

When I train clients who are new to computers, I like to mention keyboard shortcuts. The basic facts I like to get across at this stage are:

- keyboard shortcuts are a matter of choice – they are an alternative way of achieving something that can be done with the mouse
- there are far too many of them to learn all at once, so don't even try
- a few shortcuts are very useful as they work in the same way in most programs and are often used

The common ones I mention first are:

Ctrl a = Select all (eg all the text of a document or every file in a listing)

Ctrl c = copy (put a copy of whatever is currently selected into a memory area called the “clipboard”)

Ctrl v = paste (put a copy of whatever is in the clipboard into the current cursor location)

Ctrl x = delete (delete whatever is currently selected from the current location but put it in the clipboard)

Note that these shortcuts are executed by depressing the key marked “Ctrl” (the “Control” key) and then, while the Control key is down, touching the letter that goes with it (eg a,c,v,x). These commands can also usually be carried out by right-clicking on the mouse and then selecting the relevant command that appears on the “context menu” that pops up.

I usually advise my trainees not to worry too much about shortcuts to begin with as there are probably more urgent things to learn, but that if they find themselves repeating what seems to be an awkward task there may be a shortcut for it, so it's worth looking.

The moral here, though, is that I should practise what I preach. A few days ago I was having a phone conversation with a fairly novice trainee and it was important that she could navigate back to her desktop so that we could then start a remote control session. No way could she get to the desktop. It started to get quite frustrating. If only I'd remembered that there's a shortcut for getting back to the desktop wherever you are. Simply depress the windows key (the one with the Windows logo on – see image) and then press d. Easy. Repeating the command takes you back where you were before.



So, I think I'll run an occasional item on this blog of a few useful shortcuts at a time that it may be worth committing to memory (assuming your memory is better than mine).

In the meantime, you can find a full list of shortcut keys that use the Windows key at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows_key.

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