Making the text insertion point and select cursor more visible in word processors

(Note: You should have received a floppy disc along with this skillsheet that contains a free copy of a utility called ‘Follow.exe’.)

Many computer users with a visual impairment report that they often lose the text insertion point and/or the mouse pointer when using a word processor such as Microsoft Word.

The text insertion point is the thin flashing vertical bar that indicates where letters typed on the keyboard will appear next:

```
Here is some text
```

In the above example the text insertion point is directly following the word ‘text’. The cursor keys on the keyboard (along with other such as Home and End) are used to move this text insertion point about within a document.

An associated (and closely related) problem is that the mouse pointer – normally an arrow - also changes shape when over the text editing parts of a word processor display to what is referred to as a 'Text Select' cursor:

```
  I
```

This is a lot less visible than the standard mouse arrow:

```
  H
```

It is important when word processing to be able to easily identify where both the text insertion point and the text select mouse pointer are so that users know where their typing, editing or highlighting will occur.

In Microsoft Word and some other word processors there is a feature that temporarily switches off the mouse pointer when users are word processing. This is presumably to stop users getting confused with two thin vertical bars on the screen. Users have to jiggle their mouse to make the text select cursor re-appear. So some users are looking for something that isn’t even there!
Adjusting the mouse pointer

Anyone with a difficulty finding the mouse pointer can adjust the mouse properties of Windows to use larger pointers throughout Windows.

Click the Start Menu, choose Settings, then Control Panel and the double-click the Mouse icon. This opens the Mouse Properties dialogue. Select the Pointers tab and use the Scheme option to select different options.

One useful predefined option is the Windows Inverted (large or extra large) option. This sets the mouse pointer to be larger than the standard settings and also to invert colours over different backgrounds. This means the mouse pointer is a black arrow over a white background and changes automatically to a white arrow as you move the pointer over a black background:

![Mouse Properties dialogue](image)

However, the Text Select cursor (as shown as the bottom setting in the list above) is still a vertical bar – though slightly fatter and more bold than the standard setting.

Double-click the Text Select line (or single-click and then select the Browse button) to open up a window where you can select a different mouse pointer to use as the Text Select cursor.
In the File name field type in ‘Arrow_il’ or ‘Arrow_im’ for a large or medium inverted arrow, or ‘Cross_il’ or ‘Cross_im’ for a large or medium inverted cross. You could also try ‘Hand-il’ or ‘Hand-im’ for large or medium inverted hand-shaped alternatives – see table below for pictures of these options.

Then press the Enter key, or click the Open button.

This should have returned to the Mouse Properties dialogue with the Text Select cursor changed to use whichever cursor you can see more easily – for example the ‘Arrow_il’ pointer would look like:

Note – The cursor looks yellow as it is over a blue background.

Click OK.

Try moving the mouse pointer around over your word processor.

The suggested options are shown below as they would appear over a white background:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Text Select cursor</th>
<th>Arrow_il</th>
<th>Arrow_im</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross_il</td>
<td>Cross_im</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-il</td>
<td>Hand-im</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another alternative to try:

H_beam
Text Insertion Point

The above process has made the mouse pointer move visible when moving over a word processor page, but the flashing text insertion point in the word processor is still a thin vertical bar. This is difficult to alter for most word processors – though some do allow some adjustments.

One simple solution is to ‘attach’ the mouse cursor (as adjusted above) to the text insertion point using the utility Follow.exe on the enclosed floppy disc.

Follow.exe simply forces the text select cursor (the mouse pointer) to remain visible (instead of disappearing when the user starts typing) and also forces it to follow the text insertion point.

So, having set up a highly visible Text Select cursor as described above, you should now be able to find the text insertion point too.

The only point to note is that Follow.exe needs to be loaded (or run) before you start your word processor.

Try using Follow.exe and if find it useful, set it up in your Start menu to start automatically every time you start up your computer.

Putting Follow.exe in Start Menu:
Copy ‘follow.exe’ from the floppy disc to your c: drive.

Open the Windows Start menu, select ‘Settings’ and then ‘Taskbar & Start Menu…’.

Select the ‘Start Menu Programs’ tab and select the ‘Add…’ button.

Type the path to the follow.exe program (eg ‘c:\follow.exe’) or use the ‘Browse…’ button to look for ‘follow.exe’ on your c: drive. Select ‘Next’.

Scroll down the folders list and select the ‘StartUp’ folder. Click ‘Next’.

Set the name to ‘Follow’ and select ‘Finish’.

When you restart your computer, follow.exe should now start automatically and ‘Follow’ should be an item in your startup menu group.