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Highlighting words and lines in Microsoft Word

Some users report that they lose the text insertion caret (the thin vertical flashing line) when using Microsoft Word. Though it is possible to alter the mouse pointer settings in most versions of Windows to make the pointer bigger and blacker for instance, this does not usually affect the text caret in Word.

One very simple idea is to set up a keyboard shortcut key to highlight each word one at a time, or one line at a time. This may also help when trying to read from the screen when people lose which line they are currently reading.

For instance, this line has a **highlighted** word.

And this line is completely highlighted.

Microsoft Word comes with a system where a series of commands or keystrokes can be grouped together as a single command – this is called a macro. Macros can be recorded and allocated to specific keys on the keyboard. This skillsheet will detail how to set up two macros to achieve the highlighting mentioned above in Microsoft Word 2000 (other versions of Word also have this macro feature which will work in a very similar way).

We will be creating macros which contain a series of shortcut keys - which can be used to move around within documents anyway - and just putting several into one keystroke to make it easier to use. We have a factsheet discussing and listing many of the most common shortcut keys for use in Windows and applications, call us for a copy.

Try the following shortcut keys in a Word document:

- Press the 'Home' key to jump to the start of the current line.
- Press the 'End' key to jump to the end of the current line.
- Hold down the Ctrl key while pressing the left or right arrow keys to jump a word at a time.
- Use Ctrl and the up and down arrows to move a paragraph at a time.

Hold down the Shift key at the same time as the above combinations to highlight the text at the same time as moving.

So to select an entire paragraph that you have just typed, hold down the Shift key, the Ctrl key and press the up arrow.

If you are not used to using the Ctrl, Shift and arrow keys at the same time, try using them to move about as described above to get a feel for how they work.

If you find it difficult to hold down several keys at the same time, there is another option within Windows called 'Sticky Keys' which allows you to press the keys one after the next rather than all at the same time. We have another skillsheet on how to use 'Sticky Keys', please call for a copy.

Once you have highlighted some text, you can cut or copy it. Use Ctrl+X to cut the text, or Ctrl+C to copy it.

Move elsewhere and press Ctrl+V to paste the text back again.

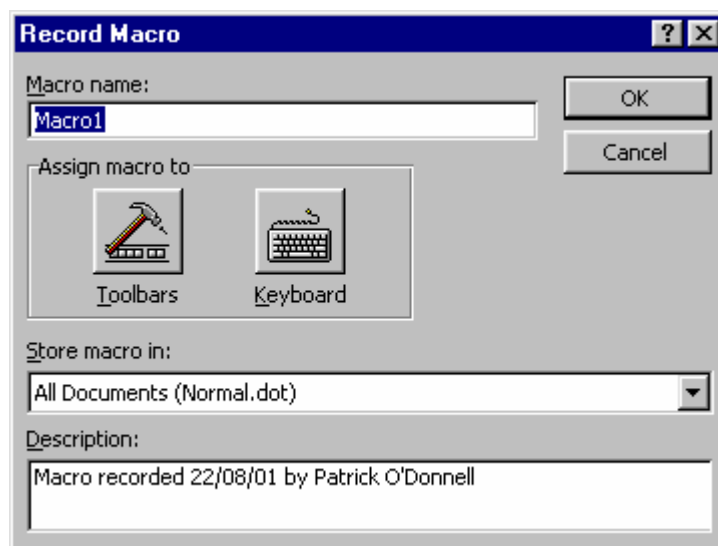
Note:

Once some text is highlighted, pressing a letter on the keyboard replaces all the highlighted text with that single letter – use Ctrl+Z to undo the last action and get the highlighted text back!

Word by word

To set up the first macro – highlighting word by word – open a word document and write a few sentences. Move the text caret into the middle of one of the sentences.

Next pull down the 'Tools' menu, use the 'Macro...' submenu and choose 'Record New macro...':

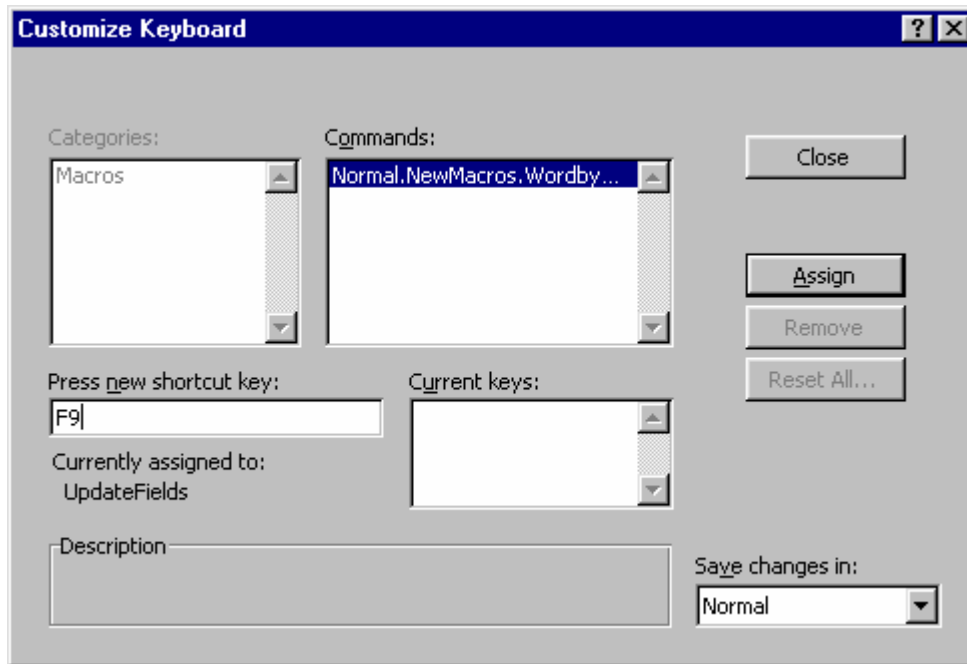


NB: Don't click the OK button on this dialogue, we are going to use the 'Keyboard' option instead as described below. If you do make a mistake

recording the macro, don't worry as you can simply repeat the steps and re-record.

Type a name for this new macro – 'WordbyWordForward' for example, then select the keyboard icon.

This then lets you choose which key combination from the keyboard you would like to use for this macro – try the F9 function key – and a message (bottom left) tells you what Word feature that key combination may already be assigned to. In this case, the F9 key is already in use by Word for UpdateFields:



If you are happy to change the shortcut key from using this advanced feature to using your new highlighting macro, just select the 'Assign' button, otherwise press the delete key and try some other key combinations. (See below for other suggested key combinations to use for these macros).

Then select the 'Close' button.

This has started the macro recording feature, and a small window will have appeared on the screen:



The mouse pointer will also have changed to be a pointer with a tape next to it to show you are recording a macro.

Now type the following 2 keystroke combinations on the keyboard:

- Ctrl + Right arrow key
- Shift + Ctrl + Right arrow key

To stop the recording, click on the small square icon on the macro recording window or use the menu bar: 'Tools', 'Macro...', 'Stop recording'.

This should have set up the word-by-word highlighting macro on the F9 key. Try pressing F9 several times and check to see if it moves the highlight along word by word.

If it does not work as you expected, try the above steps again – when you enter the macro name, the system asks if you want to replace the previous macro, select 'Yes' to replace the previous attempt.

Repeat the above process to set up another macro, called 'WordbyWordBack', select Shift+F9 as the keyboard combination and once the macro has started recording press the following 2 keystroke combinations:

- Ctrl + Left arrow key
- Shift + Ctrl + Left arrow key

Once again stop the recording by clicking on the small square icon on the macro recording window or by using the menu bar: 'Tools', 'Macro...', 'Stop recording'.

This should have set up a second macro using Shift+F9 to step the word highlight back through the document word by word.

Line by line

To set up another highlighting macro to highlight a line at a time, follow the above steps, call the macro 'LinebyLineForward' and this time assign Ctrl+F9 as the keyboard shortcut key.

Again this will leave you with the Macro recording window:



This time type the following 3 keystroke combinations:

- Down arrow
- Home key
- Shift + End key

Then stop the recording using the stop macro recording button (or Tools menu) and try this macro out with Ctrl+F9. This should move the line highlight down through your document a line at a time.

Repeat this process one last time for a fourth macro called 'LinebyLineBack', assign Ctrl+Shift+F9 as the shortcut key and record the following 3 keystroke combinations:

Up arrow
Home key
Shift+End key

This should give you a fourth macro for moving the line highlight back up a document.

Further editing

With the highlight on either a word or a line, just press left or right arrow to move to the start or end of the highlighted word or line to continue typing.

Also useful

The F8 function key is set up for a function called SelectionExtend. This can be used to highlight the current word, sentence, paragraph, section or the whole document.

Put the caret in the middle of a sentence and press F8 several times to see the effect. Shift+F8 reduces the highlighted selection back down the stages, and **you need to press ESC to get out of the selection extension mode.**

Selecting keys for use with macros

Microsoft Word has almost all the most common shortcut key combinations already set up for common functions. There are very few key combinations left unassigned, so you may have to decide which areas of Word you are unlikely to use via shortcut keys. We have used F9 above, which is all to do with using and updating fields within a document. If you are an intensive keyboard shortcut user you will have to spend some time looking through the Word help file for 'shortcut keys' to identify spare combinations to use.

You might also try using Ctrl+7, Shift+Ctrl+7 and Ctrl+9, Shift+Ctrl+9. None of these combinations is currently assigned in Word 2000.

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