

Video - Hot Keys and Shortcuts (7 min)

Support for hot keys and shortcuts makes the Cisco IOS extremely efficient. I'm using Packet Tracer 6.2. I have a console connection to a 2960 series switch. Instead of using the terminal emulation program to console into the switch, this time I'll click directly on the switch and go to the command line interface tab and press "enter" to get a command line interface. The first hot key and shortcut that I'll talk about is the tab key, or tab completion, for automatically completing your commands. You can use it like this. To get to privileged exec mode, I would normally type the command "enable." With tab completion, you simply type the first few letters of the command, in this case, "en," and press the tab key on your keyboard, and the command is automatically completed for you. This is extremely useful.

Now this will only work if the first few letters are the prefix for only a single command. For instance, if I want to put in the command configure, for configure terminal, and I type "con" and press tab, you'll see that it doesn't work, that the command isn't completed. The command isn't completed because there's more than one command beginning with the letters "con" in privileged exec mode. To see that, I put in a question mark, and you can see that there's two commands that begin with "con," configure and connect. So if I want to use tab completion, I'll need to type "conf" and then press tab, and you can see now the command is completed. For terminal, all I need to do is type the letter "t," and there's only one command that follows configure, or only one argument that follows configure, and that's terminal. So I press T and hit the tab key, and you can see that the command and the parameter, or secondary command, is automatically completed for me. Even better than command completion with the tab key is command shortening. With command shortening, instead of pressing the tab key to complete the command, you simply use the first few letters of the command, and the IOS will automatically finish the command for you. So instead of typing "int" and then pressing the tab key to complete the command interface, all I need to do is simply leave it at "int" and move on with my command. This is extremely useful. For instance, instead of typing the command interface FastEthernet 0/1, which is a very long command to type, command shortening allows me to shorten the command to just "int," F for FastEthernet, and 0/1. The IOS automatically knows that the command that I'm trying to write interface FastEthernet 0/1, and it enters that command for me. You can see how useful command shortening is, and it will save you a lot of time. To cycle through your command history, you use your up arrow and down arrow keys. For instance, I'll use my up arrow, and you can see that the last command that I used was int F 0/1, or interface FastEthernet 0/1.

Now I've only entered one command in interface configuration mode, so there's not a lot of command history to cycle through. If I do a control C on my keyboard, which takes me back to privileged exec mode, and do the up arrow key, you can see that there are two commands in my history, and if I cycle through with the up arrow key, I go backwards in my command history, and if I use the down arrow, I go forwards in my command history. This is very useful for commands that are used repeatedly.

Now let's take a look at some of the hot keys. We already know that control Z will take us back to privileged exec mode. I hold down the control Z keys, and you can see I'm brought to privileged exec mode. Similarly, control C will also exit to privileged exec mode. And it can also be used to abort certain commands. For instance if I type "configure" and T, and then hit control C, the command is aborted. Control A will jump the cursor to the beginning of a line. I'll type "configure" and do control A, and you can see that the cursor jumps to the beginning of the line. If I use control E, the cursor jumps to the end of the line. Control shift 6 is another useful key combination. Control shift 6 will interrupt a command midstream. Let's say, for instance, I mistype the command configure and press "enter." The IOS is trying to translate the letters that I did type into an IP address. Instead of being stuck in this situation, I can simply press control shift 6 and the command is aborted. To see control R work, I've consoled in to an actual 2960 series switch using Putty. I'll press enter, and you can see I have a command line interface. Control R is useful for situations where you've typed a command, and the switch or router receives an event and displays that event to the console, interrupting your command. For instance, I'll type "enable," I'll get to global config mode, and let's say I'm trying to configure interface FastEthernet 0/1. I've typed the command switchport mode, and I haven't finished the command, when all of a sudden, let's say an interface comes up. So I'll plug in a cable to one of my interfaces. It'll create an event on the switch, and we'll see that output is sent to the screen. There it is. You can see that one of the switch ports just came up right in the middle while I was typing my command. If I simply press control R on the keyboard, you can see that the command is retyped. I'll do it again. Control R, and there's the command.

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This is really useful, because now I can finish my command without interruption. So control R and redisplaying a line is a very useful key combination as well.