

What Is The Option Key On A Windows Keyboard?

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If you've connected your Windows keyboard to an Apple computer, you're probably wondering **why there's no option key**. Mac and Windows keyboards are built differently, but they can perform the same functions. While the keys have different names and locations, they will act identically.

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This guide will discuss the option key on Windows keyboards and how you can execute commands on your Mac. We'll also cover how to manipulate the key order to match the default Mac arrangement.

What Is the Option Key on a Windows Keyboard

On Apple computers, pressing the option key allows users to type special characters. It's also used with other keys to execute different commands and activate numerous software features.

There are two reasons why your keyboard could be missing the option key:

New Mac keyboards are designed without an option key. Instead, they have an "Alt" key that acts the same way and enables users to navigate their devices efficiently.

Perhaps you can't spot the option keys because you've connected a Windows keyboard to your Mac. Although this piece of hardware has no designated option key, it works well with Mac products, so you won't have any trouble using your device.

Computer products from different manufacturers usually don't pair well. But Windows keyboards are easy to use and made to fit Mac computers perfectly. Also, they're mass-produced. When searching for a Mac keyboard in your local store, you might learn that most models are out of stock. With Windows models, that's not usually an issue.

Windows keyboards have a familiar layout, so you don't have to relearn where different keys and functions are. If you've been using the same keyboard for a year, you can probably type without looking at the keys. Reusing the old model

will add this sense of familiarity to your new device and spare you from investing in a new Mac keyboard.

This is why users who have switched to a Mac device from their old Windows PC typically prefer to connect the Windows keyboard to the Mac. **As most Windows keyboards are compatible with Mac products**, you can link them with a USB cord or a Bluetooth connection.

Using a Windows keyboard won't limit your Mac experience. You can still use the device and execute commands that require the option key. **The "Alt" key acts as an option key on Windows keyboards** and pressing it will trigger the software events typically done with the option key. The "Alt" key is usually placed next to the Space bar.

Using the Option Key on a Windows Keyboard

Once you know how to trigger the option command with the Windows "Alt" key, **you can perform both an option-click and several keyboard shortcuts.**

Performing an Option Click

When you want to option-click, tap the "Alt" key. The Apple computer will register this when you simultaneously hold the "Alt" key and press the mouse.

Performing a Keyboard Shortcut

If you want to execute a keyboard shortcut that needs an option key, click on the "Alt" button. Your Mac will identify it as an option-click and act accordingly.

Performing a Keyboard Shortcut with Apple Key

Some Mac keyboard shortcuts call for both the "Apple" and option key. In that case, hold down the "Windows" and "Alt" keys. Mac devices with Windows keyboards interpret the "Windows" key as an "Apple" key.

App Menu Items and the Option Key

Different Mac programs make unique use of the option key. Using it will allow you to reveal hidden menu items. Here's how it works with a few popular apps:

Safari

When you press the "Alt" key in the Safari browser, the "Close Windows" option will become "Close All Windows." Similarly, if you hold the "Alt" key when you tap a window's "x" icon, all open windows will be shut down. This action is a built-in feature for all Apple computers and applies to most Mac programs.

Dock

Clicking on the “Alt” key when using Dock transforms the “Quit” and “Hide” menu options into “Force Quit” and “Hide Others.”

iTunes

The “Alt” key modifies the “Create Playlist” menu item into “Create Smart Playlist.” Additionally, holding the option key and tapping the “+” icon at the top of the screen will enlarge the iTunes window.

iPhoto

The option key will revert your toggle preference in the iPhoto app. If your default rotating direction is set to “right,” the option key will reverse it to “left.” Any preference controls you can modify on a Mac will be inverted this way when you hold the “Alt” key.

Mouse Actions with the Option Key

Clicking on the “Alt” button and left-clicking your mouse will cause specific Mac behavior. For example, when you option-click an app that you’re not currently using, the computer will hide the program you’re in. Instead, it will take you to the option-clicked app.

Additionally, if you’re dragging a file, pressing the option key will create a copy of the file instead of transferring it to a new location.

Downloading with the Option Key

If your preferred web browser is SeaMonkey or Safari, the action key allows you to download files to your Mac. When you tap the “Return” option in the web address field, pressing the key will download the file tied to that URL.

When you hold the “Alt” key and click on a hyperlink, you will download the link target.

Downloading files usually involves choosing several options with your mouse, so the option-click method saves time when you want to save an online file.