HOW TO CREATE KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Any time you open a Windows app by rolling your mouse pointer over to an icon or lift your finger up and tapping on a tile, you're wasting time. The fastest way to launch any program is with a keyboard shortcut you can hit without even lifting your hands off the homerow. Windows allows you to create custom shortcuts for any program, whether it's a traditional "desktop" app, a modern app, or one of Windows 8's "metro apps." Here's how.

Method 1: Create a Desktop Shortcut

1. Open a command prompt window. You can get there by typing "cmd" into the Search box, right clicking on Command Prompt, and selecting "Run as administrator."

2. Type *explorer shell:AppsFolder* at the command prompt and hit Enter. A window with a list of all your apps appears.

3. Right click on an app and select *Create shortcut*. It may be easier to find your app if you change the view setting to "detailed list" so you can see all the icons in a single column.

4. Click Yes when asked if you want the shortcut on the desktop. A new shortcut icon appears on your desktop.

5. Right click on the new shortcut icon and select Properties.

6. Enter a key combination in the Shortcut key field. The combination must be CTRL + ALT + a letter / number.

7. Click OK.

Note: Remember not to use the same key combination twice. Also note that some programs use CTRL + ALT + keyboard shortcuts that would also launch if you were in their windows. For example, in Photoshop Elements, CTRL + ALT + I brings up the resize menu.

Method 2: Use the Start Menu

If you're creating a keyboard shortcut for any application that installs via direct download rather than Windows Store alone, you can create the shortcut directly from the Start Menu. By using this method, you can avoid creating a separate shortcut icon on the desktop.

1. Open the Start Menu.

2. Navigate to the icon for the app you want.

3. Right click and select *Open file location*. A window opens with a shortcut icon. If Open file location doesn't appear on the menu, this is a modern or universal app and you'll have to follow method 1 above.

4. Right click on the shortcut icon and select Properties.

5. Enter a key combination in the "Shortcut key" box.

6. Click OK.