Wednesday 19 March 2003

Boot camp

Bootcamp 266: Word - hints and tips
(Filed: 11/03/2003)

COMPLETE BOOTCAMP ARCHIVE

Top traumas solved by Rick Maybury

- Top tips
- Jargon filter

It’s time once again for our annual round-up of hints and tips for the three most widely-used PC applications, among Telegraph readers at least.

They are Microsoft Word, Outlook Express and Internet Explorer. We begin this week with Word. Most of what follows is for Word 2000/2, although the majority of them also work on Word 97.

Many Word problems are caused by a corrupt "Normal.dot" document template file. To return Word to its default condition close the program and re-name Normal.dot, for example, calling it Normal.old, and a fresh Normal.dot will be automatically created when Word is opened. Normal.dot can be found in: C:\Windows\Application Data\ Microsoft\Templates(Windows 9X) or C:\Documents and Settings\<yourname>Templates (Windows XP).

Be aware that you will lose all of your preferences, custom dictionaries and macros, so make a backup of Normal.dot when Word is running smoothly and use that as a replacement when it goes wrong. You can also copy Normal.dot onto a floppy and use it to transfer all of your settings and auto-correct entries to another copy of Word (it must be the same version) on another computer.

Next, why not take control of your Toolbar? The standard Word layout has a number of shortcomings. Try adding the Work menu icon. This gives you rapid access to documents that you open frequently.

Right-click onto an empty area of the Toolbar, click Customise, select the Commands tab and work your way down the Categories list to Built-in Menus. Select it then go to the Command list and scroll down to Work. Click, hold and drag it onto a Toolbar, and release and close Customise. Click "Add to Work Menu" to add any open document to the list. To delete entries press Ctrl + Alt + - (hyphen), the cursor changes to a thick bar, go to the Work menu, and click on the item you want to remove.

Adding Save As and Document Close icons to the Toolbar are useful time-savers and putting them on the right side of the Toolbar also reduces mouse mileage.

On Customise select the Commands tab and click File under Categories. Scroll down the list in the Commands Windows and drag and drop Save As and Close onto the Toolbar. The Save As button doesn't have an icon so right-click on it, select Change Button Image and select something from the page. You might also want to add to your Toolbars Insert Date and Page Number (on the Insert menu in Categories) and Word Count (Tools).

To remove an icon or menu from Toolbars, open Customise then drag and drop the item onto the desktop.

Keyboard shortcuts save a lot of time but you'll be hard pressed to find much about them in Word Help. To print out a complete list, go to Tools > Macro > Macros, on the "Macros In" drop-down menu select Word Commands. Scroll down to List Commands, click Run and in the new dialogue box that opens choose

Current Menu and Keyboard Settings. This creates a document, which you can save and print. It’s long but you can edit it and use a smaller typeface to get it down to a few pages.

While we’re on the subject of keyboard shortcuts, here are three to remember. When Word does anything unwanted the instant get-out is the undo command Ctrl + Z. Copying and pasting words or chunks of text is made a lot easier with keyboard shortcuts Ctrl + C (Copy) and Ctrl + V (Paste).

If you want to create your own shortcut, or change an existing one, open the Customise menu and click the Keyboard button. Locate the function in the Categories and Commands windows and the existing shortcut will be shown under "Current Keys". To change it or compose a new one, enter the key combination in the "Press new shortcut key" window and click the Assign button.

We’ll round off with a small selection of well-hidden and undocumented features in Word, starting with a way to protect any document with a password. Go to the Save As menu, click the Tools drop-down menu, select General Options and set up your password.

If you want to exit Word quickly and you have a lot of open documents that all need to be saved, press and hold the Shift key while clicking on the File menu. A new item, Save All, will appear.

When faced with a document that contains several different styles or formats you can quickly apply your chosen format to any block of text. Highlight a portion of text with the format you want to copy then click on the Format Painter icon (paintbrush). Now move the mouse pointer to the text you want to change and drag the paintbrush across it.

Finally, Word can generate blocks of random text that you can use for dummy documents. All you have to do is type "=rand()" (without the quotes) where you want it to go, then press Enter. Putting a number inside the brackets, such as "=rand(50)", will repeat the block of text that number of times.

Jargon filter

Format

Embedded instructions within a document that specify the typeface, page layout and any other special characteristics.

Keyboard shortcut

A simple and ideally memorable sequence of two or three keystrokes, used to invoke a frequently used action within a program or application.

Macro

A simple programming function in Word (and many other programs) used to automate frequently used functions.

Return to top

Top tips

If you’ve ever wondered why Word document files are so large, it is due to "Metadata". This is hidden information that contains the author’s name, summaries, revisions, hidden text, previous authors and so on. Metadata can still be recovered, even if the document is sent as an email attachment.

If you are concerned, you can remove Metadata by sending the document as a plain text file, or have a look at Microsoft Knowledgebase, articles Q223790, Q237361 and Q290945 (Word 97, 2000 and 2002).

Next week: Internet Explorer tips