

SELECTING TEXT - A COMPREHENSIVE DISCUSSION

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The heading noted above seems like a very simple one, and it's probable that most people feel they have a "good enough" capability in that area. After all, what's so complicated about selecting text? And, there are many people who state that they don't know how to select text, but so what? They've never had occasion to do so.

Often, when helping friends with their computing activities, I often make the erroneous assumption that they are capable in this task. But, when they start asking me fundamental questions about the various ways that I select text, I remind myself that most people haven't learned the basic principles involved.

WHY DOES ONE NEED THIS?

The aspect of COPY and PASTE, or CUT and PASTE can be one of those things that is similar to the following. Before you got onto the Internet, you probably didn't care about the Internet, and had little interest in it. But, now that you're on it, you may often wonder how you ever got along without it. So, if you're not up on the subject of "selecting" text, and copying/cutting/pasting, read the following material and see if maybe you should be learning and using these activities.

UNIVERSAL WINDOWS USAGE

The material presented below is applicable to virtually every Windows program, and every Windows version. Once you learn to use it, you can do so in e-mail, word processors, web pages, and many other places. It's similar to driving a car. Even if you learned in a Buick, the brakes, steering, etc. on most cars work the same way, and you can easily drive another brand of car. So, learning to select, and copy/cut and paste is the same thing.

Some of this material has been covered in an earlier Windows lesson I've presented in Boca Bits. But in this lesson, I'm going into more detail, with more ways to do things, and places to try them out. You can choose the method(s) you like, and stick to them most of the time. Any time that your chosen method doesn't seem to do the job, try one of the others. Some programs will not respond to all the techniques. The techniques presented do not include every possibility. But, they should give you a pretty good start on becoming an expert in this area.

WHERE DOES ONE USE THIS??

One of the most requested uses of COPY and PASTE that I get asked about involves e-mail. You received an e-mail from someone, and there's a section of it that you'd like to send to someone else, or that you'd like to save. In most e-mail programs, you can't easily save a message all by itself, and use it outside of your e-mail program. So, that's where COPY and PASTE comes in. You select what you want to copy, then you copy it, and then you paste it where you want.

But before you can copy anything, you must select it. Your computer isn't very smart in some areas. You know exactly what you want to copy, but your computer isn't a mind reader, and you have to define what you want. As with many things in life, you must specify the items to be addressed, and then do the job.

LOTS OF WAYS TO SELECT

There are many ways to select. Listed below are some of the most used ways. These can involve the mouse, and/or the keyboard.

MOUSE ALONE

1. Click the mouse cursor - where you want to start selecting. Then drag the mouse to the end of where you want to select while holding down the mouse button (this is called "click and drag"). Release the left mouse button, and the section you dragged over should now be selected, as shown by a reversal in color (black with the text in white.)
2. Clicking within a text area - Click twice quickly to select the current word. Depending upon what program you're in, clicking more times can have different results. In WordPerfect, WordPad and Word, clicking three

times will select the sentence, and four times will select the whole paragraph. In Notepad, the only multiple click that works is a double click for the word. So, test things out to see what is available in you're the program you're in.

MOUSE AND KEYBOARD

1. ***Click the mouse cursor*** - where you want to start selecting. Now, hold down the shift key and click the mouse at the end of what you want to select. Presto - it's all selected.

KEYBOARD ONLY

1. ***Position the cursor where you want to start the selection*** (either via the mouse or keyboard commands.) Hold the SHIFT key down. Use the arrow keys to make the selection. Experiment here to see the exact effect of selecting this way. Try all four arrow keys to see what they do. A little practice and experience here can make this method much clearer than I can by discussion. Also play with the HOME and END keys while the SHIFT key is held down. Playing around here can help you to learn much here.
2. ***Select the entire document*** - Hold the CTRL key down while you press the “a” key. This will select the entire document.

OK - SO NOW WHAT??

Now that you know how to select, let's practice something. Go into an e-mail text message that you can access, and select a section of text. Then COPY via hitting the CTRL and C keys. This puts a copy of that material on the clipboard. Now start a new message to someone, and paste (CTRL+V) that material into the new message. There probably will be some extra line breaks in the text. You can edit these out if you want via the delete and backspace keys used accordingly.

Suppose you'd like to save that section of text, but not in another e-mail message. Here's where the “text editor”, or “word processor” comes in. You have two text editors installed with Windows. They are NOTEPAD, and WORDPAD. NOTEPAD is a very basic text editor. WORDPAD has more of Word's formatting features available. Open up whichever you find more convenient (or open up your word processor), and paste the material you've copied, into a blank document there. Edit it if you want, and add in any additional text you want. Then save it. Use a descriptive file name which you'll recognize later, and note where it's being saved, so you can easily find it when you want to retrieve it.

The next thing you should try is copying some text from a regular web page. This can generally be done, by the usual selecting, and then copying. Experiment here to get a better feel for what can be done. Depending upon how the web page was designed, selecting and copying there can be more difficult. But, once again, play around to see what you can accomplish

CONCLUSION

If you have successfully gotten this far, then you're well on your way to bigger and better things. ***The way to continue learning is to practice and experiment.*** If you got lost with things like NOTEPAD et al, then you must have missed the earlier lessons here, and have some more learning to do. Check back to review those areas if you need to. Like all areas of life, things must be learned serially. It's just not possible to present all the previous material again. So, I have to assume that have made it through those areas.....Good luck, and have fun learning - that's what it's all about.

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