Jaws Cursor

When you use the cursor to move around a document, you use what JAWS calls the PC cursor. The PC cursor is the vertical blinking line within word documents, or the cursor Windows uses to highlight items while tabbing through a Dialog Box. The PC cursor is the same cursor that someone would use when utilizing keyboard commands on a computer without a screen reader. The PC cursor does not really care how items are laid out on the screen visually; it only cares about how things are organized in the computer code. This means that when you tab through a dialog box, you move through a programmed order. Similarly, this is why on web pages you may go down the left column of a page before reaching some text at the top. This programming allows you to keep hitting right arrow past the end of a line and end up at the beginning of the next line. You don’t need to understand exactly how it works, just know that the PC cursor is the normal cursor you use, and that it is not based on visual layout.

JAWS has an additional cursor, called the JAWS cursor. The JAWS cursor is equivalent to moving the mouse around the screen. Unlike the PC cursor, the JAWS cursor is entirely based on the visual layout of the screen, just as one would encounter it when using a mouse. The JAWS cursor can occasionally allow you to get to items that the PC cursor cannot. Most people don’t use the JAWS cursor very often, but it’s a helpful tool to know about when you encounter a new situation that doesn’t seem very accessible. Additionally, we will come back to the JAWS cursor in unit 11 when you learn how to use JAWS OCR.

Let’s start by seeing how the JAWS cursor reads information.

1. Switch to the JAWS cursor with CAPS Lock p; what does JAWS say when you press up arrow from this point? Note that you will want to switch back to the PC cursor with CAPS LOCK semicolon to write your answer because while if you type while using the JAWS cursor, your text will still be typed where you last left the PC cursor, it will be a lot harder to edit your text.
2. Switch back to the JAWS cursor, and let’s explore the Window a little further. Find the top line of this document; how does it compare to the top line of the document if you navigate there using the PC cursor?

Have you ever encountered a dialog box where you miss some of what is said, but when you try to tab back through it, you either don’t have any choices, or just a mysterious yes or no? I can think of several you should have encountered by this point. In unit 6, you learned the command JAWS key B to read a dialog box to get this information, but what if the information you need is a long name or number, and you just can’t catch it all. This is one area where the JAWS cursor can help.

1. Navigate to the Word Count Dialog box, and use the JAWS cursor to find the number of characters with spaces in this document.

Sometimes on web sites or in applications you encounter buttons or other items that do not respond no matter how many times you press enter or space. These buttons sometimes respond better to an actual click of the mouse. With the JAWS cursor, you can actually click somewhere just like someone would do with a mouse. If you are using a laptop, or a computer that actually has a mouse, all you need to do is put the JAWS cursor where you want, and then click. If you have a desktop computer and no mouse, the top middle two keys of your number pad will work as your left and right mouse buttons. In these cases, it is often easiest to route the JAWS cursor to the PC cursor, which puts the mouse exactly where your cursor already is, then all you have to do is click.