

# Back to Basics

By Ted Fessler

**The Mouse** – The mouse controls the motion of a pointer on the computer screen. Sensors within the mouse detect the direction the mouse is moving so that when you move the mouse with your hand, a pointer on your screen moves in the same direction. Mice for use on PCs (as opposed to MACs) usually have left and right buttons and a scroll wheel.

A mousepad is a special pad used under a mouse to increase the friction of the rubber ball on the underside of a “mechanical” mouse. This ball detects mouse motion. Nowadays, most mice have an optical device for detecting motion and do not require a pad. Whether to use a mousepad with an optical mouse is largely a matter of personal preference. One exception occurs when the desk surface creates problems for the optical tracking; commonly these are black, transparent, or reflective surfaces.

When moving the mouse pointer a long distance it may become necessary to lift up the mouse, bring it to the opposite edge of the mousepad while it's held above the surface, and then putting it back down onto the mousepad.

Different ways of operating the mouse cause specific things to happen:

- Left-click: pressing and releasing the left button,
- Double-click: pressing and releasing the left button two times in quick succession,
- Right-click: clicking the right button,
- Drag: pressing and holding the left button, while moving the mouse,
- Scrolling: rotating or clicking the scroll wheel,
- Hovering: stopping mouse movement while the pointer is within the bounds of an item.

The “specific things” that happen will depend on which program is in use. Following are two examples.

The DESKTOP is the main screen area that you see after you turn on your computer and log on to Windows. On the desktop are icons and “software buttons” that can be activated by using the mouse. Icons are the small pictures that represent files, folders, programs, and other items.

If you right-click over one of the icons, you will see a context menu. (A context menu gives you choices appropriate for whichever item was clicked on.) You will also note that hovering over an icon causes the appearance of a “tooltip”, a short description of the item it represents.

If you double-click with the mouse pointer on an icon for a program, that program will be started up. If you double-click on an icon for a folder, the Windows Explorer program will display the contents of that folder. If you double-click on a data file icon (for example an icon for a text-file), then a program appropriate for that file will display the file's contents. With the mouse pointer over an icon, you can drag the icon to another position on the desktop.

In the lower left corner of the desktop is the Start button. A left-click with the mouse pointer over the Start button brings up a menu for selecting a program to be run. If you hover over any of the items that have a ► symbol, you will see a new menu appropriate to that item.

Just to the right of the Start button is the Quick Launch area. A left click on one of the icons in this area will start the program it represents.

ADOBE READER is the program for reading PDF files (properly known as portable document files). PDF files have the advantage that they appear the same on all computers and operating systems. We can use this Back to Basics document to demonstrate some of the mouse operations in Adobe Reader. Here's how to bring up Adobe Reader and this Back to Basics file. Double-click on the Internet Explorer (IE) icon on the desktop. When the IE screen appears, type **villagecc.org** in the box at the top of the screen, press the Enter key. This takes you to our website homepage. Now left-click the **How to** button, locate the Back to Basics entry, and left-click it. You will see this Back to Basics document.

Rotate the scroll wheel. You can see text scrolling up or down. Now click the scroll wheel. The mouse pointer is changed and you will notice that if you move it up on the screen, the text will scroll up and if you move it down, the text scrolls down. The further up or down you move the pointer, the faster the scrolling is. To stop scrolling, click the scroll wheel again.

At the top of the Adobe Reader screen are software buttons labeled File, Edit, View, etc. A left-click on any of these will bring up a menu for you to choose from. To choose a menu item, move the mouse pointer to the item and do a left-click again.

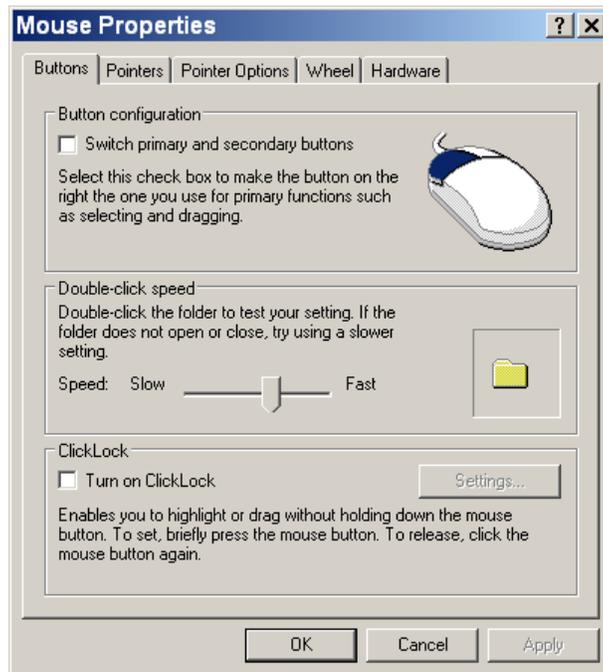
Below these menu labels are small icons that you can activate. Tooltips tell you what they will do when you hover over one of them. You activate these icons with a left-click.

Under the menu item labeled Window is a small text box with a ▼ mark at its right. You can change the size of the text by moving the mouse pointer to the text box and typing in a different value for text size. Or, you can left-click the ▼ symbol then left-click one of the sizes that appear in a menu.

At the right end of the line with icons and size controls is a text box with the word find. If you would like to search the document for a specific word or words, you can move the mouse pointer over the box, type in the word(s) you want to find then press the Enter key on the keyboard. This will find the next appearance of the word(s) in the text. You can modify your search by a left-click on the ▼ symbol.

You might like to copy some text from this document to a word processor program. (A word processor is a computer application used for composing, editing, formatting, and possibly printing of any sort of printable material.) To do this, place the mouse pointer at the beginning of the text you want to copy, and then drag the mouse to the end of the text you want to copy (holding down the left mouse button). Now let up on the mouse button. Notice that the text to be copied has a shaded background. You can copy this text to the "clipboard", using the copy item from the Edit menu. Open the WordPad program, and use the paste item in its Edit menu to paste this text. (You will find WordPad in the Accessories programs group in the Start menu.)

Did you know that you can change the appearance of your mouse pointer? You can also change the speed and visibility of the mouse. To do this, left-click the Start button, hover over the Settings option, then left-click Control Panel. Now locate the Mouse option and double-click it.



The Mouse Properties dialog box is where you change mouse settings. Left-click one of the tabs at the top to bring up a dialog for that particular item. Pointer Options includes pointer speed, which is the property that most people may want to adjust.

**The Keyboard** – The computer keyboard is very much like a typewriter keyboard and is the main input device for computers. While pressing most keys produces a letter, number, or sign (characters), other keys or simultaneous key presses can produce actions or computer commands. In normal usage, the keyboard is used to type text and numbers into a word processor, text editor or other program. This diagram shows the computer keyboard keys that correspond to the typewriters of yesteryear.

~ ,	!	@	#	\$	%	^	&	*	(	)	-	=	← Backspace
Tab ↔	Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	{	}	 \ /
Caps Lock ↑	A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	:	"	Enter ↵	
Shift ↑	Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	<	>	?	Shift ↑		
Ctrl	Win Key	Alt								Alt	Win Key	Menu	Ctrl

On this keyboard, the alphabetic characters are produced in uppercase when either a shift key is held down or the Caps Lock key has been pressed, otherwise they appear in lower case. The keys with two symbols on each produce the upper symbol when the shift key is held down or when the Caps Lock key has been pressed, otherwise the lower symbol. (**Note:** Unlike the typewriters of old, the Caps Lock key does not stay depressed. But there is a light on the keyboard that indicates it has been pressed. Pressing the Caps Lock key again will turn off the light and undo the Caps Lock action.) The large key at the center of the bottom row is the space bar key.

Try out these keys with the WordPad program. First, you move the mouse pointer to where you want to insert the typed characters and left-click. A vertical bar (the text cursor) replaces the mouse pointer. As you press keys, the characters appear at the text cursor and the text cursor then moves to the right. (The mouse pointer will not appear again until you move the mouse.)

Now about the other (gray) keys in the typewriter section of your computer's keyboard.

- In word processor programs, the **Tab** key typically moves the text cursor to the next tab stop. (A tab stop is a column position which is set for aligning text on a page.)
- **Backspace** deletes the previous character.
- **Enter** typically causes a program to finish an "entry" and begin the desired process. In word processing applications, pressing the Enter key ends a paragraph and starts a new one.
- **Ctrl** (there are two) is a "modifier key" that is used to modify other keys or mouse actions by some programs.
- **Win Key** (there are two) is also a modifier key. When used alone, it brings up the Start Menu.
- **Alt** (there are two) is a modifier key.
- **Menu** brings up a context menu (choices appropriate for whatever the mouse is pointing at).

In addition to these keys, there are other keys surrounding the typewriter section of the keyboard:

- **Arrow keys** move the text cursor in the direction of the arrow,
- **Page Up and Page Down** keys scroll up and down an entire page or the height of the screen,
- **Home** key is used to return the text cursor to the beginning of the line on which the cursor is located,
- **End** key puts the text cursor at the end of the line,
- **Insert** key is mainly used to switch between overtyping mode, in which the typed characters overwrite any text that is present, and insert mode, in which characters are inserted,
- **Delete** key discards the character at the text cursor's position, moving all following characters one position "back" to the freed place,
- **Escape** key is most often used to "escape" or back out of a command. In Windows, it is used as a shortcut for No, Quit, Exit, Cancel, or Abort.

There may be still more keys on your keyboard, but you are not likely to need them.