

5 ways to use your mouse more effectively

For my readers that don't use your mouse's right button, you really should. Right-clicking on practically anything in Windows or your favorite programs can bring up a list of helpful options you wouldn't see otherwise. Once you start right-clicking, you won't stop!

When you combine your mouse and the keyboard, however, things really get fun. Here are a few of my favorite mouse tricks you can use. Almost all of them work on laptop track pads, too!

Double (or triple) your clicking, double your fun: The double-click has been around for ages. I bet you use it every day to open programs and files. That's not all it can do, however.

Say you're writing a document and want to select a word. Instead of holding down the left mouse button and dragging the cursor to select a word, you can simply double-click on the word to highlight it.

Then you can right-click on it for more options, or use one of your helpful new [keyboard shortcuts](#).

Instead of double-clicking, try a triple-click! It highlights the entire section or paragraph you're working on. You don't have to triple click rapidly - most programs can figure out what you want.

Give it a try and you'll find it beats clicking-and-dragging any day.

Shift into high gear - What if you need to highlight more than just a paragraph of text? You can combine the Shift key with your mouse to quickly highlight any amount of text.

Just click at the start of the text you want to highlight. Hold down the Shift key and click at the end of the text you want to highlight (you don't have to press Shift until you're ready for the second click). Then let go of the Shift key.

All the text you want will be highlighted and it just takes a second.

Or, double-click to select a full paragraph of text. Then hold the Shift key and start single clicking other paragraphs. They'll be highlighted as well.

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Holding the Shift key and clicking works with anything else that you might want to highlight, from cells in a spreadsheet to Windows icons and files. Select the first item, hold Shift and then select the last one. It's that easy.

Take full control of your clicks - What if you want to highlight words, icons or spreadsheet cells that aren't right next to each other? With the Shift key, you're going to grab them all.

That's where the Control (Ctrl) key on your keyboard can save you. In Word, hold Ctrl and start double-clicking on words to select them.

For files in Windows, hold Ctrl and single click on each item you want. You can release the Ctrl key at any time and then press it again to add more items.

Did you accidentally highlight something you didn't mean to? Hold Ctrl and click the highlighted item again. It will be deselected.

In fact, you can highlight an entire group of items using Shift + click and then deselect individual items using Ctrl + click.

In Word and some Web browsers, you can hold the Ctrl and single click on a word to select an entire sentence. Or, as I mentioned above, you can hold Ctrl and double-click to select individual words.

In many programs, including Web browsers, you can zoom text by holding the Ctrl key while moving your mouse's scroll wheel. Just push the scroll wheel up to zoom in and down to zoom out.

Not just for scrolling - Your mouse's scroll wheel can do so much more than move the page up and down. It just told you how to use it for zooming text.

Did you know that it also acts as a button? Press down on the scroll wheel and you'll hear a click. This is commonly called a "middle-click."

The middle-click does different things in different programs. For example, in your Web browser, hover your mouse cursor over a link and middle-click. This automatically opens the link in a new tab.

This is much faster than right-clicking on the link and choosing "Open in a new tab." You can also middle click on an open tab to quickly close it.

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Middle-click on a blank spot on the page and it brings up a navigation tool. You can then move your mouse to navigate the page for more controlled scrolling.

Try experimenting with middle-click in some of your favorite programs to see what happens.

Customize your mouse - The middle-click acts as a third button, but some mice come with even more buttons. If you have a mouse with multiple buttons, it should come with software that helps you customize it.

You can change the way a more generic mouse works, too. Just go to Control Panel>>Hardware and Sound>>Mouse. Here, you can change what the buttons do, how fast they respond and all sorts of other details.

You can even change the way your mouse cursor appears on screen. I know many people find the larger cursors much easier to use.

Now that you've graduated from mouse and keyboard shortcut academy, it's time to take it to another level!

- Microsoft has plenty of keyboard shortcuts, but you can program your own. [Make up your own shortcuts with this free program.](#)
- A wireless mouse comes with all sorts of perks compared to a wired one. [Find out if a wireless mouse is right for your computer.](#)
- As much as you use them, your mouse and keyboard can become a hotbed for germs. [Clean your mouse, keyboard and other gear.](#)

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