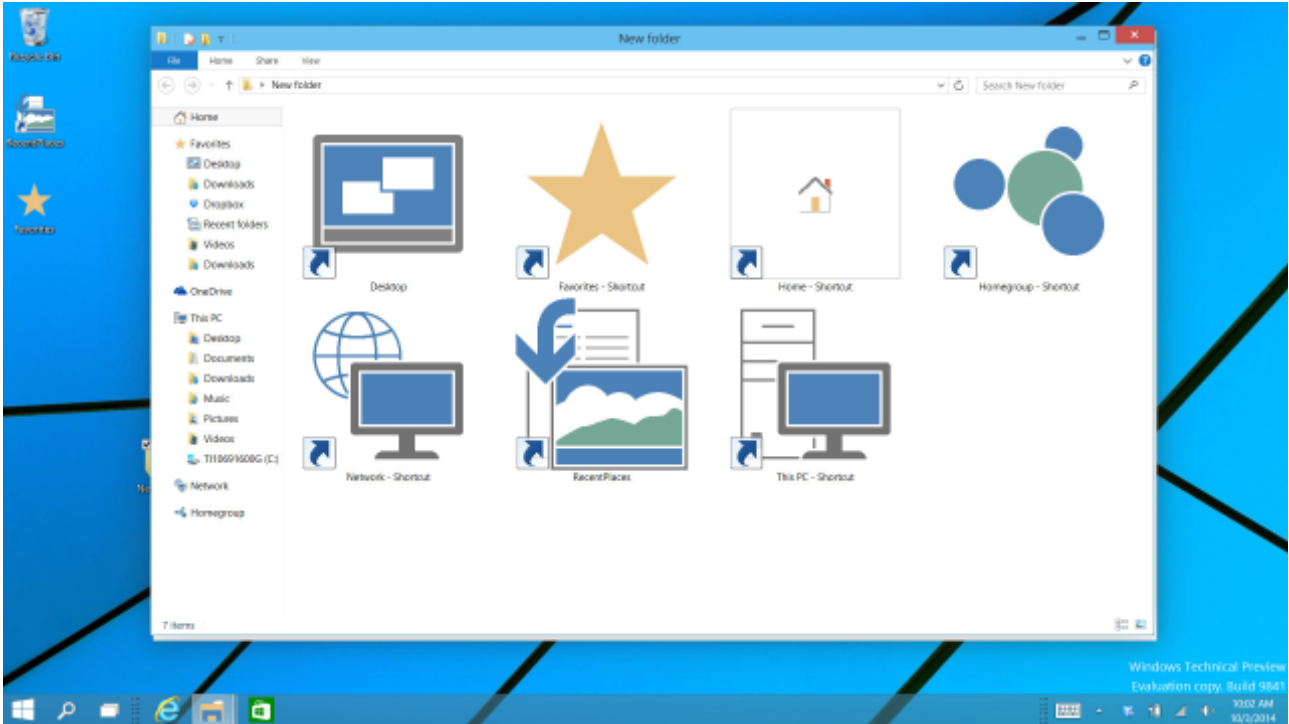
Open Modern App Command Bar

Windows 8 Apps (we've collected the [best Modern Apps](#) for your convenience) have unique App Command bars that appear at the bottom of the screen – for example, the Start screen's contains options to unpin, uninstall, or resize an app. Right-clicking or swiping up from the bottom of the screen will open these, as will **WIN + Z**.

See our [complete guide to Windows 8 shortcuts](#) for even more, including gestures and new command line tricks.

Windows 10 Shortcuts

Windows 10 is coming. Microsoft's new OS attempts to make up for the ill-received Windows 8, and as such has all-new shortcuts that weren't around in 7 or 8. You can install the technical preview of Windows 10 and try these now for yourself, but be cautious; the unfinished product should not be your main operating system as it hasn't been sufficiently prepared for mainstream use.



Snap Windows

Windows 10 increases the functionality of window snapping. In addition to **WIN + LEFT** and **WIN + RIGHT**, try **WIN + UP** and **WIN + DOWN** to snap your windows side-by-side vertically. Using all four, you can now display four windows at once in a little 2 x 2 grid.

Open Task View

Previously, you had to utilize third-party tools for virtual desktops, but the new Windows runs them natively.

- **WIN + TAB** goes from displaying a nice visual effect (in Windows 7) to an essential new menu – the Task View. Once you tap the key combination, you'll be able to let the buttons go and choose between open programs in your current virtual environment.
- **ALT + TAB** is the same as before, except you can switch between programs from any desktop.

On the subject of virtual desktops, you'll also want to use **WIN + CTRL + D** to create a new virtual desktop environment, **WIN + CTRL + F4** to close your active desktop (remember that ALT + F4 closes open windows, so this is the same idea), and **WIN + CTRL + LEFT/RIGHT** to toggle between your open desktops.

Open Settings App

Windows 10 no longer contains a Charms bar. At the time of writing this manual, **WIN + C** had no function. **WIN + I**, which previously opened the Charms bar Settings, now opens the Settings app, which is a modern Control Panel.

Navigate Command Prompt

Windows 10 includes some long-awaited new shortcuts that make [using the command prompt](#) much more user-friendly. Instead of having to right click and choose Paste, you'll finally be able to use **CTRL** shortcuts to edit text when on the command line.

Before you try these, the How-To Geek explains how to enable the new shortcuts: right click on the title bar of a command prompt, choose *Properties*, and under the *Experimental tab* check the box next to *Enable new CTRL key shortcuts*.

- Just like other places in Windows, you can now use **CTRL + C** to copy text, **CTRL + V** to paste text, and **CTRL + A** to select everything on the console window.
- Managing multiple lines of commands is much simpler when using **SHIFT + Arrows** to move the cursor and select text; up and down move one line, while left and right move one character at a time. Holding **CTRL + SHIFT + Arrows** will move one word at a time. Keep holding down **SHIFT** to select more text.
- **SHIFT + HOME/END** will move your cursor to the start or end of the current line, selecting all text on that line with it. Adding **CTRL** to this shortcut will move to the beginning or end of the entire output.
- Holding **SHIFT + PAGE UP/DOWN** scrolls the cursor by a whole screen, and as you might guess, also selects the text on said page.
- Using **CTRL + UP/DOWN** lets you scroll one line at a time (just like using the scroll bar on the right), while **CTRL + PAGE UP/DOWN** moves a whole page up or down.
- **CTRL + M** lets you enter a "marking mode" to mark text. Since you can highlight text now using **SHIFT**, you might not need this shortcut.
- You can finally use **CTRL + F** to search for text in a command prompt.

Read: [15 CMD Commands Every Windows User Should Know](#)

Specific Software Shortcuts

Now that we've seen shortcuts that work across Windows, let's take a glance at some time-savers for the [best Windows software](#).

All Browsers

Whether you're surfing with Chrome, Firefox, Opera, or even [good old Internet Explorer](#), these shortcuts will get you around with less clicks.

Switch and Open Tabs

- **CTRL + 1-8** will switch instantly to that numbered tab, just like **WIN + 1-0** switches to programs on the taskbar. Also, **CTRL + 9** jumps to the last tab even if you have [way too many tabs](#) open.
- **CTRL + T** will open a new tab; in combination with [powerful browser omniboxes](#), you can instantly start typing a search term after using this shortcut.
 - If you need to re-open a tab you just closed (this probably happens on a daily basis), **CTRL + SHIFT + T** makes it reappear in a flash.

Open Links

When you want to open a link but don't want it to take over your current page, **CTRL + Left Click** it to open it in a new tab. You can also **Middle Click** the link for the same result. **CTRL + SHIFT + Left Click** will do the same as the above, but you'll be brought to the new tab instead of it being left for later.

Go Back and Forth, Refresh, and Stop Loading

Instead of using your browser's back and forward buttons, **ALT + LEFT** will go back, and **ALT + RIGHT** goes forward if applicable. For as often as you navigate pages, this is definitely one worth [getting into the habit](#) of using. When you need to [quickly refresh a web page](#) for various reasons, **F5** will do it for you. To override [the browser's cache](#) and fully reload the page if it's being finicky, use **CTRL + F5**. If you want to stop a page from loading, **ESC** will cease the page's activities.

Go Home

Having taken the time to set up [an awesome homepage](#), you'll want to visit it whenever you can. **ALT + HOME** will bring you back where the heart is.

Send

This one doesn't do anything in the browser itself, but many websites (including sending email with any provider, posting messages on Facebook and Twitter, and [PC texting apps](#) such as MightyText) use **CTRL + ENTER** as an equivalent to clicking Send or Enter.

Zoom In or Out

Sometimes it's too hard to read text on a page, or perhaps you need to inspect an image from close-up. To quickly scroll, use **CTRL + +/-** to go in or out. You can also hold **CTRL** and slide the mouse wheel instead of using the + and - buttons for faster scaling. To jump back to standard zoom, a quick tap of **CTRL + 0** makes everything look normal again.

Address Bar Shortcuts

CTRL + L instantly focuses the cursor on the address bar so you can paste in a URL or search for a term. Once in the address bar, **CTRL + ENTER** will add “www.” before your text and “.com” to the end of it. So instead of manually entering “www.makeuseof.com”, you can just type “makeuseof” **CTRL + ENTER** and your browser will fill in the boring parts.

Navigate Menus

Use a few shortcuts to jump to the sub-menus of your browser. **CTRL + H** opens the history, **CTRL + J** will bring you to your downloads, **CTRL + D** adds the current site to your bookmarks, and **CTRL + SHIFT + DEL** opens the prompt to clear the browsing history.

Other Programs

We've written at length in the past on shortcuts for specific programs, so I won't be redundant here. If you're looking to get around faster in your favorite software, these articles will put you well on your way.



- Evernote is a fantastic note-taking utility, and when you're knee-deep in notes and lists you'll want to be able to find your way around. Shortcuts for Evernote ensure you stay in charge of your stuff.
- iTunes: Spotify may be taking over iTunes, but that doesn't mean it's gone just yet. iTunes is full of shortcuts, so managing your digital music is easier than ever.

- Spotify: We've told you that [you might be using Spotify wrong](#); hopefully one of those ways isn't ignoring keyboard shortcuts! Make good use of [Spotify shortcuts](#) and you'll be an expert in no time.
- Gmail: We've written a [power user guide to Gmail](#), but anyone using Google's mail service can benefit from picking up a few [Gmail shortcuts](#).
- Facebook: Though many people might not take advantage, you can [customize Facebook with browser add-ons](#). [Facebook's keyboard shortcuts](#) allow you to quickly jump to your own page or send a new message and are underutilized, as well.

Type Special Characters

Special characters (such as ¡ or ®) are necessary to type sometimes, but it's annoying to copy them from the Web every time you need one. If you don't want to use a website like [copypastecharacter](#) to do the job quickly, using **ALT** and the numeric key pad lets you punch these in at any time.

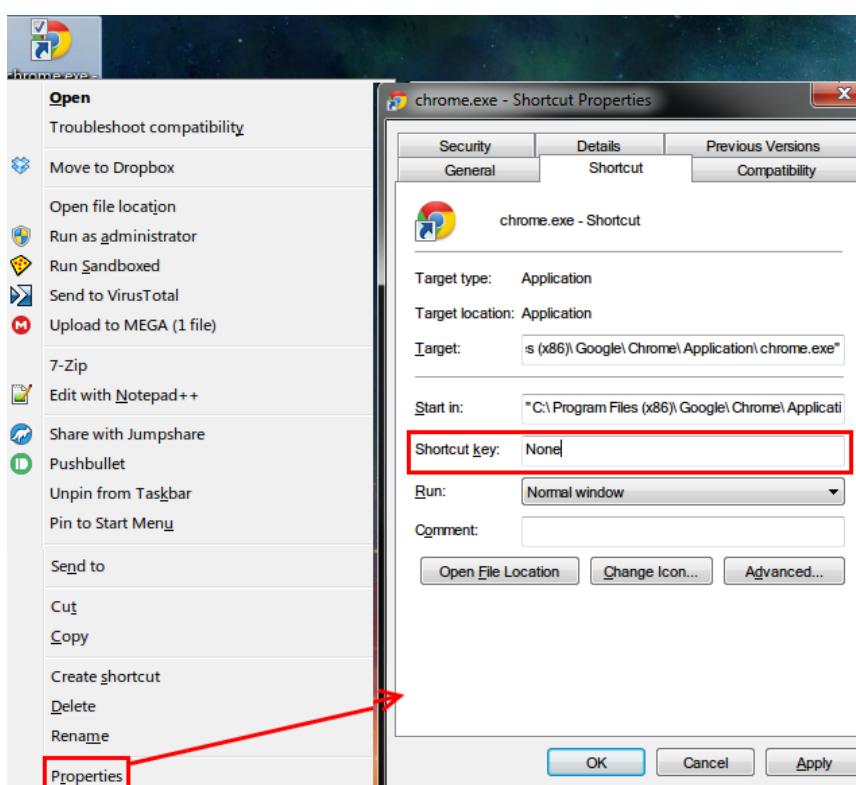
Download: [Special Windows Characters Cheat Sheet](#)

Make Your Own Shortcuts

If you're not satisfied with [the variety of hotkeys available to you](#), it's time to make your own shortcuts. Since they're user-created, they're incredibly versatile – you can use them to just open a few of your favorite programs, or make in-depth shortcuts that perform a string of functions for you. Here's a basic overview of what you can do.

Launch a Program with a Shortcut

Go-to programs that you use all the time shouldn't be more than a few taps away. To make a custom shortcut, first find the program you want to use and create a shortcut icon for it. Place the shortcut anywhere, then right-click it. Choose *Properties* and in the *Shortcut Properties* box, type your combination into the *Shortcut* button.



Keep in mind that though all shortcuts made here start with **CTRL + ALT**, it can't be a combo that's already in use elsewhere, so pick something unique. [Launching multiple programs with one command](#) is possible – give it a shot if you have applications that you like to launch in pairs.

Get Some Help from Another Program

For anything beyond opening a few programs, you'll want to utilize powerful third-party tools to make some shortcuts. Since we've covered this topic in the past, I'll refer you to our existing resources if you wish to give it a shot: the [powerful AutoHotKey combined with ac'tivAid](#) lets you do nearly whatever you want with automation; novices should [try out the less intimidating HotkeyP](#) which doesn't involve any AutoHotKey code.

Though it's probably not as fast, if you use the Run menu (**WIN + R**) regularly, [using AddToRun](#) will let you add program shortcuts to that prompt.

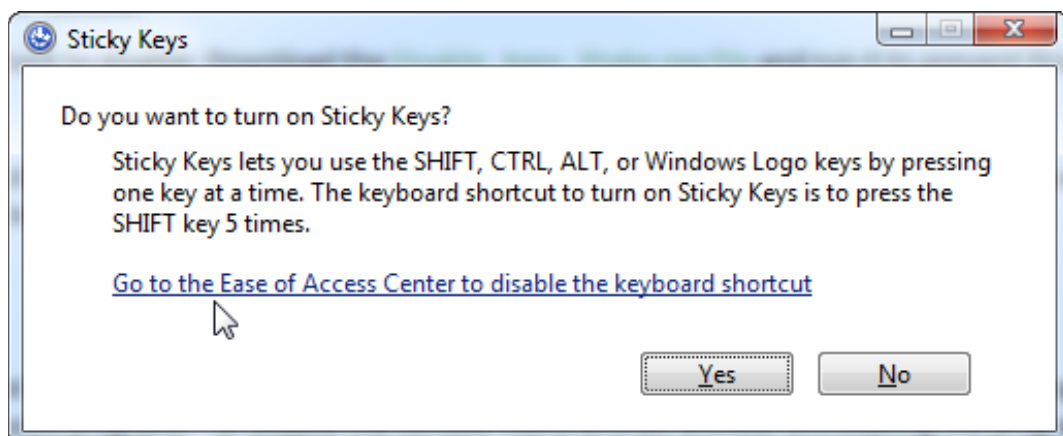
When Shortcuts Go Bad

As amazing as keyboard shortcuts are, sometimes you activate a key combination by mistake, leading to all sorts of wacky things. Let's see some of the common culprits and find out how to actually take advantage of what they do!

- **CTRL + ALT + Arrow Keys** will flip your display to 0, 90, 180, or 270 degrees. Unless you have a tablet PC you probably won't ever want your display shifted, so use **CTRL + ALT + UP** to get it right-side up again. If you're the mischievous type, this function make a great PC practical joke to play on your friends.



- By pressing **SHIFT** five times in a row, you'll hear a beep and see a message telling you about Sticky Keys. This Windows accessibility function allows people who have trouble pressing two keys at once to use their keyboard – for example, to press **CTRL + ALT + DEL** with Sticky Keys enabled, you could tap **CTRL**, then **ALT**, and then **DEL**, one at a time.



For most, this is just a [Windows annoyance](#) you won't ever want enabled, so it's wise to disable the prompt so you stop being pestered about it. Tap SHIFT five times to get the pop-up (if it doesn't come up, you've already disabled it) and then choose to go to the Ease of Access Center, where you can disable the shortcut.

There are Shortcuts in Life

Hopefully you made it through our massive list of Windows shortcuts! Although we compiled a ton of them, there could be even more that aren't as universally useful. As Windows adds features in future versions, we're likely to get an even larger library than we currently have.

Remember that you're not expected to remember or even use all the shortcuts presented here! Pick out the ones that you'd use most in a regular day, and work them into your routine. They're designed to help you, and I'll bet if you haven't been using many shortcuts until now, you're going to be very pleased with your increased productivity! If it helps you, make up your own mnemonics to get them into your head even faster.

Hungry for even more shortcuts? Check out [how to add shortcuts to your right-click menu](#), or try something different and check out [Just Gestures to use mouse shortcuts](#).

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