



# WINDOWS SHORTCUTS 101

THE ULTIMATE KEYBOARD SHORTCUT GUIDE

BY BEN STEGNER



# Windows Shortcuts 101: The Ultimate Keyboard Shortcut Guide

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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 previously rounded up **some cool keyboard shortcuts**, but today we're here to produce the ultimate guide on Windows keyboard shortcuts (also known as Windows hotkeys).

Unlock The 1-Page "Windows Keyboard Shortcuts 101" Cheat Sheet Today!

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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?

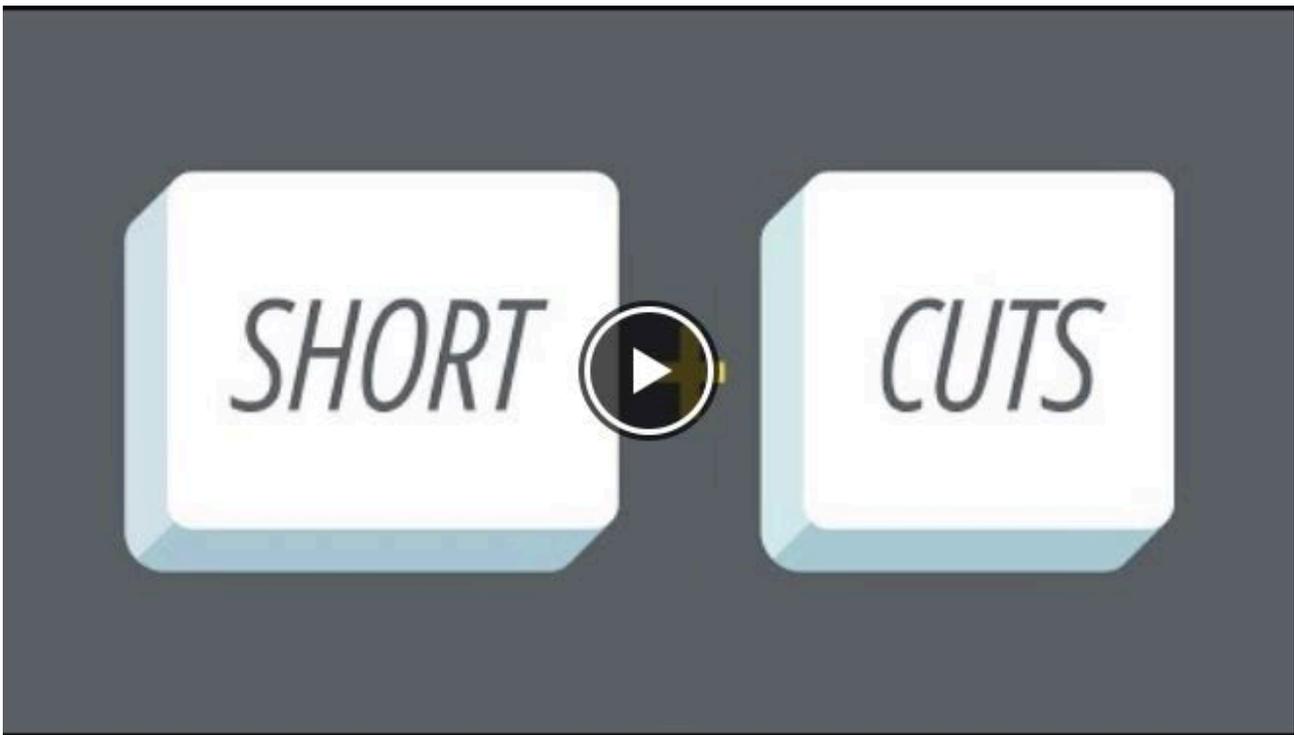
If you're not accustomed to using them, keyboard shortcuts might seem like a waste of time. After all, you can **use your mouse to make selections**, work with the toolbar options (like File, Edit, and Tools), launch programs, and navigate websites. Yet a mouse isn't required to use your computer at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

You probably only have one hand on your mouse. 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 **Ctrl + 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. Don't worry if your memory isn't capable of remembering hundreds of shortcuts. **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 them 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!



Watch the Youtube video here: [Tech Savvy Tips and Tricks: Keyboard Shortcuts](#)

## A Few Keyboard Shortcut Guidelines

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 and combinations appear in **bold**.
- Keyboard shortcuts that need to be pressed at the same time will use a **plus** symbol (e.g. **Ctrl + S**).
- Combinations that need to be pressed one after another will use a **greater than** symbol (e.g. **Ctrl > T**).
- As we go, we'll share 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. We'll make a note 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.



Image Credit: Yanas/Shutterstock

## Universal Windows Keyboard 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 **Save**), making them a cinch to learn.

### 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. 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 go to the Start screen with this key.

Probably the most ubiquitous of our habits are the shortcuts that deal with text editing:

### Cut, Copy, and Paste Using the Keyboard

- **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.



Image Credit: Radu Razvan/[Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com)

## 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 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 disappear 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, you can also use this to save a page for offline viewing. The keyboard shortcut for **Save As** (saving a file with a new name) depends on the app you're using. In Word it's **F12**; many other programs use **Ctrl + Shift + S**.

**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**.



Watch the Youtube video here: [Top 10 keyboard shortcuts you didn't know about](#)

## 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.

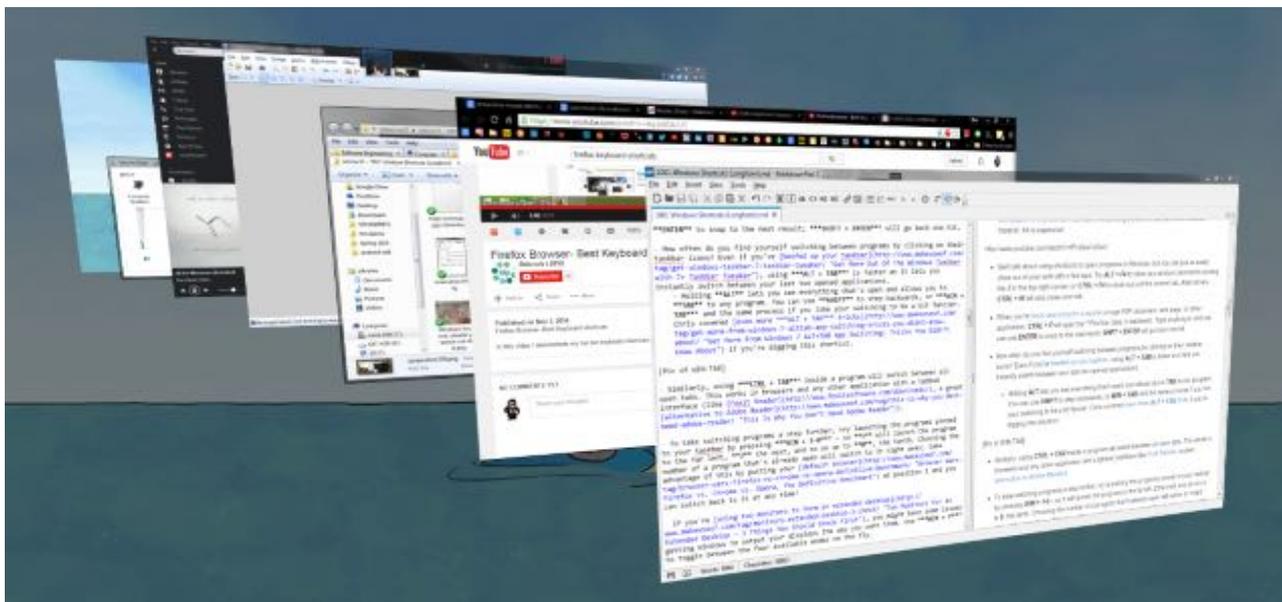
## Search Documents

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. 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? 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. Note that in **Windows 10**, **Win + Tab** will open the virtual desktop screen (see the below section on Windows 10 shortcuts).



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.

To take switching programs a step further, try launching the programs pinned to your taskbar by pressing **Win + 1-0**. 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. With multiple monitors, you can also use **Win + Shift + Left/Right** to move the current window between displays.



## Open File Explorer and System Properties

File 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**.

Pressing Win + Pause will bring up the System Properties panel with **basic information about your PC you should know**.

## Show Desktop

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



## Minimize and Maximize Windows

Similarly, if you need to clear your mind from the insanity of work for a minute, press the **Win + M** shortcut to minimize all windows. Once you're ready to get back in the action use **Shift + Win + M** to get everything back open.

In most programs, using the **F11** full-screen shortcut will expand the window to take up your entire monitor.

## Lock Your Computer

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 and 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 tasks.

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 [tips on the Task Manager](#).



## Windows 8/8.1 Keyboard Shortcuts

**Windows 8** and 8.1 (you **shouldn't use Windows 8 any longer** as Microsoft is not supporting it) 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.

### Open Charms Bar and Search

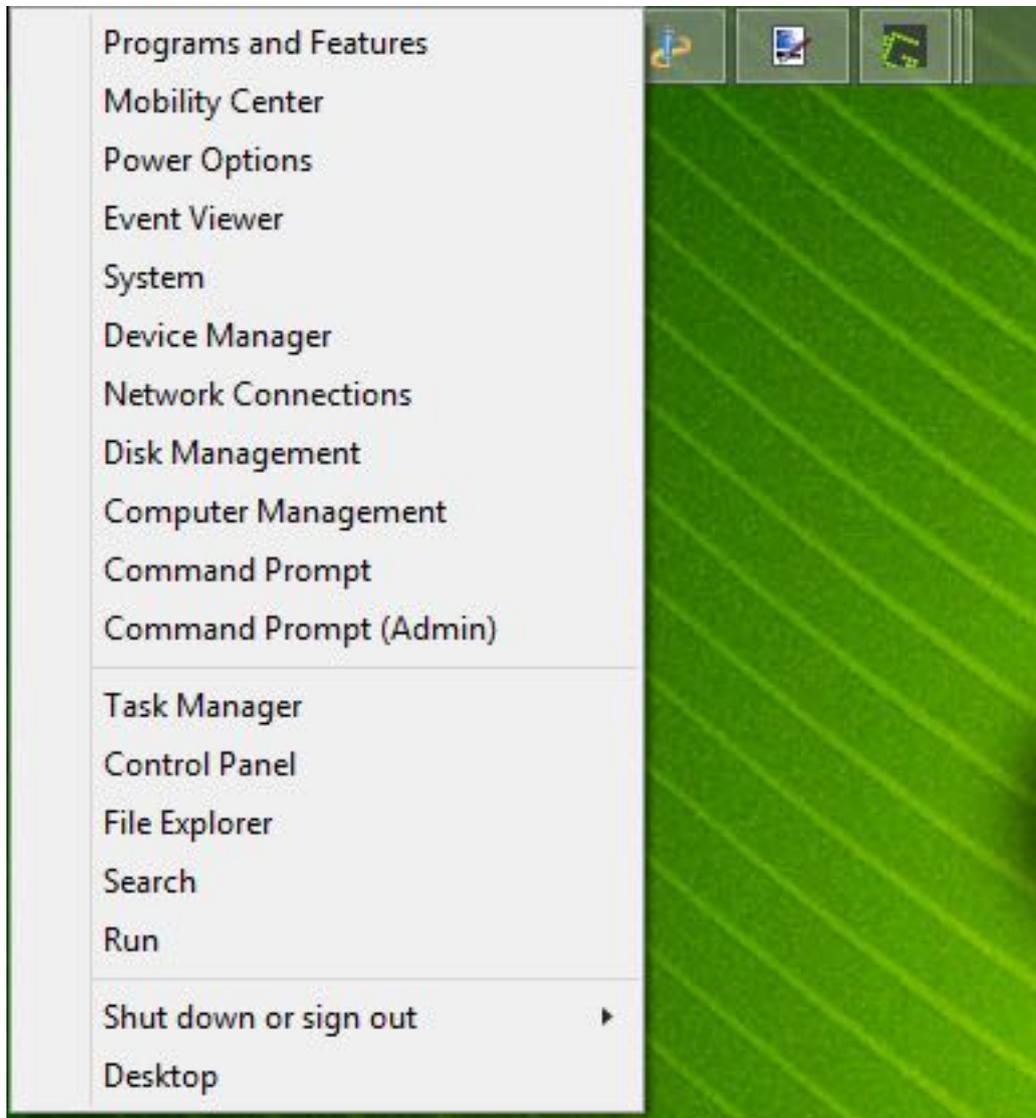
**Win + C** will open the **Charms** bar, the central hub for searching, sharing, and accessing settings. You can use swipe gestures in Windows 8 to get there as well, but those are annoying and can activate by accident.

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.

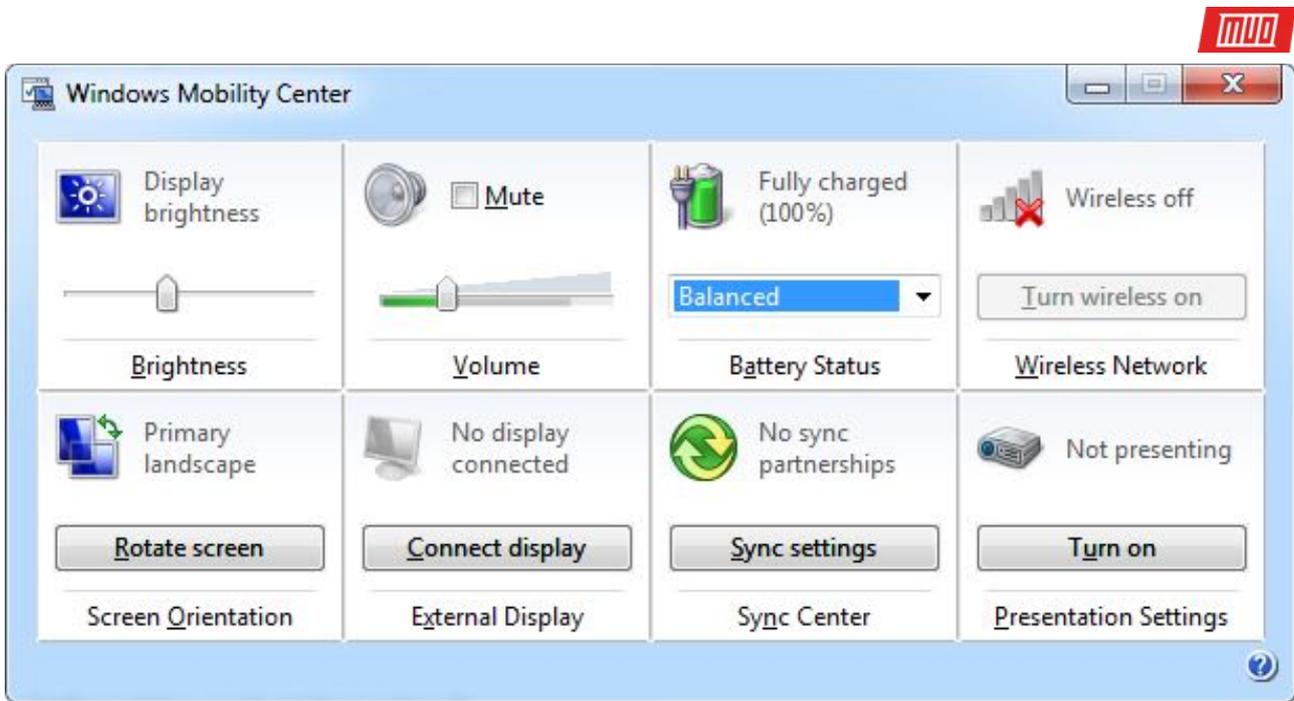
Other important Charm items have shortcuts too. **Win + I** will jump you to Settings, while **Win + W** lets you start searching settings (great if you need to find a buried Control Panel item).

## Access System Tools

**Win + X** launches the Quick Access Menu, **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.



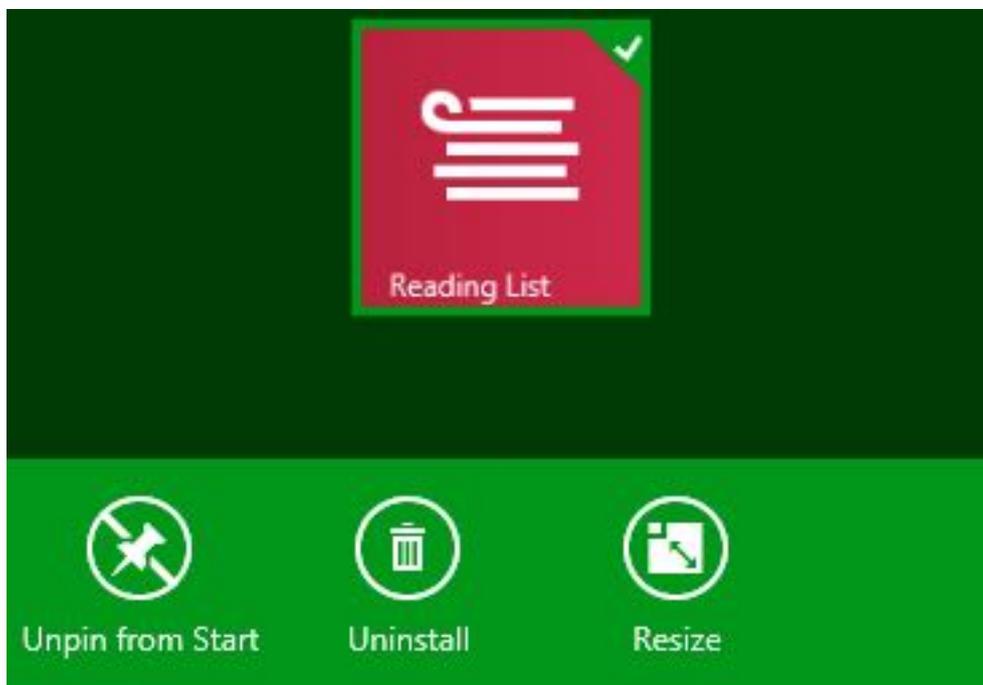
Remember, on Windows 7 this menu doesn't exist, so **Win + X** brings up the Windows Mobility Center instead. It's still useful, especially on laptops where you change settings like screen brightness, volume, and display mode frequently.



## Snap Windows

You can **snap windows to either side of your screen** for dual-pane working. **Win + Period** snaps the current App to the right side of the screen and **Win + Shift + Period** throws it to the left.

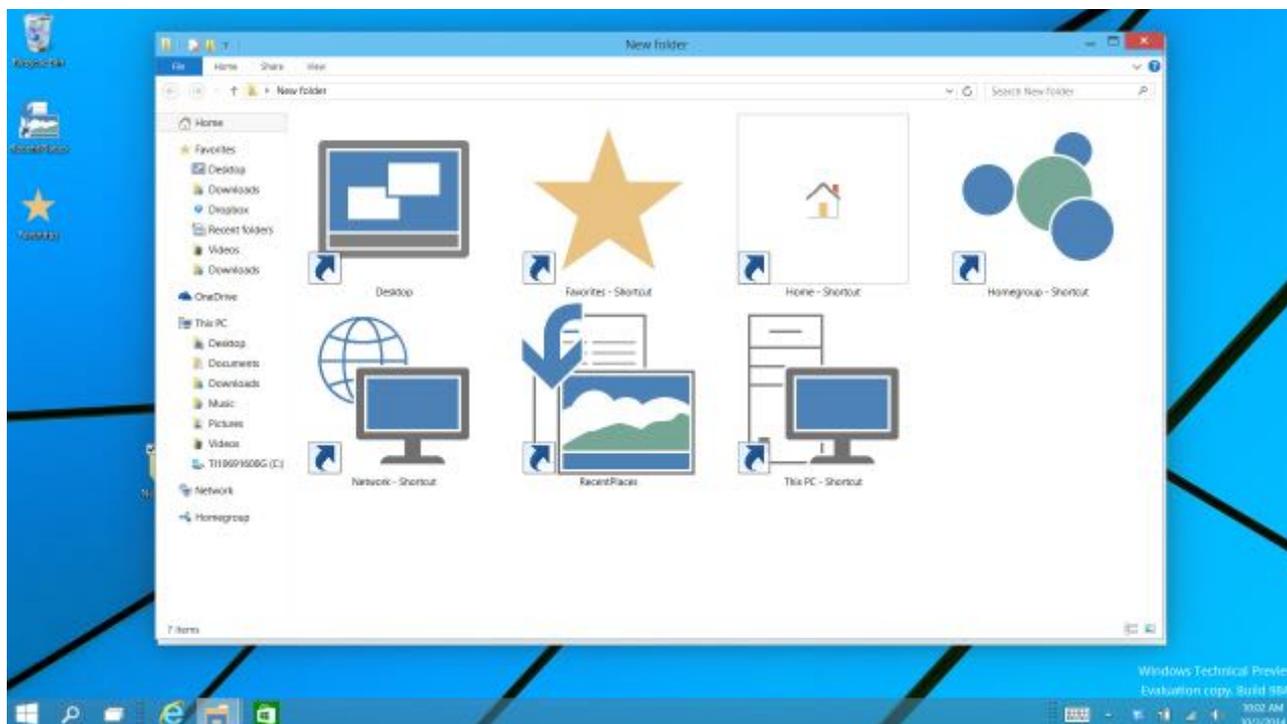
## Open Modern App Command Bar



**Windows 8** Modern Apps 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**.

## Windows 10 Keyboard Shortcuts

Windows 10 is the current version of Windows and makes up for the ill-received Windows 8. It contains all-new shortcuts that weren't around in 7 or 8. If you don't have Windows 10 yet, **you can install it free.**



### 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 2 x 2 grid.

### Virtual Desktops

Previously, you had to utilize third-party tools for this, but **Windows 10 includes virtual desktops.**

- **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.

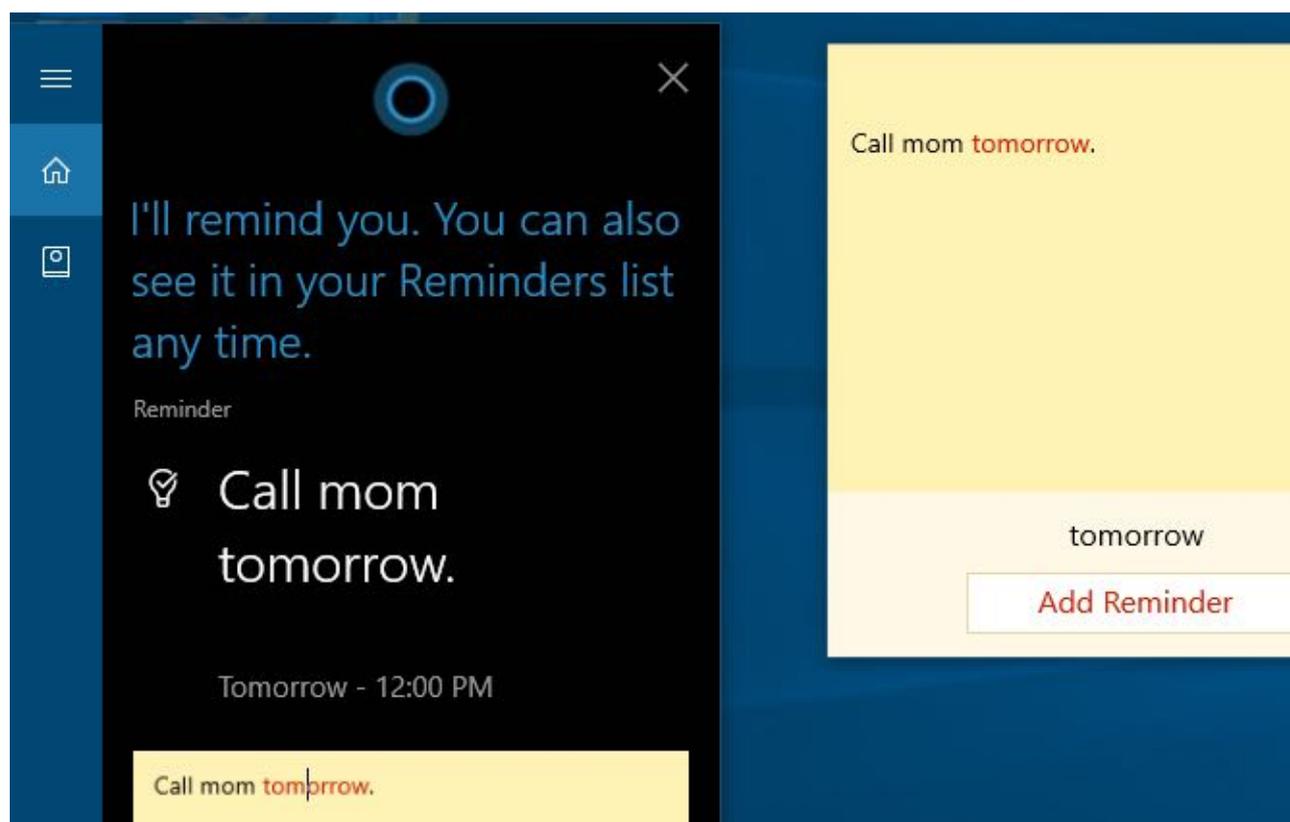
On the subject of virtual desktops, you'll also want to use **Win + Ctrl + D** to create a new virtual desktop environment. **Win + Ctrl + F4** closes your active desktop (remember that **ALT + F4** closes open windows, so this is the same idea), and **Win + Ctrl + Left/Right** will toggle between your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

## Open Settings App and Action Center

Windows 10 no longer contains a Charms bar. **Win + I**, which previously opened the Charms bar Settings, now opens the Settings app. To open the new Action Center, which collects your notifications and provides some handy toggles, press **Win + A**.

## Cortana

Cortana is your digital assistant in Windows 10. You can summon her with **Win + Q**, where she'll instantly be ready to search with text you enter. If you're enabled listening mode, you can talk to Cortana after pressing **Win + C**.



## More Windows 10 Features

You should know a few other shortcuts that don't fit into a category. In any text field, press **Win + Period** to open the emoji panel and select the perfect emoji for your mood. When playing a game, use **Win + G** to open the Game bar, which lets you easily take a screenshot or recording, toggle game-related settings, and more.

## 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 can finally use **Ctrl** shortcuts to edit text when on the command line.

Before you try these, you must enable them. 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 the 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: [Essential Windows CMD Commands You 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](#).



Watch the Youtube video here: [Keyboard Shortcuts Everybody Should Know](#)

## All Browsers

Whether you're surfing with Chrome, Firefox, Opera, or **Microsoft Edge**, these shortcuts will get you around with fewer 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 lots of 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, **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.



Watch the Youtube video here: [Google Chrome Keyboard Shortcuts, Tips, and Tricks](#)

## 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, **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 and posting messages on Facebook and Twitter) use **Ctrl + Enter** as an equivalent to clicking Send or Enter.



Watch the Youtube video here: [Firefox Browser- Best Keyboard shortcuts](#)

## 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 + Plus/Minus** to go in or out. You can also hold **Ctrl** and slide the mouse wheel instead of using the plus and minus 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**, then press **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 we 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 moving around efficiently is essential. [Our guide to Evernote](#) includes shortcuts to ensure you stay in charge of your stuff.
- **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](#).
- **Microsoft Office:** Office apps like Word and Excel have their own set of shortcuts you should know. We've covered [60 useful shortcuts for Microsoft Office](#), including [shortcuts specific to Outlook](#).
- **Photoshop:** Adobe Photoshop has so many tools that hunting around for them by mouse will take forever. Learn [the most useful Photoshop shortcuts](#) instead to work more efficiently.
- **Kodi:** The wildly popular media player isn't without shortcuts. Have a look at [the biggest Kodi keyboard shortcuts](#) if you're a power user.



- **Default Windows Apps:** If you use programs like the Calculator, Paint, and more, you should learn **the best keyboard shortcuts in built-in Windows software**.

## Type Special Characters

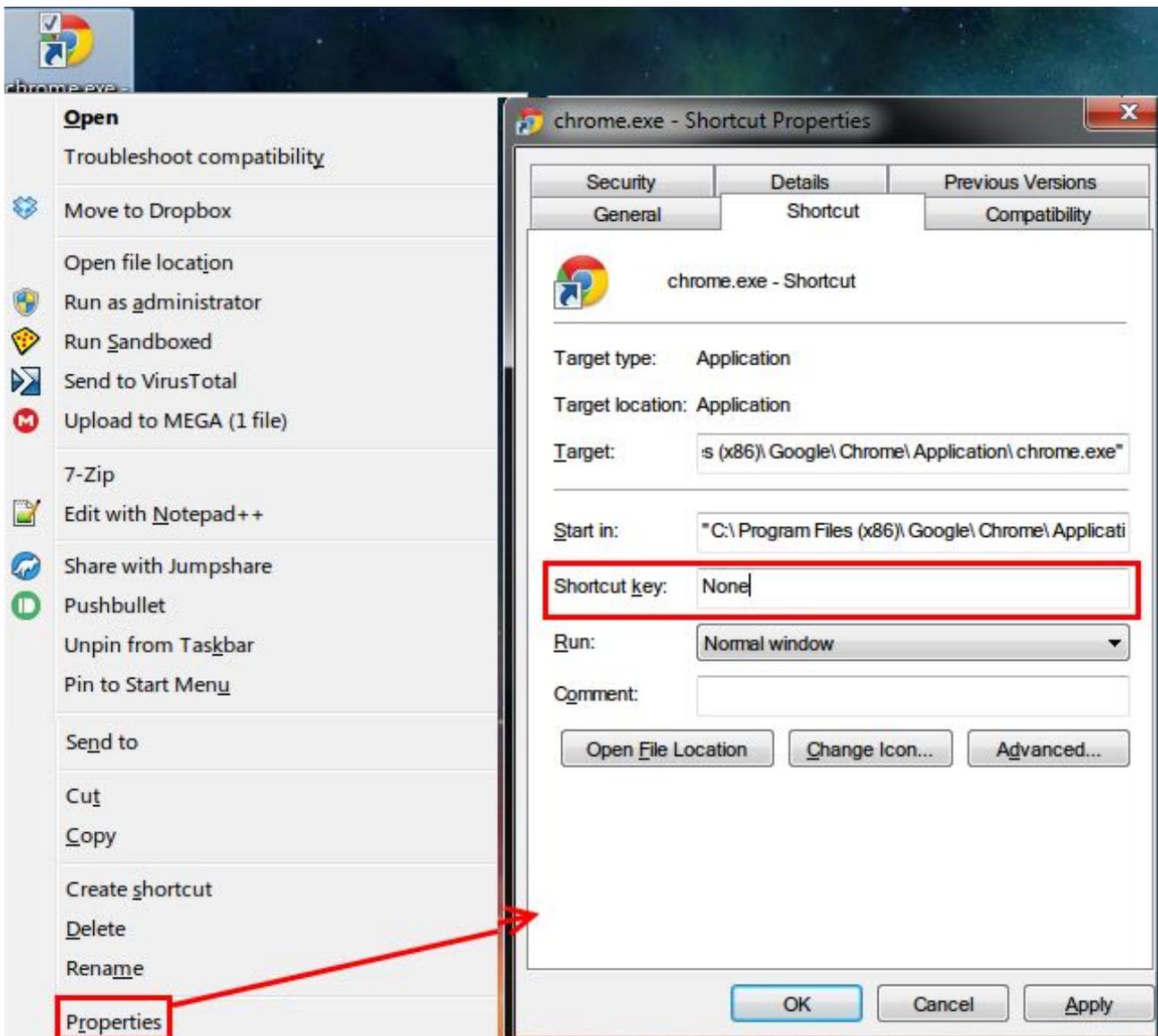
Special characters (such as ; or ®) are necessary to type sometimes, but it's annoying to copy them from the web every time you need one. If you don't want to use a website like **copypastecharacter** to do the job quickly, **using Alt and the numeric key pad** lets you punch these in at any time.

## Make Your Own Shortcuts

If you're not satisfied with the variety of Windows 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.

## Get Some Help From AutoHotKey

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 giving the **powerful AutoHotKey** a shot. It lets you do nearly whatever you want with automation.

## How to Create a Desktop Shortcut

We've dedicated a full article to this topic. Check out **the easiest ways to create a desktop shortcut** in any version of Windows.

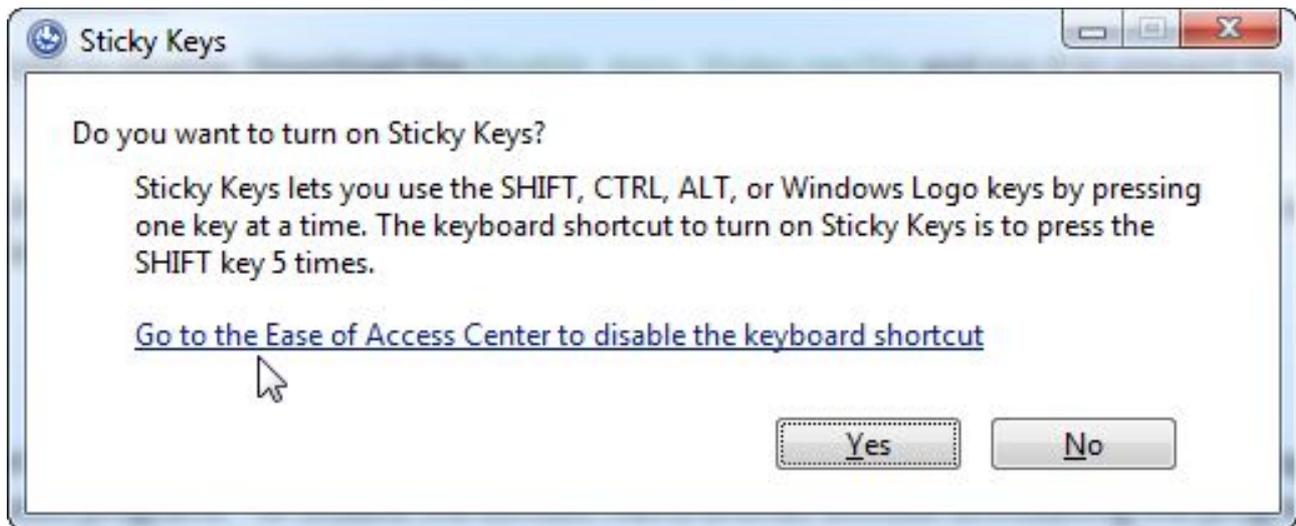
## When Keyboard Shortcuts Go Bad

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

You've made it through our massive list of Windows keyboard shortcuts! Although we compiled a ton of them, there are even more that aren't as universally useful.

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 will be 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](#)**.

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