How to navigate Windows using a keyboard

Navigating Microsoft Windows using the keyboard for many commonly performed tasks can dramatically increase your productivity. Also, a situation may arise when the mouse stops functioning or you need to work on a computer without one. The following sections contain many key combinations used to navigate Windows using your keyboard. You can navigate this page by clicking on a link below, or scroll through the entire document and learn all of the methods individually.

Opening a program from the Start menu

To start off, you can access the Microsoft Windows Start menu by pressing the Windows Key on the keyboard or by pressing the Ctrl and Esc keys at the same time.

Because Windows 8 does not have a Start menu, pressing the Windows key or Ctrl+Esc keys shows the Windows Start screen or go to the Windows desktop.

In the Start menu, you can use the arrow keys on the keyboard to move up, down, left, or right in the Start menu. Once you've located the program you want to run, press the Enter key.

You may quickly open a program by pressing the Windows key, **typing the program's name**, and then pressing **Enter**.

Opening a program on the desktop

To run a program with an icon (shortcut) on the desktop, you can move to the desktop by pressing the Tab key on your keyboard. Pressing Tab while on the desktop switches between the desktop, Start, and each of the items on the taskbar. You can determine what area you're currently at by looking for an item that is selected. An item that is selected is highlighted or has a border of dots.

In some cases, you may have to press Tab several times before getting to the desktop icons. Once one of the desktop icons is selected, you can move to other icons by using your arrow keys.

Once the icon on the desktop you want to run is selected, press the Enter key to open that program.

Closing, minimizing, maximizing, or moving a window

Closing a window

Press the **Ctrl** and **F4** keys on the keyboard at the same time to close the current open program or window.

Users may also press the **Alt** and spacebar keys at the same time, then arrow down to the *Close or Exit* option in the menu and press **Enter**.

Minimizing or shrink a window

To minimize a window, press the Windows key and **down arrow** at the same time (sometimes twice).

Maximizing a window

To maximize a window, press the Windows key and **up arrow** at the same time.

Moving a window

Before you can move any window, it must not be maximized. To make the window appear in windowed mode, press the **Alt** and **spacebar** keys at the same time, move to the **restore option**, and press **Enter**. In windowed mode, you can move a window if you press **Alt**+**spacebar**, choose **Move**from the menu, then use the arrow keys to move it.

Closing or changing tabs

Closing a tab

In most programs, pressing the **Ctrl** and **F4** keys at the same time closes a tab.

Switching tabs

To move left to right between tabs in the currently selected window, press the **Ctrl** and **Tab** keys at the same time.

To move right to left between tabs in the currently selected window, press the **Ctrl**, **Shift**, and **Tab** keys at the same time.

Moving between open windows and applications

To move between any open programs on your computer, press and hold the **Alt** key, then press the Tab key. If this is done successfully, a window appears that displays each of the open programs on your computer. Repeatedly pressing Tab while continuing to hold Alt moves between each of the open programs. When the program you want to switch to is selected, let go of both keys to make it your current window.

Navigating between fields and buttons on a window

To move your cursor between objects of fields in a window (such as a dialog box), you'll often use the Tab, spacebar, arrow, and the Enter keys. Tab is usually the default, but if it does not work, try using the arrow keys. If you need to press a button, such as OK or Cancel, press the spacebar or Enter key.

Manipulating and moving through text

Below are the different methods of how you can move through text in a
document without the aid of a mouse. Not only does this help users without
a mouse, it can also save you a great deal of time when working with text
documents.

Arrow keys - Using the arrow keys on the keyboard move the cursor up,
down, left, or right in the document.

Ctrl and Arrow keys - Holding down the Ctrl key while pressing the left or right arrow keys move the cursor one word at a time. Using this shortcut is much faster than only using the arrow keys. Holding Ctrl while pressing up or down moves through each of the paragraphs in the document.

End and Home keys - Pressing the End key takes you to the end of a line or document, while pressing the Home key moves you to the beginning.

Shift key - The Shift key allows you to highlight text. For example, holding down the Shift key while using the right or left arrow keys highlights the text to the left or right. If you hold down shift while pressing the down arrow keys, you highlight one line at a time in that direction.

Finally, you can use the Shift key in combination with the other above recommendations. For example, pressing and holding Shift and Ctrl and using the arrows highlights a word at a time. Holding down Shift and pressing the End key highlights from the current cursor position to the end of the line or document.

Scrolling in a window

Scrolling up or down in a window is often accomplished by using the up and down arrow keys, Page up and Page down keys, or the spacebar.

Right-clicking an icon or other element of Windows

In some situations, you may need to right-click on an icon, text, or other Windows element. To do this without a mouse, select the icon or move the cursor to the text you need to right-click. Then, press and hold the Shift and F10 keys at the same time.

Checking and unchecking a checkbox

Some Windows settings pages require you to check or uncheck a checkbox to change settings. Press the Tab key to cycle through each entry in a settings page. Then, press the spacebar to check or uncheck a checkbox for the highlighted entry.