

# HOW TO SAVE TIME WHEN WORKING ON YOUR COMPUTER

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# HOW TO SAVE TIME WHEN WORKING ON YOUR COMPUTER

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## About The Author

My name is Marcus D. Mercer and I live in the good old United Kingdom.

I have owned / worked with computers for over twenty years and you could say that I have grown up as computers have grown up, particularly home computers, whose popularity has grown, thanks to the World Wide Web.

I have taught people how to use their Personal Computer, on a one-to-one basis, in their own home. And I have also taught the use of a PC to produce music.

I am also a Web Designer, Spreadsheet Developer, manage a church audio-visual presentation team, have produced seven music CDs and I love my soccer, foosball and pool.

Having also worked in various places, I have seen some pretty dismal management decisions that have cost companies time and money.

## Introduction

Do you recognize this situation?

- You are sitting at your desk with a mountain of work to do and not enough time to do it in.
- Your boss wanders along and calmly pops another task onto the pile, or you receive a quick memo to be found in your inbox, asking for yet another task to be done ASAP.
- Your computer seems to be getting slower as the day wears on and when you have to print something, you can't seem to do it quickly enough.
- Worst of all, the mouse that allows you to access most of the computer's functionality seems to slip about and the pointer seems to go anywhere but where you want it to go even if it the latest optical version.
- Frustration begins to boil up inside.

Most office workers have experienced this sort of situation many times and still do. Yet, with today's modern society and its cutting edge technology, you would have thought that things would be better now than they were in the past.

Computers were invented to make time-consuming tasks much simpler and do them in a lot less time. It has been said that; 'time is now so important, time is money.'

A lot of people only use a computer to the extent that they have to, and no further. They may be told how to do a task in such a way, that it actually takes longer than it should, because the person who told them didn't know any better either.

Many of the problems that I mentioned at the start of the book, combined with this, just lead to unnecessary pressure and unhealthy stress. And from a company's point of view, lost profits.

Well, don't let the pressure build any more than is healthy.

Computers may occasionally send you up the wall with their little idiosyncrasies, but they can easily be your friends. Don't forget that computers are machines, machines are technology and technology is here to help, rather than hinder, people's everyday lives.

With this in mind, surely you can make the computer work for you?

These tips are all for use on the PC (Personal Computer) platform running any version of Windows (95, 98, 2000, ME, XP). They will work with just about any program, although there are some that are more specific to Microsoft Office programs, such as Word, Excel etc.

There are a few tips that will work for Apple Mac users, particularly the hardware section, though most of the tips can be translated for the Mac using its own particular key combinations.

The tips and techniques are preceded by appropriate headings and these have been placed in alphabetical order.

## Those Timesaving Tips & Techniques

### BACKING IT ALL UP

Saving is absolutely the most important thing you can do when working on anything on a computer. The data that is saved is generally saved to a nice permanent storage device, which is normally your hard drive.

However, what happens if your hard drive fails? Or your computer is stolen or lost, as can be the case with laptops?

It's a safe bet that you wouldn't want to do all that work again, and an even safer one, that you simply couldn't replicate everything.

To save this potentially horrific situation happening, you will need to backup all your data, certainly the most important stuff.

Until recently, the best, (and quickest), way to backup your data was to burn or write it to CDR or CDRW, blank CDROMS that you could record to. You can still use these and they still have a place in this area of computing, but the best way you can backup a lot of data nowadays is by using Mobile Disks also known as USB storage disks or Pen drives.

These are small rectangular devices that you can easily fit in your pocket. They are:

- Light in weight and as I said earlier, can store lots of information. Currently up to 1 Gigabyte.
- Best thought of as portable hard drives that don't have any moving parts, but can store information, even when there is no power supplied to them.
- Cheap and getting cheaper by the day.
- They will work with USB 1.0 and USB 2.0
- Perhaps most importantly of all they can be used to back data up quickly and easily, no more sitting around waiting for the CD writer to do its job.

They are also getting more and more popular, surely ensuring that they will be in use for a long time to come.

## CLOSING A PROGRAM

Windows is one huge program and others programs run within it. Therefore what's good for the gander is good for the goose. In other words, you use the same key combination to close a program as you do to shutdown Windows:

- Press and hold the Alt key and while holding it, press F4

You may be asked whether or not you want to 'Save the changes' to the file you are working on, if you haven't already done so.

## CLOSING FILES

That fiddly mouse and that even more fiddly looking, small cross in the top right hand corner of the screen, is regarded by some as the quickest way to close a program or file.

Often, there are actually two little crosses to choose from: one for the file and one for the program the file is running in, making for more time-consuming choices. There is of course a better way:

- Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it down, press F4.
- This will close the most active file, (the one you are looking at).

You may be asked whether or not you want to 'Save the changes' to the file you are working on, if you haven't already done so.

## COPY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

This is a super-important function, as far as I'm concerned.

When you select an item such as a paragraph or even just a word, picture or file, you copy these to what is known as The Clipboard. The Clipboard is one of the best friends you will meet in the world of computers, particularly when using them for work.

I mentioned The Clipboard in the introduction example, of how I saved a lot of time when doing a certain task at work. In most instances, The Clipboard can only recall one entry at a time. If you place something else in it using the technique above, it will overwrite whatever was previously in it.

This is worth mentioning and remembering, but the most important thing to remember is that it can store any type of information.

To copy something, such as a paragraph in Microsoft Word or a file, you need to:

1. Select the item, (highlight the text, click on a file etc. see the ‘SELECTING IT QUICKLY’ tip).
2. Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press C.

Once it has been put on the clipboard, you need to paste it to the location of your choice. To do this:

3. Select the new location.
4. Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press V.

You can paste it as many times as you wish and in different programs. For instance, you can copy text from a web page and paste it into a Word document.

**NOTE:** To quickly copy a file displayed in Windows Explorer or My Computer:

1. Press and hold the Ctrl key and click and hold on the required file.
2. Drag the mouse to a blank part of the window and let go of the buttons.

You will get an exact copy with an appropriate file name to match.

One extra point: You should remember that if there is an error in the original item that you copy from, that error will exist in all subsequent replications of it when you paste it into new locations. It is definitely worth making sure the original is correct before copying and pasting.

## CUSTOM KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

There are times when there is no keyboard shortcut available for the task that you have to do, often repeatedly.

For instance, you might like a particular Blog, (if you don't know what a blog is, type the word 'blog' into a search engine such as Google and see how many results come up, it is an abbreviation for web log and is basically an online diary).

Many blogs contain pictures to illustrate a point, when you save it as a web page and refer to the web page when you are offline, the pictures may be missing.

One way round this would be to:

1. Copy the entire web page into a blank Word document
2. Copy the pictures to a folder by:
  - a. Clicking on the picture with the right mouse button
  - b. Clicking on 'Save Picture As' with the left mouse button

- c. Click in the box next to 'Save as type:' and choose Bitmap
  - d. Click in the box next to 'Save in:' and choose a folder to save the picture in.
  - e. Click on the 'Save' button or press the Enter key.
3. Insert them by:
- a. Clicking on the place in the document where the picture will go
  - b. Moving your mouse to the top of the screen and clicking on Insert
  - c. Then scroll down to 'Picture'
  - d. When the next sub-menu is displayed, click on 'From file'.
  - e. Choose the folder where you stored the picture, clicking with your left mouse button and
  - f. Double-click with the left mouse button on the picture's file name to insert the picture

This is a nice long-winded approach and takes ages if you need to insert multiple pictures.

There is no keyboard shortcut for inserting pictures, unless you make your own.

You would use the same method to copy the pictures to a folder and still click on the place where you want the picture to go, but to actually insert the pictures quickly:

1. Click on Tools near the top of the screen.
2. Move the mouse pointer to Customize and after the dialogue box has appeared make sure that the Options tab is showing, if not, click on it.
3. Click on the Keyboard button at the bottom of the box.
4. In the Categories list click on Insert and in the Commands list click on anything, press the 'I' key and scroll down to 'InsertPicture'.
5. Click in the 'Press new shortcut key' box and press and hold the Ctrl key, while holding it press the '3' key. This will be the new shortcut key combination.
6. You then need to click on the Assign key and then Close.

Though this might seem a fairly long process, it doesn't take that long to set up and can potentially save you loads of time.

**NOTE:** Apply this to anything that doesn't already have a keyboard shortcut. When setting the new key combination, make sure that you don't overwrite an existing one that

you use often. You will see what the key combination you have chosen already belongs to under the 'Press new shortcut key' box. This tip can be used with all programs that support it, like the Microsoft Office suite.

## **CUT IT, MOVE IT, ANYWHERE YOU WANT IT**

Just as using Ctrl and C will copy an item you have selected, the Cut function will put selected information onto The Clipboard.

The difference is that the selected information is not left at its original position and then pasted and duplicated elsewhere. Instead, it is removed from its original position and then pasted and can be duplicated elsewhere.

When you Cut and Paste, you are effectively moving the selected item. You do this by:

1. Pressing and holding the Ctrl key, while holding it press X.
2. Select the new location.
3. Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press V.

You can Cut and Paste files, text, pictures and so on, so you can use this method to move a file from one folder to another.

**NOTE:** Items such as text will appear to be erased from the page, don't worry; they are just put on The Clipboard ready to be pasted to the new location.

## **DRAWING MADE EASIER**

Ever tried to draw a circle with a mouse?

I know that you can go into any drawing program and:

1. Select the ellipse tool
2. Click where you want the circle to start and
3. Press Shift or Ctrl while adjusting the size of the circle with the mouse.

You'll get a perfect circle that way, but have you ever tried using just the mouse?

I am asking this question just to get a point across, because the answer is that unless you are an absolute genius, drawing with a mouse unaided is hard, very hard.

So how can you get around the whole 'using a mouse' issue?

Simple, you buy a graphics tablet.

These are also known as digitizing tablets and until fairly recently were the sole domain of professional computer graphics artists and architects.

They used to be expensive, but now you can buy perfectly good ones for your own computer for very reasonable money. They often come with their own software, and are excellent for editing photographs and doing many other fiddly jobs.

## FINDING THINGS 1

In a lot of programs, but not all, you can use a facility call Find.

This is a very useful, timesaving tool that is also present in all the various incarnations of Windows itself, (95, 98, 2000, ME, XP).

If you are in a program such as Microsoft Word:

1. Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press F.
2. This will display the Find and Replace dialogue box.
3. If it isn't already on the Find tab, click on it to display a simple box that you will use to type the word or words that you are looking for.

As an example, imagine that this ebook is a Word document and that you would like to find this tip about findings things.

You would:

1. Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press F.
2. This will display the Find and Replace dialogue box.
3. Type 'Find' or 'Finding' into it and press the 'Find next' button.

This button is called the 'Find next' button because Word might find the word 'Find', before this particular tip. This is because Word looks through from the start of the document until it finds the word you typed into the box. It will also find it if it is part of another word, such as 'Finding' or 'Findings' and will highlight the part of the word that you typed in the box.

You can alter options such as 'Find whole words only' and 'Match case', by clicking on the 'More' button.

**NOTE:** Another way of displaying the 'Find and replace' dialogue box is to press F5. This will, by default, open on 'Go to' so you will need to click on the 'Find' tab. 'Go to' is great for going to different pages in a document or whatever item you choose, (it could be a cell in Excel), simply by typing it in.

## FINDING THINGS 2

I mentioned in FINDING THINGS 1 about Windows and its own Find function.

The quickest way to get to this is by:

1. Pressing and holding the Windows logo key, (often situated next to the Alt or Ctrl key).
2. While holding it press the F key.

The Windows Find function is different to the other, previously mentioned, Find function, in that it helps you to look for files on your computer.

You get Windows to look for a file using its name or the date it was created or modified.

**NOTE:** It is also great for finding a number of files between certain dates, and for the occasions when your boss might ask you to print the last document they were working on and don't tell you the name of the file, even though they just logged off.

## FOLDER TEMPLATES

Later in this ebook, there is a tip called 'ORGANIZE TO FAMILIARIZE', which looks at ways to avoid the harrowing experience of looking through a seemingly endless list of files for a particular file that you need in a hurry.

I explain how to create a folder for each category or subject of a file.

If you are in any kind of business, you need folders arranged in such a fashion that makes it easy to find that particular letter or invoice, especially if you are on the phone to a client at the time.

Such organization of folders takes time, here's a nice tip:

When you are dealing with different clients, you will normally have the same kinds of files in the same kinds of folders for each one. So if you have a client folder with a 'Letters' folder, an 'Invoices' folder, an 'Estimates' folder and so on within it, you could create a 'folder template', instead of setting up the same arrangement of folders again and again:

1. Copy one of your client's folders, the easiest way to do this is:
  - a. Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it
  - b. Click on the folder you wish to copy with the left mouse button and hold it down.

- c. While holding the left mouse button, drag the file to a blank part of the window you are in.
2. A new folder will appear with the original name of the folder copied but with 'Copy of' preceding it.
3. Change the name of the folder to something like 'Client Template' by
  - a. Clicking on it with the right mouse button
  - b. Moving the pointer down to 'Rename'
  - c. Clicking with the left mouse button and typing in the new name
  - d. Press the Enter key.
4. Now go into each sub-folder such as 'Letters' and
  - a. Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it press the A key
  - b. This will select all of the files within the folder, press the Delete key and
  - c. Click 'Yes' to the dialogue box that appears.

This will create a fresh, empty, template arrangement of folders that you should keep empty.

Whenever you have a new client, all you have to do is follow steps 1 to 3 above, copying the 'Client Template' folder, naming the new client folder appropriately and saving all future files into their respective folders that are contained within it.

## FORMAT IT QUICKLY 1

Good old Formatting, the art of taking boring black on white text or cells and turning them into something more presentable.

Formatting is about how something looks, whether it's turning text red and bold or filling a cell in Excel, a nice yellow colour.

If you have spent any time at all formatting something, you will know how much time it can take, particularly if it is to be presented to other people in some way.

It helps to have an artist's eye when formatting, but if you just want to do the necessary emboldening, underlining, italics etc. you could do worse than use these keyboard shortcuts: (You need to select the text or picture before using these.)

1. Press and hold Ctrl and while holding it press B. This will turn emboldening or **BOLD** on or off.
2. Press and hold Ctrl and while holding it press U. This will turn underline on or off.

3. Press and hold Ctrl and while holding it press I. This will turn *italics* on or off.
4. To center some text, press and hold Ctrl and while holding it press E.
5. To left-justify some text or picture, press and hold Ctrl and while holding it press L.
6. To right-justify some text or picture, press and hold Ctrl and while holding it press R.

## FORMAT IT QUICKLY 2

Another way of saving a huge amount of time, when formatting Word documents or Excel spreadsheets etc., is to make full use of the Format Painter.

The Format Painter will copy any formatted cell or text to any cell or text that needs to look exactly the same.

Rather than choosing the right colour, size of font and so on, all over again, you can 'paint' an example of the format you want, onto the appropriate text etc.

Let's say, for example, that you have just spent a while making a sub-heading in a Word document look pretty, turning it from dull black to a nice sized, interesting looking font, coloured dark orange and underlined, (if you like that sort of thing).

You have many other sub-headings that you would like to look the same. This is what you would do:

1. Select one of the words in the original sub-heading, (look at 'SELECTING IT QUICKLY' if needs be); this will be used as an example of the format you want to copy/paint.
2. Move your mouse pointer up to the icon picture of a paintbrush near the top of the screen, (if you can't see it, click with your right mouse button anywhere on the toolbar underneath 'Help' and left-click on 'Standard' when the menu pops up or click on the two arrow heads (>>) and double-click on it from the menu that pops up).
3. Double-click on the icon, (if you haven't already done so).
4. Move the pointer, which has changed to a paintbrush with an 'I' to the right of it, down towards the next sub-heading.
5. Click with the left mouse button at the start of the sub-heading and hold the button down.
6. Now drag the pointer across to the end of the sub-heading and let go of the mouse button.

Hey presto! Your sub-heading now looks the same as the first.

Because you double-clicked on the paintbrush, you can apply the format to as many sub-headings as you like, using just steps 5 and 6.

When you have finished format painting:

1. Move the pointer up to the paintbrush icon.
2. Click on it once with the left mouse button. This will turn it off.

Don't forget that you can use this technique with anything that you can format.

## **HELP ME!**

It can be necessary, particularly in complex programs, to ask for help. Most programs come with help files, (thankfully).

In most cases, you can access the help file, simply by pressing the function key, F1.

For me, the quickest way to find the help you are looking for, is to:

1. Click with the left mouse button on the Index tab, (if it is not already displayed).
2. Type a keyword appropriate to whatever you need help with, into the 'Type keywords' box. So if, for instance, you would like help with printing, you would type 'print' or 'printing'.
3. Click the 'Search' button.
4. Click once with the left mouse button on the topic in the 'Topics list' that covers your query.

The topic that you clicked on will display in the larger pane of the window to the right.

Another method that can be the quickest, depending on the nature of the help you are trying to find is to:

1. Click with the left mouse button on the Answer Wizard tab.
2. Type a keyword or a short sentence, such as 'save' or 'save a file' into the box under 'What would you like to do?'
3. Click the 'Search' button.
4. Click once with the left mouse button on the topic in the 'Topics list' that covers your query.

You can learn a lot from the Help File.

## HYPERLINKS

Hyperlinks are words or pictures that you click on when you are looking at a web page, that take you to another website or web page.

You can use hyperlinks in most of the Microsoft Office programs, to take you to a file or another place in the document or spreadsheet you are working on.

In most cases, the easiest way to setup a hyperlink is:

1. Click with your right mouse button on a word, cell or a picture.
2. Select the hyperlink option.
3. You will be presented with a dialogue box with Insert Hyperlink at the top. In this box, you first
4. Choose the type of item that you want to link to, such as a file or place in a document. If, for instance, you were linking to another file, you would
  - a. Select it in the 'Link to:' section, then
  - b. Click on the 'File' button underneath 'Browse for:' and look for the file you want to link to.
5. It is then simply a matter of double-clicking on the file with your left mouse button and clicking OK.

Whenever you click on the hyperlink you will be taken straight to the file or place in the file you are in, without having to search for it in Windows Explorer etc.

**NOTE:** This technique is very useful if you work with databases and need to see a clients file quick sharp.

## MACROS

Macros rock!

They say that knowledge is power and if you know a bit about macros, you sure have the power, especially when it comes to computers, My [Golf Scorecard](#), [Weather Records](#) and other spreadsheet applications wouldn't work without them.

The entire Microsoft Office suite of programs allows the creation of macros and there are also other programs that can use them.

Basically a macro is a set of instructions that the program will carry out by pressing a button.

It may be a procedure that normally takes you an hour to complete, such as typing out the same text on several pages that could be done in less than a second if you used a macro.

Believe me, it is a great pleasure to do something that would normally be tedious, in next to no time and watch it happen right in front of your eyes.

There are many different applications for macros and therefore many different macros.

You can create your own, download them from the Internet, or hire someone to create them for you.

It is also possible to assign a keyboard shortcut combination to a macro so that it will run when you use it.

To create a simple macro, you can record your actions in a program such as Microsoft Word or Excel, using the Macro Recorder. To see what I mean, (if you own Excel), try this:

1. Point the mouse pointer at the Tools menu near the top of the screen and click with your left mouse button.
2. Move the pointer down to 'Macro' and then when the sub menu displays, click on 'Record New Macro'
3. Type 'Test' into the 'Macro name:' box.
4. Type 'w' into the little box under 'Shortcut key:' and to the right of 'Ctrl+'.
5. Click on OK
6. Now type 'Hello' into the cell A1, (top left).
7. Press the Enter key.
8. Again, move the pointer to the Tools menu as before and move down to 'Macro'.
9. You should see a solid blue square next to 'Stop Recording' in the place where 'Record New Macro' was. Click on it with your left mouse button.

You have now recorded a macro, which recorded you typing 'Hello' into cell A1. The macro will repeat this over and over again whenever you use the keyboard shortcut, Ctrl and W. To test it:

10. Click on cell A1 and press the Delete key.
11. Press and hold the Ctrl key, while holding it press W.
12. The word 'Hello' should appear in cell A1.

This is obviously an extremely simple example of what a macro can do, imagine if, for some weird reason, you wanted to put the same 'hello' into five thousand cells, a macro would do it at the press of a button and a lot quicker than you would manually.

Just about any task that takes you a long time to complete, when you are working in a Microsoft Office program, can be automated to take a fraction of the time.

Visit [www.mrexcel.com](http://www.mrexcel.com) for more information on macros and how they might be able to help you.

It is beyond the scope of this book to explain a macro in detail.

Meanwhile, here are a few examples of what a macro can be used for:

- Ranking a list: Click a button to put a list of items with values beside them into rank order. For example, sales personnel and how much of a product they have sold.
- Copying information from one place to another: It can be a frustrating procedure copying certain information exactly to another location, set up a macro to enable a click of a button to do it for you.
- Inputting hundreds or thousands of formulas: Very often, the same formula in Excel has to be copied down to many other cells. Some of the references don't refer to adjacent cells, but there is a pattern. Instead of tediously entering the references by hand, a macro can do it in a second.
- Complicated counting: Excel can count using formulas, but sometimes the counting process can be more complex. Use a macro instead.
- Reporting: The whole process of reporting, particularly in Excel, can be executed with the click of a button.

## NAVIGATING DOCUMENTS

You can use macros, (see above), to navigate and find your way around a document or spreadsheet by using on-screen buttons, but you can get around just fine without them, in most situations, by using simple keyboard shortcuts:

- With the cursor at the top of, say, a letter in Microsoft Word, you might want to go to the end of the letter to carry on typing:
  - Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press End

To do the opposite use the 'Home' key instead, this can save a whole lot of scrolling.

- To get to the end of a line, you just press the 'End' key and 'Home' to go the other way. It is slightly different in Microsoft Excel, to get to the end of a line of cells where each one has something in it:
  - Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press the right cursor key

It goes without saying that this works the other way, and up or down.

If you are in a folder with a lot of files you may find that the 'Home' and 'End' keys work wonders when you don't want to scroll all the way to the top or bottom again.

As an extra tip, you may or may not know that when an icon for a file or program is highlighted, you can just press the 'Enter' key to open it rather than double-clicking it with your mouse.

## OPEN A FILE

To open an existing file quickly, from within a program:

- Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press O.

Also, if you have Windows Explorer or My Computer open in a folder containing files that you may want to open and the program window is only taking up a section of your screen, rather than all of it, you can:

- Click and hold on the file icon and drag it straight into the program window.

This is known as drag 'n' drop. You can also:

1. Click and hold on the file icon drag it down to the task bar, (the bottom-most bar on your screen), and hover the file over the minimized program button.
2. If you hold it nearer the top, the program window will open and you can then drag the icon into it. The file should open in it.

## OPTICAL CHARACTER WHAT?

Ever heard of Optical Character Recognition?

I hadn't until I needed to do a certain task in a hurry.

That certain task was to copy some text from a whole sheet of A4 paper. The text was printed in a traditional Times New Roman font. I had seen that the scanner at work supported something called Optical Character Recognition and it was the Character Recognition part that caught my eye.

It turned out that my initial thoughts about being able to scan the text from the printed page into the computer and being able to edit it in a program such as Microsoft Word were true. Instead of having to type out the entire page of text into the computer, I was simply able to scan it in and do the same job a whole lot faster.

So how do you do it?

Well, almost all consumer scanners sold in electronics stores or on the Internet incorporate OCR these days, even the cheaper ones. (My favourite is probably the Hewlett Packard range.)

If you already own a scanner and cannot find OCR anywhere in your scanner software, you could do worse than try <http://www.simpleocr.com/>, they offer a free OCR software solution.

The method is simple:

1. You place the printed sheet onto the scanner bed, (normally face down).
2. Start your scanning software, (either by double-clicking on the program's icon or moving the pointer to Start, then Programs and clicking on the relevant program).
3. The first thing the software will do when it has finished loading, is to do a 'Preview Scan'; this will scan the whole sheet that you placed on the scanning bed.
4. You will normally have to select the type of scan that you wish to achieve at this point, such as: Photo, Black and White picture, Colour picture etc. The type that you want is normally called Text, or OCR Text.
5. You then have to select the area of text that you would like to scan. You normally just have to drag a rectangular shape that borders all of the text with your mouse, which you size by holding the mouse pointer over a border line until it displays as a two-way arrow, then hold the left mouse button down and drag to the size you want.
6. All you have to do now is select where you would like the scan to be sent, (I normally send it to Microsoft Word or Wordpad), and click on 'Start Scan' or similar button.

When it has finished, Word will start a new file with the text that you scanned in it. You can then change it to your heart's content just as if you had typed it!

I have found that OCR works well with Times New Roman, Arial and other simple looking fonts. The basic rule of thumb is to not use fonts that are too 'flowery' or complex, as the OCR won't interpret the characters in the right way.

I use OCR on a weekly basis and I cannot begin to workout how much time it has saved me.

**NOTE:** OCR results will vary slightly according to the make of scanner and software. Oh and OCR doesn't seem to like *italics* much.

## ORGANIZE TO FAMILIARIZE

When you are creating a lot of files, it is a good idea to keep them on the hard drive in a nice organized fashion.

A lot of people will simply save their latest Word document, for example, straight into the default My Documents folder and think no more about it.

This is fine, if you only have a few files, but what happens when you have built up quite a sizeable number?

It does seem easier when saving a file, to ‘dump’ it into the nearest folder, (as I say, normally My Documents), but ultimately it always turns out to be a false economy, time wise, as you soon find out when you urgently need a file and it is somewhere in amongst the crowd of files when you desperately look through them in the ‘Open’ dialogue box.

Even worse, you can’t remember the exact file name of the file you’re looking for.

The best way to avoid storing up this kind of future time hog is to create a folder for each different type of file category.

I myself, create folders within the My Documents folder that contain files relevant to a certain subject.

So all invoices are saved into a folder called ‘Invoices’, all letters on a certain subject go in their own folder, etc. etc.

To create a folder within My Documents you have to:


1. Click with your right mouse button on any blank area inside the My Documents folder.
2. Move the mouse pointer down to ‘New’ and when the next sub-menu is displayed,
3. Move the pointer over to ‘Folder’ and click with the left mouse button.

You will then be presented with an icon of a new folder with the words ‘New Folder’, highlighted beside it.

Just type an appropriate name for the folder and press the Enter key.

When you save any future file you can now choose this folder when you click on the ‘Save in:’ box at the top of the Save As dialogue box, (see the ‘SAVE AS – REFERRING TO THE PAST’ tip).

You can also create a new folder from within the Save As dialogue box:

1. Make sure that the 'Save in:' box says My Documents or something similar and
2. Click on the  icon and type an appropriate name in the 'New Folder' dialogue box.
3. Click OK and when you have done so, you will be placed straight into the folder you have just created
4. Type the new file name as usual; click Save and your file will be saved in the new folder.

Using this tip can potentially save you more time and stress than you can imagine.

## PRINT IT

Another way of avoiding using the mouse to home in on a fiddly little icon, is to use a keyboard shortcut to do it instead.

- Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press P.

This will open the Print dialogue box and allow you to select the options you want, before pressing Enter to start printing.

## PRINT IT QUICK

Another money saving as well as a time saving technique is to select the Draft option in the Print dialogue box, if it is offered.

Most printers offer this option but setting it varies according to the make of printer.

It allows you to print the same file, such as a Word document, in a way that you can still read but uses half the amount of ink or toner than the normal setting would. Because it uses less ink or toner, it also prints much faster, handy if you need to print out many pages of information fast.

**NOTE:** If your document has any black and white or grey pictures in it, don't naturally assume that only the black/monochrome cartridge will be used to print it.

Very often the colour cartridge is called upon to mix its colours to create the black or grey required for the pictures.

To avoid this, try to select the 'Print in Black & White' option if it is available.

Ink cartridges and toner is expensive enough, without using it unnecessarily. This tip applies to normal or draft printing.

## SAVE AS - REFERRING TO THE PAST

Lets say that you recently sent your first invoice to someone, having set it all out beautifully in a Word document. The thing with invoices is that, hopefully, you will have to send out many more. One thing you don't want to do is set out each invoice again from scratch.

There are two ways to overcome this problem.

One way is to use a Template; this is where you turn your first invoice into a template for the future invoices, by saving it as a template in the 'Save as' dialogue box, then recall it when you need to, changing the relevant bits of information.

Or you can use the 'Save as' method, which is my particular favourite. All you have to do is:

1. Open your invoice file, (see 'OPEN A FILE' tip, if needs be).
2. Straight after it has opened display the 'Save as' dialogue box, by pressing F12. (In other programs, you may have to point the mouse at 'File', click and move down to 'Save As' and click again.)
3. Give the file a new name, (such as the date of the invoice), type it into the box to the right of 'File name:.'
4. Save the file in the same folder (shown in the box to the right of 'Save in:.' it will normally be My Documents), by clicking on 'Save' or pressing Enter.

When you have pressed Enter to save the file, the file name at the top of the window will change to the new file name you just entered and you can start to change just the relevant bits of information.

Don't forget to save, (Ctrl + S, see next tip 'SAVE THAT FILE'), along the way and at the end of the task.

The beauty of it is that although it seems that you overwrote the first file you opened, you didn't! It is still safe and sound in the folder you saved it in.

**NOTE:** You can use this tip with just about every program available. It's a huge time-saver.

## SAVE THAT FILE

Saving your files is the single, most important task that you can do while working on your Personal Computer.

It is best to save your work often, as you don't know when the next power cut, power surge or accident will happen.

The keyboard shortcut is:

- Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it, press S.

If you haven't saved the file you are working on before, you will see a dialogue box appear, called the 'Save as' dialogue box. You will need to choose a folder such as My Documents to store the file in and type an appropriate filename in the box, (see the tip 'SAVE AS – REFERRING TO THE PAST').

**NOTE:** To display the 'Save as' dialogue box quickly in an Office program, press the function key, F12.

## SELECTING IT QUICKLY

While I like to use the mouse as little as possible, there are times when it has to be used because there is simply no alternative.

I am telling you this because some of the tips and techniques that follow, involve the use of the mouse, as well as keys and key combinations.

These tips and techniques can be applied to most programs and situations:

- If you want to select a whole word quickly you simply double-click with the left mouse button while hovering the pointer over the word.
- If you want to select a whole sentence or paragraph you simply treble-click with the left mouse button while hovering the pointer over one of the words in the sentence or paragraph.
- To select a whole line at once make sure that the cursor is at the start of the line, then press and hold the Shift key, while holding it press the End key. (This is normally found between the main keys and the number pad keys, on a desktop PC keyboard.) **NOTE:** This also works if you have the cursor at the end of the line and you press the Home key instead.
- To select one or more words quickly with keys:
  - Make sure that the cursor is at the start of one of the words and
  - Press and holds the Ctrl and Shift keys together.
  - While holding these keys down, press the right arrow key, keep pressing to add more words to the selection.
  - Again, this will work the other way, if the cursor is at the end of the word; press the left arrow key instead.

- To select everything you see in a window, such as a page of text in a Word document or files in a folder, press and hold Ctrl, while holding it press A. This will 'Select All'.

The selection of one or more words technique will also work with Microsoft Excel, where cells with anything in them are treated like a word in Microsoft Word, however, to highlight a whole line of cells either vertically or horizontally, you must:

- Hold both the Ctrl and the Shift key down and
- While holding them down press the Cursor key in the direction you wish to highlight.

To highlight an entire column or row, click on the column or row headers, i.e. the grey rectangle at the top of the column or at the side of the row with 'A' or '1' etc. in it.

## SHORTCUTS ON THE DESKTOP

For those of you who don't know, the desktop is the screen that appears when the computer has finished starting-up. It has the Start button in the bottom left-hand corner.

The desktop will often have icons on it that allow you to access a program by double-clicking with the left mouse button on them.

Some of them, like Internet Explorer, are put there by default.

You can add these icons, known as 'shortcuts' to your desktop for any program, folder or file that you use frequently.

Doing this is simple:

1. Find the program, (click the Start button, then move to Programs), folder or file that you wish to place on the desktop.
2. Point the mouse pointer over the icon for the program, folder or file
3. Click with the right mouse button
4. When the menu displays, move the pointer to 'Send To' and when the next menu displays, click on 'Desktop (create shortcut)'

A dialogue box will appear confirming that the item has been placed on the desktop, just click on OK.

## SHUTTING DOWN

If you need to shutdown your PC in a hurry for some reason:

1. Press and hold the Alt key and while holding it down, press F4.
2. This will display the 'Shutdown Windows' dialogue box.
3. In Windows 95 – 2000 it is then a case of simply pressing the Enter key. If you are using Windows XP you need to press the right arrow key first to move it to 'Turn off your computer' and then press the Enter key.

**NOTE:** You may need to check that 'Shut down' is selected if you are using Windows 95 – 2000. It is the default selection anyway, but a quick glance will make sure that the computer does shut down and not restart or something else.

## SORTING OUT YOUR FILES 1

There are a lot of occasions when you find yourself in Windows Explorer or My Computer staring at a load of icons or a list of all the files that you have stored in a particular folder, such as My Documents.

The first thing I would say about viewing files in a folder, is; if its not in some kind of list form, the best thing you can do is to turn it into one.

It is a nightmare and frankly a waste of time, trying to see a particular file, if all you can see is a bunch of icons representing the files. It might be OK if there are only two or three, but file numbers quickly mount up and before you know it, it's like looking for a needle in the proverbial 'haystack'.

The first thing you should always do when opening a folder, is:

1. Point your mouse pointer to the View menu and click with the left mouse button.
2. Move the pointer down and click on Details.

This will show you a list of all the files and relevant information such as the date a file was last saved, (modified), the name, the type of file and the file size.

You can now see what you have stored in the folder a lot more clearly than a bunch of icons.

There are ways, of course, of making it even clearer to see what's what:

At the top of the part of the window where the files are displayed, you can see the various column headings that I have just mentioned; Name, Size, Type and Modified.

Though its not immediately obvious, these column headings are in fact, buttons. When you click on them they actually do something. If you click on Name, it will sort your files in alphabetical order. The first click will normally sort them in ascending order, or A-Z. Another click will sort them in descending order, or Z-A.

You can apply this to the other buttons, which work in the same way, except that, obviously, the Size button will sort according to a numerical value and dates will be oldest to youngest or vice-versa.

Windows XP does this sorting process very well, clearly grouping files of the same type and so on, so that it would be impossible not to see what's going on.

**NOTE:** If you can't see the whole name of a file etc:

1. Place the mouse pointer over the join between two buttons and it will turn into a two-way arrow with a line between the two arrows.
2. All you have to do is click and hold down with the left mouse button and move the pointer to the right until the column is wide enough.

Also, you should notice that when you return to the same folder at a later date, Windows will have 'remembered' how you left it, so you won't have to go through the whole process again.

## **SORTING OUT YOUR FILES 2**

New files come and new files go. It doesn't take long before you have to delete old files or at least put them in the Recycle Bin. You may also have to move files to a new folder or copy existing ones so that the original isn't destroyed.

This can be a time-consuming process and always feels like one where you feel that you could be doing something more interesting.

The quickest way to get the job done is as follows:

1. If you are going to delete, copy or move selected files, click on the first file then:
2. Press and hold the Ctrl key.
3. When you click on the next file, the file(s) you previously selected will remain selected ready for you to copy, move or delete them.
4. This is most useful if the files that you want to deal with are not adjacent to each other.
5. Go through the list until all the files that you want have been selected
6. Let go of Ctrl and carry out the next action, such as pressing Ctrl and C to copy all of the files, or pressing Delete etc.

**NOTE:** To delete file(s) from your computer entirely, without sending them to the Recycle Bin first:

1. Click on the file(s) in question.
2. Press and hold the Shift key and while holding it, click on the Delete key.
3. You will then be presented with a dialogue box asking you to confirm 'Yes' or 'No'

## **START ANEW**

When you start a program for the first time, some programs, such as Microsoft Word, will start with a fresh new file. Other programs may start with a Wizard, with the option of starting a new file, whether it is a picture, a piece of music or whatever.

Very often you may wish to start a new file while another one is open. To do this quickly:

- Press and hold the Ctrl key and while holding it down, press N.

**NOTE:** In more modern programs, you can change the file you are currently working on by clicking on the button with its name on it, down on the Task bar, at the bottom of the screen.

## **TALK DON'T TYPE**

One of the greatest computer add-ons ever invented, if you can't type very fast, is the 'Talk 'n' Type' system.

These systems have been around for a few years now, yet its surprising how few people actually know about them or even use them.

When they were first put onto the market, computers were slower and people had to talk slowly to 'type' anything in. Nowadays, however, you can talk perfectly normally and dictate to the computer, which in turn will 'type' what you say.

You can put punctuation and even format words, simply by telling the computer to, verbally.

Of course, this type of input system is great if you have lots of Word documents, such as letters and college assignments to do. But it also provides 'voice-activation' of programs and other computer tasks, so you could tell the computer to start a particular program or open a file.

'Talk 'n' Type' systems are not expensive. You should be able to find one for about £22/\$40. IBM's ViaVoice is a safe bet and some deals offer a free headset, so the microphone is 'fixed' near your mouth.

## THE F5 KEY

The F5 key has been mentioned already in this ebook.

It sits nicely in the middle of the Function keys, so I guess this is the reason why it's been chosen for more than one job.

If you were looking at some files in Windows Explorer or My Computer and you had to delete some of them, you will very often see the gaps that they have left. Or if you have added some files while the Windows Explorer was open, the files would not be in the right order if you had the files in a particular folder in list form.

Pressing the F5 key will always refresh a window while it is open, so that it shows only the most up-to-date information, whether it be files, lists or information on a web page. **NOTE:** If you have a folder set up to show files that have been most recently modified, (see 'SORTING OUT YOUR FILES 1'), showing at the top. Pressing F5 will refresh the folder to show those files at the top, where they should be.

Also, click anywhere inside the window that you want to refresh, if you see that the title bar is grey or greyed out.

## UNDO YOUR LAST ACTION

You know the feeling: You just did something on your computer that you think you shouldn't have.

No need to worry, though.

In most cases, if you have made an error or you have done something that you just don't like:

- Press and hold the Ctrl key, while pressing and holding it, press Z.

This will undo the last thing you did and if you press it again, it will undo the thing you did before that and so on.

Some older programs only allow one level of Undo, in other words, only the last action and no further back. More modern programs have multiple levels of Undo.

## **NOT THE END...**

All of the techniques and tips that have been mentioned in this book are designed to save you time, potentially money and sometimes, a whole lot of stress.

Even if you were to use just fifty percent of these tips and techniques at home or in the office, you would save yourself a lot of time and effort, particularly when tasks can become tedious and/or time is of the essence.

I have made it a mission to try and save time when doing things that can potentially waste time and money and eat into quality time that you could be spending doing something much more interesting.

Just remember that computers were invented to help, not hinder and if you use them the right way, they can be great time-savers.