

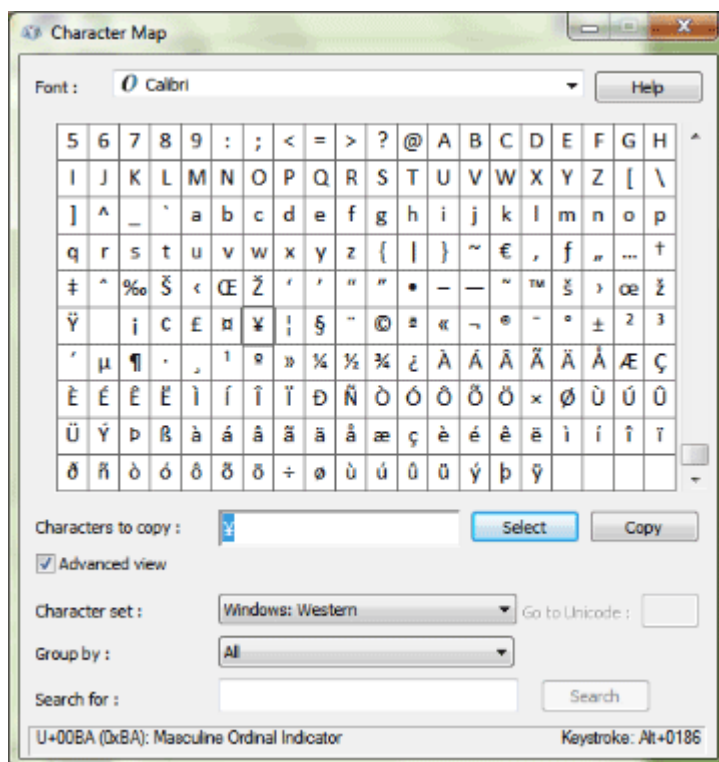
Have you ever wondered how to type special characters that do not appear on the keys of your keyboard? I'm talking of things such as:

è é ç

These are all pretty standard French characters, but it's not at all obvious (in Windows, at any rate) how to type them.

Likewise, symbols such as © (copyright) and ¥ (yen) may also be needed from time to time.

These characters, and many others, are accessible from the Windows "Character Map", but you may well need some computer help to find it! Once you have found it, here is the Character Map for the font Calibri in Windows 7. It is very much the same in Windows XP and Vista. Note that some fonts (like the one illustrated) contain more characters than can be contained in the fixed-size window, so there is a scroll bar at the right.



It can be a little bit tricky to find the Character Map and a bit tricky to use it until you know how it works, so let's take those as two separate tasks:

1) Creating a Shortcut to the Character Map

There are several ways to launch the Character Map (see, for instance, [my blog on Run Commands](#)), but the easiest thing to do is to create a shortcut on your desktop. The Character Map will then be accessible at any time by just double-clicking on this shortcut. Here are the steps. They are the same for Windows XP, Windows Vista, or Windows 7:

- 1.1) Go to your Desktop and right-click on a blank part of the screen (your cursor must not be on top of an icon that's already there)
- 1.2) Left-click on the option that says "New"
- 1.3) Left-click on the option that says "Shortcut"
- 1.4) In the space where it says "Type the location of the item:", type in the following:

C:\Windows\System32\charmap.exe

- 1.5) Click on the "Next" button
- 1.6) Type in a name for this shortcut (such as "Character Map") or leave the default name that it offers
- 1.7) Click on the "Finish" button

Your shortcut has now been created. If you double-click on it you should see the Character Map window displayed as above.

As this may be the first time that you have created a shortcut on your desktop it's worth just noting the fact that what we have done here is to place an icon (or shortcut or button - they all mean just about the same in this context) on your desktop that "points" to a program. This means that we don't have to find that program again: we just need to double-click on the shortcut and it will always open that program. The location of the program and its name are contained in the text you typed in (C:\Windows\System32\charmap.exe). There are many ways that you can personalise your computer setup with shortcuts like this and you don't need to be a computer geek or computer specialist to start taking advantage of them. It just takes a bit of computer training and a bit of practice. In most cases it is easier to create a shortcut than in this instance.

2) Grabbing Characters from the Character Map

Back to the main point. Now that we have access to the Character Map we need to know how to use it.

- 2.1) Select your font by clicking the triangle next to "Font:". Note that different characters are available in different fonts.
- 2.2) Select your character(s) by double-clicking on it/them. As you double-click on them you will see them build up in the space next to "Characters to copy:"
- 2.3) Click on the "Copy" button. This will put the selected characters into the Windows clipboard (an area of memory where Windows puts data prior to copying or moving it to somewhere else).

2.4) Return to the program into which you wish to place the special character(s).

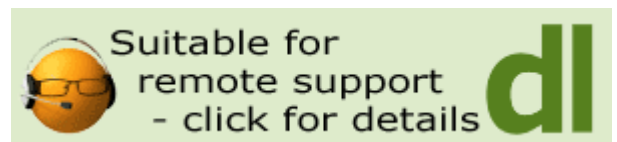
2.5) Type Ctrl v to insert the characters. Note that “Ctrl v” (pronounced “control vee”) means depressing the key marked “Control” or “Ctrl” and, while that key is down, hitting the letter v. If the application you are using has a “paste” command then that will do exactly the same thing. See [my blog on basic keyboard shortcuts](#) for further information on this.

2.6) If you select your special characters from “character sets” that your program can not handle then they may appear in your documents as question marks. If this happens, go back to the character map, tick the box next to “Advanced View” and then select “Windows: Western” from the list next to “Character Set”. Then choose your characters again.

Voilà !

3) Wingdings and Webdings

If you scroll down to the end of the list of fonts (see (2.1) above) you will probably see several fonts called Wingdings, Wingdings2, etc listed at the bottom. These are special fonts that produce entirely different characters that are more like icons than letters. These can be inserted into “normal” text in just the same way as other characters. Here are just a few examples from the Wingdings font:



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