

## Left-Handed Computing

There must be at least dozens, and perhaps hundreds of things nobody ever told you about using a computer. The evidence of this can be easily found by watching someone use a computer almost exclusively with a mouse in the right hand. How much more productive could you be if you incorporated all of the power of your left hand into your computer operations repertoire?

The answer might be; “more than twice as productive.” This is one of those situations where it only takes a few examples to show that adding keyboard shortcuts (most of which are in the left hand) to the power of the mouse more than doubles your ability to get results from your computer. If your left hand had been laying there dormant on the keyboard while your right hand was busy “mousing around”, it’s time to get both sides of your brain in action and make your computer more useful!

Consider the mouse to be the ultimate cursor positioning and selection tool. Think of the keyboard as the best source of copy, cut and paste commands. If you’ve ever had to pull text from one document into another, you know where I am going with this example.

Here’s the drill. After positioning your windows in a way that allow you to see both windows, you are ready to begin. Use your mouse to select the text you plan to pull into the other window, then, use your left hand to do the copy command (that’s Ctrl-C in windows, Command-C on a Mac). Now, use your mouse to position the cursor at the insertion point of the other window and use your left hand to execute the paste command (that’s Ctrl-V in windows, Command-V on a Mac). Do this just a few times and pretty soon, you’ll be thinking of many ways you can combine your keyboard and mouse to get things done in the most efficient manner.

Somebody will ask; “Why isn’t it Ctrl-P to paste?” It’s because Ctrl-V is right next to the C and X in the scheme of things, and Ctrl-P is the print command. Also, you may have noticed that you simply substitute Command for Ctrl, if you are using a Mac.

A few more keyboard commands you can use for file management include; ctrl-n for a new document, ctrl-o to open a document, and ctrl-w to close a window (or document). There are dozens of new keyboard shortcuts in Windows 7, if you have the good fortune to be running that OS on a PC. Of the many things nobody ever told you about how to run a computer, the Windows key (since Windows95), holds many of those secrets. You can search the words “Windows Keyboard Shortcuts” on the internet and you’ll find links to a number of pages that will clearly explain these things. Microsoft’s web page on this subject is very clear, well laid out and easy to follow.

One last secret before we go – you can find all of the keyboard shortcuts you want to learn and use by paying careful attention to the menu selections you routinely use. For many of the commands in those menus, just to the right, you’ll see the keyboard combinations you can use to get the same thing done. That’s one way anyone can add to the skill set necessary to become a more proficient computer user.