Excel 2016 Mouse Shortcuts and Techniques

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1. Mouse Tips

This session will focus on mouse related shortcuts. This involves using the mouse with

- the left mouse button
- the right mouse button
- the Ctrl key
- the Shift key and
- the Alt key.

Practice!

Some of these techniques can take time and practice to master. It is **ALWAYS** a good idea to practice on "dummy" data rather than live data, or at least work on copies of your live data. They can become second nature with practice. The earlier you start using them, the quicker you will remember them.

Use Save As (F12) to Save a file with another name. Some changes to spreadsheets may cause problems that are not immediately obvious so it pays to be careful and have a backup.

In Excel 2007 and later versions you can **UNDO** actions after you Save**.**

Important Cursor Shapes

It is important that you use the correct mouse cursor when using the mouse in Excel

There is an arrow cursor when pointing at the borders of a cell or selected range. This arrow is used when moving (dragging) or copying. Be very careful using this cursor shape by itself as it can cut and paste which can cause #REF! errors (reference errors) in formulas. See later in the manual where you can use it to copy and paste, a much safer option.

The bottom right hand corner of a cell or range has a small plus sign. This is called the Fill Handle. The Fill Handle is used for dragging to copy or increment.

There are other cursor shapes around the screen and it is very important that you use the right cursor shape for the right task. If something isn't working with a mouse technique it will most likely be because you are using the wrong cursor shape

Using the Cursors

When using the three most common cursors it is a good idea to force yourself to use different parts of the cell for each cursor. See the image below. Note that all three cursors appear close to the bottom right corner of the cell. This corner should only be used for the Fill Handle (small black plus sign). To use the other two cursor shapes use different parts of the cell/range.

The arrow cursor - use the middle of one the borders.

The Fill Handle - it only appears on the bottom, right corner.

The large plus sign - use the middle of the cell.

Most problems I see when people are learning Excel involves using the wrong cursor shape, and it is usually in the bottom right corner that the problem arises.

MS Office

Many of these techniques will work in the other MS Office applications

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2. Right Clicking

Using the right mouse button can make doing most tasks easier. If you don't already use it then now is a good time to start. You will find it will save you time and effort. Right clicking also works in all other Windows programs.

When you right click you will see a context-sensitive menu based on the part of the screen you click on.

Not all parts of the screen will give you a shortcut menu, but most do. Right click menus contain commonly used options for the item/area selected.

In the grid of the Excel screen you need to have the cursor shape to be able to Right Click.

Useful Right Clicking areas

- **Cells** – Copy, Paste, Add comments, Sort and Filter and Format
- **Rows / Columns** – hide and unhide
- **Sheet tabs** – hide, move and copy, view code and change sheet colour, protect sheet
- **Sheet navigation buttons** (left of the sheet tabs) - list of sheets.

In many cases the right click menu is the quickest way to access these operations.

The right click options have been expanded dramatically in Excel 2010.

See the screen shot left for the extra options now available.

The format options are shown above the menu.

This right click was after a copy, so the paste options are all listed.

Sort and Filter are listed.
Note: the ability to Sort and Filter by Colour is now available.

There is yet another way to use the right mouse button discussed later in the session.

3. Left Mouse Button

Single clicking the left mouse button involves selecting items or icons in Excel and there aren't many extra shortcuts associated with that. There are many shortcuts when you use a keyboard key with the left mouse button.

Ctrl Key

Selecting Multiple Ranges

The Ctrl key allows you to select more than one range at a time. This is useful for formatting, deleting and data entry.

To use it first select a range as normal using the large plus sign cursor. Then hold the Ctrl key down and select another range and then another and another.

In recent versions of Excel you can amend the selection. In older versions you have to start again from the beginning - you can't undo the last one you did.

Error message explained

When you try to do some things with multiple selections you may see the following error message.

Don't be discouraged. You can actually perform a lot of useful tasks with this feature as long as you are aware of it limitations.

When selecting the ranges if you select one column wide ranges you can copy and paste to bring them together.

If you need to select more than one column they need to be lined up to work.

The images that follow show examples of using multiple ranges to copy and paste.

	A	B	C
1	Name	Age	Salary
2	Fred	25	56,045
3	Mary	43	67,656
4	Sue	54	72,734
5	Larry	23	86,698
6	George	45	50,798
7	Stephen	32	70,522
8	Sally	65	84,674

Copy three separate cells from column A

	E	F
	Fred	
	Sue	
	George	
	(Ctrl)	

Paste in cell E2

	A	B	C
1	Name	Age	Salary
2	Fred	25	56,045
3	Mary	43	67,656
4	Sue	54	72,734
5	Larry	23	86,698
6	George	45	50,798
7	Stephen	32	70,522
8	Sally	65	84,674

Copy 3 separate ranges from columns A,B and C

E	F	G
Fred	25	56,045
Larry	23	86,698
Stephen	32	70,522

Paste in cell E2

Note: when you paste multiple ranges formulas are converted to values.

Selecting Multiple Sheets (Grouping)

You can select and work on more than one sheet at a time. This is called sheet grouping. This is both powerful and dangerous. It is powerful because you can print, update and makes changes to multiple sheets in one step. It is dangerous because when selected it is not obvious that multiple sheets are selected and so it is very easy to think you are only changing the current sheet when in fact, you could be changing many more.

As soon as you select more than one sheet Excel puts [Group] after the file name in the Excel header as shown below. It is always a good idea to check that when opening a file.

Excel Mouse Shortcuts [Group] - Microsoft Excel

Another danger is that if sheets are grouped when the file is saved that grouping is retained when you open the file and since someone else may open the file they may not be aware that sheets are grouped. I highly recommend you **ALWAYS** ungroup after you have grouped and done what you need to do. If you get interrupted during a grouping task **ALWAYS** check the grouping status.

By the way "grouping" is the most overused term in Excel. It can mean at least four different things in Excel. The terms can be applied to Sheets, Rows/Columns, Pivot Tables and Objects.

Now that I've warned you about grouping sheets, let's see how easy it is to do.

Simply hold your Ctrl key down whilst using the mouse to click individual sheet tabs at the bottom of the screen.

If you want to select consecutive sheets click the first sheet tab then hold the Shift key down and click the last sheet tab.

To ungroup you can right click the sheet tab and choose Ungroup or simply click a sheet tab that wasn't selected to remove the grouping.
Check the Excel header to make sure [Group] has gone.

Copying Everything Quickly

There are lots of ways to copy in Excel using the mouse. For short distances the quickest way involves holding the Ctrl down whilst dragging the arrow icon or the object involved. It works for cells, range, charts, images, text boxes and sheets.

The arrow icon changes to an arrow with a small plus sign - see example below.

Whenever you see that small plus sign it means Excel is going to perform a different operation than the standard operation.

In this case it will copy and paste instead of cut and paste.

This technique can be used to copy everything in Excel. Where you would have normally used the mouse to drag something try holding the Ctrl key down whilst you drag. You will copy it.

See the image on the right to see how easy it is to make a copy of a sheet. Click and hold on the Sheet tab with the mouse, then hold the Ctrl key down. Drag and release the mouse to create an exact copy of the sheet.

This sheet copy technique works between files as well.

Use the Windows resize button to have both files visible and drag the tab(s) between files using the Ctrl key.

There is yet another use of the Ctrl key which will be covered later in the manual.

Shift Key

Using the Shift key with the left mouse button allows you to do a few useful tasks quickly and easily.

Large Range Selections

Selecting large ranges in Excel can be problematic. Using the Shift key with the mouse can simplify it. First click the start cell. Then use the scroll bar (right of screen) or the scroll wheel on the mouse to scroll down the sheet. Hold the Shift key down and then click the end cell. This will fill in between where you started and where you clicked.

Change Range Selections

If you want to amend the selection just hold the Shift key down and select another end cell. This can be useful to extend an existing Print Range selection.

Perfect Squares and Circles

When using Excel's shape objects you can draw a perfect circle or perfect square using the Shift key. Simply hold the Shift key down whilst resizing a rectangle or an oval and it will convert it to a square or a circle.

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Moving a Whole Row or Column

Holding the Shift key down whilst you move a whole row or a whole column will insert the row or column in between the existing rows or columns.

To move a whole column you first click on the column letter. Then you point the mouse to the left or right border (edge) and use the arrow cursor shape. You click and hold and drag the column at the same time hold down the Shift key. Release the mouse to insert the column where you have dragged it to.

Alt Key

Holding the Alt key down when you move objects (eg charts, controls, text boxes or images) with the mouse allows you to align them to the underlying grid. This enables you to line then up perfectly.

The feature is called “snaps to” because the object will move to the closest lines below the object, either the row lines; the column lines or both.

This “snaps to” feature also applies if you hold the Alt key when you resize an object using the mouse.

Double-Clicking

Navigation and Range Selection

You can move around a sheet by double-clicking the left mouse button on the arrow cursor shape around the border of a selected cell or range.

You can move in the four directions up, down, left and right. The result will depend on the layout and contents of the sheet and whether there is anything in the direction you click.

Holding the Shift key whilst double-clicking allows you to select large ranges at the same time.

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Column Width and Row Height

Double-clicking the line between column letters or row numbers will automatically re-size the column/row to fit the contents. Select more than one column or row to do them all at once. It is not dynamic so you may need to redo it if the entries change.

Dragging the cursor after selecting a group of columns can make all the columns exactly the same width. This applies to rows too.

Changing the Sheet Name

Double-click the sheet tab name to amend it.

Two Icons You Can Double-Click

When you double-click this icon you can paste the format multiple times with the mouse. To stop pasting the format click the icon again or press the Esc key.

AutoSUM - instead of clicking the AutoSUM icon once and then pressing the Enter key you can double-click it. If you select a range first you only need to click it once.
Warning: the range used is “guessed” and the range will stop at blank cells so it may be wrong.

4. Fill Handle - to Copy or to Increment

You can click, hold and drag the Fill Handle to fill in the cells between the start cell and the end cell. The result you achieve will depend on the contents of the start cell. You can drag the Fill Handle in four directions, down, up, left and right. You cannot drag diagonally.

Excel will either copy the entry or increment it. It will copy text, values and formulas. It will increment dates and text ending in numbers.

When you stop dragging the Fill Handle a small option icon displays. This will allow you to control the result of the drag.

Click the drop down to switch between incrementing or copying.

It also allows you to control formatting.

Delete an Entry

If you select a cell and then drag the Fill Handle up to cover the cell it will grey the cell out. If you release the mouse then it will delete the entry.

This applies if you select a range and then drag the Fill Handle up to cover the range and release the mouse.

Copying Down in a Table

Double-clicking the Fill Handle is the quickest way to copy down in a table. The way this shortcut works is

1. If there are existing entries below it will copy down as far and those entries. It will stop at the first blank cell in the column.
2. If there are no entries below it will copy down as far as there are entries in the column to the left. It will stop at the first blank cell in the column to the left.
3. If there are no entries below or to the left it will copy down as far as there are entries in the column to the right. It will stop at the first blank cell in the column to the right.

Ctrl and Fill Handle

If you hold the Ctrl key down when using the Fill Handle you will see the small plus sign mentioned earlier.

Holding the Ctrl key will switch the default fill action. It will switch copy to increment or increment to copy.

You only have to hold the Ctrl key down just before you release the mouse.

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5. Dragging with the Right Mouse Button

This involves something most users have never tried, dragging with the right mouse button held down.

It can take a bit of practice to get used to dragging with the right mouse button.

The arrow cursor and the Fill Handle mouse shapes can both be dragged with the right mouse button. When you finish dragging, a menu of options is displayed.

Click Cancel or click outside the menu to close the menu. Pressing Esc also closes it

Useful right dragging time savers

- it allows you to specifically choose between copying or filling a series
- you can copy or fill formats only
- paste values easily
- easily link cells

The options displayed will vary if dates are involved. **Note** there is a Fill Weekday option for dates.

PRACTICE – dragging with the right mouse button

Sheet – Right Mouse

1 Use the right mouse button to move cell A2 to L3 (use the arrow mouse cursor) – - Note the options listed

2 Drag the Fill Handle (bottom right corner) of cell C2 with the right mouse button – Note the options listed

3 Try moving or dragging cells E2, G2 and I2.

Note: the option of filling weekdays for G2 and I2 is shown for any date related values.

6. Quick Access Toolbar (QAT)

The QAT can sit above or below the Ribbon.

I prefer it below the Ribbon as the icons are quicker to access. You can right click the QAT to move it.

The QAT is where you should place your most used icons.

You can add any Ribbon icon to the QAT by right clicking the icon and selecting Add to Quick Access Toolbar.

You can also Right Click the QAT and select Customize the Quick Access Toolbar to select from all the possible buttons, options and macros.

See how to customise the QAT on the next page.

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1. This drop down lists the categories of icons - you can choose All Commands

2. You can chose any icon on the left list and double click it to add it to the list on the right which is the QAT.

The Separator icon (first on list) is a vertical line that you can add to create sections within your QAT. Eg you might put all your format options together.

3. You can also click the Add button to add the selected icon (List 2) to the QAT (List 4).

4. The icons already on the QAT.

5. You can select an icon in the QAT (list 4) and use the up and down arrows on the right to move the around.

Hide the Ribbon

Once you have all your common icons on the QAT you can right click the ribbon to hide it if you want to maximise the screen for the grid. The QAT will remain visible.

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7. The Office Clipboard

Not many people realise you can copy a number of items one after the other and then go somewhere else and paste them in any order you like. Unfortunately this technique doesn't work with formulas, but it can be useful for images, charts or values. This works between Office applications.

To see the Office Clipboard click the little arrow in the bottom right corner of the Clipboard Section.

By the way - those little arrows mean there are more options available and you can right click them to add them to the QAT.

Once the Clipboard is visible it automatically keeps a track of the items you have copied.

You can save up to 24 items of the Clipboard and from various Office applications.

You can then selectively paste them.

Individual items can be removed as well

There are Paste All and Clear All icons as well.

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8. Fill a Large Range with a Series

Let's assume you have a large range to fill with a series. It could be consecutive numbers or dates. You could drag with the Fill Handle or you could use the Series dialog.

Series Dialog

This dialog is hidden away on the Home ribbon on the far right-hand side under the Fill drop down.

It allows you to create a series form a starting figure and you can specify how many entries to create.

There is an unusual mouse shortcut to access it.

Wyn Hopkins MVP shared this tip on Linkedin.

Type 1 in a cell and press Ctrl + Enter.

Use the right mouse button to drag the Fill Handle down to the cell below and then back again to the starting spot.

The following menu on the right will display.

Click the Series option and the Series dialog below will open.

You need to click the Column option to create a vertical series.

Click in the Stop Value box and type 1000 and click OK.

This technique also works with dates.

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