

By Jo Becker, BA

Following are a number of quick and simple computer tips you can use to improve your computing performance.

Search and Find

Here's a quick but powerful tip for you. Most software programs will allow you to search the screen you have open for specific content. Let's say you've drafted a long letter to Aunt Tilly in MS Word and somewhere on page 3 or 4 you mentioned your super duper jam recipe. You now realize that you forgot to tell Tilly to be sure add a little hot sauce to give it that special kick. It would be quite tedious to read through the whole letter to find the paragraph in which you mentioned the jam. What are you to do?

Well, if you didn't already know it, you can hold down the combination Ctrl+f to search your open document for a particular word or phrase. So, with the letter to Aunt Tilly open on the screen in front of you, hit the "control" button and hold it down while you also hit the "f" key. This will bring up a small dialogue box asking what you want to search for or find ("f" for find).

As a general rule, it's best to type as little as possible to avoid complicating the matter with typos, etc., so instead of typing "super duper jam" or "balckberry jam" (typo intentional there!), just type "jam" and hit your "Enter" key. The dialogue box will zip you to the 1st occurrence of the word in the document from the point at which your curser was placed when you did the search. Hit "Enter" again to look for another occurrence, and so on. Now, you might wonder where Ctrl+f comes from. On your program's Edit menu you'll find a "Find" option; you can use this "longhand" option if you prefer.

Let's take it a step further. You may very well be searching your document for a certain word or phrase in order to replace it with something else. Perhaps you drafted a marketing piece and repeated referred to a CMA (Competitive or Comparative Market Analysis). Let's say for argument's sake that your ever-vigilant spell checker did you a favor and automatically corrected your 'typo' by changing it from CMA to CAM. Let's face it; spell checkers have limited mental computing power. Granted, they can't read our minds but they can still be very frustrating. So how do you find every single incidence of CAM and expediently correct it to read CMA?

On your Edit menu, choose Replace. (Note: this is an option in many word processing programs and various Microsoft programs, but not all.) A dialogue box will appear asking what word or phrase to search for, as well as what word or phrase to replace it with.

You can choose to replace each incident one-by-one by hitting the Find Next and then Replace buttons on the dialogue box, or Replace All all at once. Pretty slick, 'eh?

If you take a closer look at this dialogue box, you'll see that Replace is the 2nd of 3 tabs at the top of the dialogue box. The 1st tab is our friend Find. The functions are very closely related and you can get to one by choosing the other. (IE: Hit Ctrl+f to bring up the find function, LEFT click once on the Replace tab to perform a search / replace function.)

Find and Replace can be real timesavers—Try it out and get familiar with it! Many times you can use these tools online in your internet browser as well. It's incredibly handy and there honestly isn't a day that goes by that I don't use it!

As always, if this seems overwhelming ask for help, but keep trying! Before long you'll get the hang of it. In the meantime, *hang in there!*

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Jo Becker has eight years of licensed real estate experience. As a former broker, she knows how important, and sometimes scary, technology and self-promotion can be. Jo has provided personalized one-on-one marketing consultation and computer software training to the industry since 2002.

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