



Free Tool Friday - AutoHotKey



Intro to Free Tool Friday

At TPM we pride ourselves on helping our customers have the right tools for them to succeed. I am here to introduce an initiative help those in our own company succeed, so in turn we can have more time to better help our customers.

My role in this is to share my experience with free software and computer tools that can improve your workflows with a series called Free Tool Fridays. So be on the lookout for these emails from me in coming weeks as I detail out the [What](#), [Where](#), [Why](#), and [How](#) of different free software.

What is AutoHotKey?

AutoHotKey is a lightweight but very capable tool that anyone can customize their keyboard and mouse inputs with macros to complete common tasks quicker.

Where can I find AutoHotKey?

The AutoHotKey website can be found here: <http://www.autohotkey.com/>

I have also included the files discussed in this email on SharePoint here: [SharePoint - AutoHotKey](#)

Why should I use AutoHotKey?

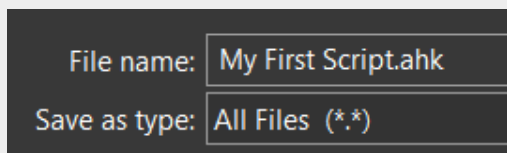
You can save time typing out repeated words or phrases, reduce spelling mistakes, or create keyboard shortcuts to complete common tasks.

For example, you could make it so every time you typed @@ it would automatically replace it with your email address. Or if you type sw it changes it to SOLIDWORKS .

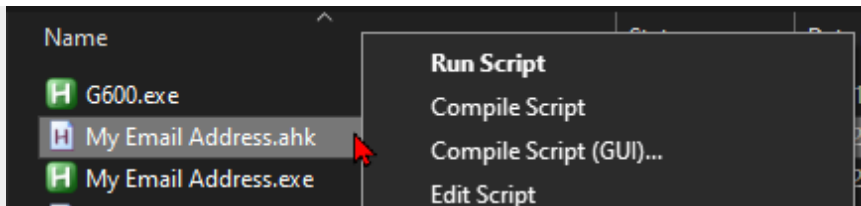
How do I set up AutoHotKey?

First, download AutoHotKey from the website or from the SharePoint link above.

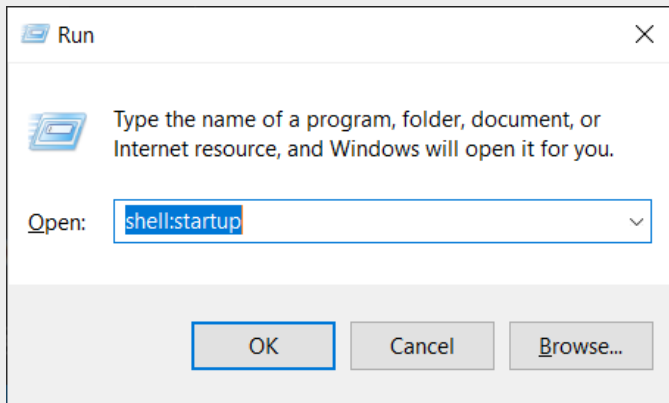
Then, either create or download your first .ahk file. There are some example scripts on SharePoint. You can also open Notepad, type up your macro, then when save it, make sure you select "Save As Type" "All Files" and type .ahk after the name of the file.



Once you have an .ahk file saved, right click on it in File Explorer. From here you can "Run Script" once, or "Compile Script" to create an executable file.



An executable file is useful if you want this script to always be running when Windows is running. Right click on the .exe file and select "Create Shortcut." Now press **Windows** + **R** to open the Run command. In here type `shell:startup` and press **Enter**. This will open a new File Explorer window with a list of files to be run when you login to Windows.



You can then place any shortcut's to exe's here that you would like running everytime you login.

How can I Make My Own Macros?

If you really want to dive in I would recommend reading the documentation here: [AutoHotKey Tutorial](#) If you just want to get started fast, use the files on SharePoint.

Hotstrings vs Hotkeys

Hotstrings is the term for when AutoHotKey replaces what you just typed with something else. First start the macro with `::` then the string you want to type then `::` again, finishing it off with what you want AutoHotKey to type for you.

For example: replacing `@@` with `josephcaswell@tpm.com`

```
::@@::josephcaswell@tpm.com
```

A slightly more complex example is if you want to replace `sw` or any capitalization of `SolidWorks` with `SOLIDWORKS`.

```
StringCaseSense, Off  
::sw::SOLIDWORKS  
::*solidworks::SOLIDWORKS
```


Line 1 ignores capitlization.

Line 2 replaces sw with SOLIDWORKS if you press the spacebar afterwords.

Line 3 replaces solidworks with SOLIDWORKS. This line features `:*`: which means you do not have to press space.

Also note that the `StringCaseSense, Off` applies to the entire macro, and you can string together many different hotkeys or hotstrings all in the same file.

HotKeys are simply keyboard shortcuts to run a task. To code it type in the symbol for the key you want to press, and the `::` and then type the code you want to run.

Key	Code
Ctrl	^
Alt	!
Shift	+
	#

For example if you wanted to press `Ctrl Alt N` to open Notepad, the macro would read

```
^!t::Run, notepad.exe
```