

Keyboard for Lawyers (or parasym” and “secsym”)

I want it:

<http://www.lawsitesblog.com/2017/01/debuting-tomorrow-keyboard-designed-just-lawyers.html>

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Why not just map those functions to a key? Something like <ctrl><shift> Y for the section symbol, etc. I did that through WordPerfect's Keyboard shortcuts years ago.

Frank J. Kautz, II, Massachusetts

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As I noted in response to Bob Ambrogi's FB post, although this is a clever idea, the reason it came about struck me as an example of law firm tech department nonsense:

"Some of the more technologically astute among you might be thinking, "He could just create a shortcut in Word for the section symbol and his problem would be solved."

Actually, he couldn't. At the time, Potts — who is now a partner at Perkins Coie — was a partner at Foley & Lardner. Foley's computers were networked, and every time he powered down, any shortcuts disappeared."

So, in order to get around an incompetent IT department, the guy created a keyboard.

Kevin W. Grierson, Virginia

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I was furiously writing a brief when I went to insert a section symbol. As was my custom, I had to stop what I was doing, use the mouse, go to insert a symbol, find the section symbol and hit insert. This process stopped my train of thought, took up my precious time, and more than anything else, was incredibly annoying.

What lawyer can't relate to Potts' annoyance?

Uh, Me. § ¶

I can't relate to it. Then again, I've been word processing since DOS was the bees knees. We didn't use no mouse, we didn't even HAVE no stinkin' mouse. We use Alt codes; you hold down the Alt key and then in very quick succession type the 2

followed by the 1 key; thus; §. Paragraph symbol is Alt 2 0; ¶. It still works, AFAIK, on all Windows word processors. Bah, you young'uns want a key board for everything. You want it easy. We had to use alt codes back in the day. In the Snow. Uphill both ways.

Ronald Jones, Florida

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On my personal computer, I use TextExpander for this. I can't install TextExpander on my work computer but I use the same key combination and then I do a find and replace at the end of my draft.

I also use TextExpander for legal citations the easy way.  
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=oVqG92h2UFA>

Mike Wright

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Simple solution lower case s and then find and replace. I used to copy the symbol and then cut and paste if needed. Simple.

Mitchell P. Goldstein, Virginia

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OR what about saving it in the correction commands for Word? Every time you type a code, it changes to the symbol?

Mitchell P. Goldstein

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I set up Alt-P for paragraph symbol and Alt-S for section symbol. I have numerous autocorrect entries for things like ocga becoming O.C.G.A. §. I am about computer illiterate, but through the years there are many ways to find shortcuts.

Robert "Robby" W. Hughes, Jr., Georgia

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That's a good effort-saving idea, similar to the Adobe Acrobat plug-in for accountants - <https://www.safesend.com/product/tic-tie-calculate/>  
Which might, BTW, also be useful for attorneys in some areas.

Scott Bonacker, CPA, Missouri

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Like Ron, I know most of the ALT codes for characters I use a lot, but in Word, I don't need them. In addition to having configured autocorrect with mnemonics for the pilcrow and the section symbol (§ and ¶ are "parasym" and "secsym"), so I don't have to stop the stream of typing, I have also configured shortcuts for common words so they can be typed with fewer keystrokes ("jdn" for "jurisdiction" and "jdx" for "jurisdictions", for example). It's also helpful if there are words you commonly mistake, but that won't trigger a spell-check error when you use the wrong one; never again type "According to the General Statues, a party must..." Just come up with a non-word shortcut for "statute" (so you don't get it when you don't want it, and if you mistype it, it'll trigger a spelling error), say "stx".

And, since Outlook uses parts of Word to operate its interface, it all carries over into e-mail.

For anyone thinking, "What the heck is he talking about?", you should be aware that autocorrect is a bit different from what is known as autocorrect or predictive typing on your iDevice.

In Word (I have 2007, so your path may vary a bit with different versions), click the Word button upper left (the "ribbon"), choose "Word Options" then "AutoCorrect Options". On the "AutoCorrect" tab, you can see what's already configured for automatic replacement, some of which you may wish to turn off.

· E.g., I rarely use the © symbol, and far more often cite to paragraphs, so I tweaked that to substitute © for (c) only when I type "\_(c)"; if you like that automatic substitution, but don't want it in a particular context, just backspace, and it'll undo the conversion. Same with ® and ™. Even emoticons are built in!

- Are you a New Yorker reader who likes that they always print “naïve” rather than “naive”, or “coöperate” rather than “cooperate”? Put that here.\*\*

- You can type a whole phrase with just a couple of characters, if you use it regularly. Don’t want to waste all those keystrokes to close that demand letter with “Govern yourself accordingly,”? Give it a shortcut! (If you want to build a library of whole paragraphs you can inserts with a click of the mouse, look up “Quick Parts.” When I send an initial e-mail to a new/prospective client to confirm the address I saved, the entire stock message is inserted as a Quick Part.)

- Caveat: “Replace text as you type” gives you a choice between “Plain text” and “Formatted text.” If you want the shortcut to work whether you’re working on body text or a header (and you probably do...), choose “Plain text.” But if you \*want\* it to apply formatting when it does the replacement – e.g., superscript or bold – choose “Formatted text.”

- If you just typed something, and decide, “Hey, I would love to create a shortcut for that!”, just select and copy the text before you go into Options, and you can paste it in there, retaining formatting if you wish.

On the “AutoFormat” tab, you can see some built in functions that reflect holdover habits for some of us who worked on-line a lot where there was no on-screen formatting, like “suggesting” that text should be bold by typing \*words\* with asterisks, or \_words\_ with underscores to make italics, etc.

On the “AutoFormat As You Type” tab, you will learn that some of the nifty stuff Word does automatically that annoys you can be turned off, like automatically turning

a sentence or phrase that starts with a hyphen into a bulleted list with hanging paragraphs. (If, for some reason, that annoys you and you have a need to prevent it.)

\*\*There is another whole set of tricks for these, since you may not always use diacriticals or accents in the same words all the time. As a general rule in Word, you can get a diacritical on a letter by holding the CTRL key down while typing the diacritical, then typing the letter; it will combine them. For a trema, use the colon, as in CTRL-: then “e” for ë. CTRL-’ then “e” for é. The “add-on” accents are ’, ` , ~ , ^ , and the workarounds are CTRL-: for trema/umlaut, CTRL-@ for the mark over å, CTRL-& with a or o for æ and œ, and CTRL-, for Ç, and so forth.

It’s worthwhile to get bold and get under the hood sometimes, as you can learn a lot about how you are under-using tools that you spend hours a day with. (Imagine using a hammer to drive nails for years, and only then realizing that you could use the claw on the hammer to pull a nail, just as you’d been doing with a crowbar for years. That would seem rather silly, wouldn’t it?)

Richard J. Rutledge, Jr., North Carolina

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And, if you don't want to map keys, or set up quick correct, remember, as I learned on this list:

Alt+21 = §

Alt+20 = ¶

Who needs a funky keyboard?

David Masters, Colorado

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I also have a small list of Alt-codes taped to the bottom of my monitor, which is a lot quicker than trying to pull up Character Map. E.g., á, Á, ä, Ä, £, ¥, ·, as well as the

memorized ¶ and §. Combined with a line showing the last four digits of various credit cards, so that I do not have to keep pulling up KeePass or looking in my wallet when buying something on Amazon. That way I can easily remember that my business credit card ends with 5555, my personal with 3333, and my debit account with 9999.

I uploaded a printable version ("Common Alt-Codes.pdf") of various sizes of those here, if anyone's interested:

<http://koeneckelaw.com/temp>

Michael Koenecke, Texas

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And he went to all the trouble to create a (largely unnecessary, based on the comments here) keyboard but didn't bother to make it ergonomic. Why on earth not?!

Kelcey Patrick-Ferree, Iowa

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As I recall, the Alt+Number trick only worked with the numbers on the number pad. Is that still true? None of my current computers have a number pad on the keyboard.

John Varde, Illinois

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Am I the only one for whom ALT 20 and ALT 21 do different things? On my version of Word, Alt 21 opens the Save As window, and ALT 20 does nothing (but beep at me). I do have autocorrect for both

§ and ¶ (Ss and Pp, respectively).

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

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I use the number pad a lot, but usually in Excel when I'm primarily typing numbers. In fact, 20 years ago (when I still worked as an engineer), I transitioned from using a right-handed mouse to a left-handed mouse so I could more efficiently use the mouse and number pad together.

Cynthia V. Hall

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Yep, works only with the 10 key pad; my new Lenovo T560 has a 10 key pad.

I think it works if you have a 10 key pad accessory for a laptop (they're cheap and connect wirelessly; very handy).

David Masters

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That's correct, at least on my keyboard.

Kevin W. Grierson

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Many thanks to Michael Koenecke for sharing the cheat list of codes.  
Michael, are you still a die-hard WP user (as I am)?

Miriam N. Jacobson, Pennsylvania

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Afraid so:

<http://macros.koenecke.us>

I should really do some updating there...

Michael Koenecke

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Not going to beat up the idea of the keyboard. Its a good idea and will be very useful to many. Personally, I do not like to rely upon special key boards and prefer to learn the shortcuts that work on computers, or config files that I can share between computers for autocorrect, etc.

As for the Alt codes, I am not familiar with those, but for use a three digit code for the symbols:

¶ is Alt (hold) 0182

§ is Alt (hold) 0167

Here is a link to many of them:

<http://symbolcodes.tlt.psu.edu/accents/codealt.html>

Phil A. Taylor, Massachusetts

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In the snow, uphill both ways? In Florida too?

When I was first told that expression I asked why they did not go home the same way then came as that would have been downhill.

Phil A. Taylor

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Rick, my Word shortcuts don't work in Outlook. How do you get it to do that?

Nanci Bockelie, Utah

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I cannot relate either.

If taking the few seconds to take the steps to put a symbol into your brief distracts you and throws off your train of thought, then how do you handle trial or oral argument, where information is constantly thrown at you, and you have to constantly think about multiple things at once? It doesn't sound like you need a new keyboard. It sounds like you need a new brain.

Tracia Y. Lee, Texas

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I am sorry. What am I missing?

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How is this appropriate or acceptable? I can't stop and enter the symbol into the brief while I am working either. It doesn't work for me for a variety of reasons, including having a problem with my hand that makes my typing difficult if I stop. And, quite frankly, I will put my trial skills and oral argument skills up against anyone, anywhere, anytime.

My dad also couldn't do it. He had Parkinson's Disease. And while he wasn't an attorney, he as the brightest guy I have ever met. But his typing was very deliberate and stopping to add a symbol was not going to happen. He used a trackball and went back to add it in.

Not sure when we became so convinced that OUR way was right that anyone who didn't do it must be a moron. I also don't know when it became acceptable to suggest that people who don't do it our way are morons or imbeciles. Sorry we all don't do it your way. Life is pretty damn boring when we all do things the same way.

Jonathan Stein, California

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Me too. Tracia, who were you posting this to?

Julie Mills, Ohio

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You are spot on and beat me to this. I do not see what the benefit to the group was for that post. When I am typing there is a certain flow and I do not have to really think about where the keys are, nor look at the keyboard much. I would not say I am a proficient touch typist, but I have gone beyond the point where I need to look for each key. When I do have to look for keys or take my hands out of "home" position it slows things down. It changes my thinking process from the brief, memo, etc. to where is a certain key.

I have taken the effort to learn the common Alt codes for symbols I use and can just type them in. As for bullets and numbered lists, they can be done automatically as well if you turn on that feature (I think some asked about this).

The thought process during a hearing with arguments being made or other things to respond to is ENTIRELY different than the thought process of typing and looking for certain keys. By the time anyone gets to trial or a hearing, I presume (like me) they know their position inside and out and likely know the other sides position and possibly arguments as well.

I hope this does not come across the wrong way, but if you do not know what the other side is likely to state then you did not prepare well.

If they other side comes with something out of left field that you did not expect, then it is not relevant and you will recognize that right away, or you missed something during preparation. Bottom line, it is entirely different thought process than typing.

Phil A. Taylor

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This product results from a failure of the firm's IT department and/or support staff. A simple solution to the problem as explained above would be to create firm-wide document templates that contain common shortcuts that are available to all users (e.g., ALT+CTRL+P for the para. symbol, ATL+CTRL+S for the section symbol). Or am I missing something?

Lisa Solomon, Ne York

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My thought exactly. Reminds me of when a former firm tried to force the transactional attorneys to work in Wordperfect when all of our clients were using Word, and those clients were expecting to get Word documents to work with from us. The IT department suggested we just "print to PDF" to send things to back our clients.

I was a big WP fan and initially championed it over Word, but client service comes first, and at the time (and still, though to a lesser extent) converting contracts from Word to WP and back inevitably played hell with the paragraph/outline formatting. We needed to work in Word to service our clients.

Kevin W. Grierson

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After practicing for a long time, it becomes very easy - particularly for solos to become set in our ways. We are very resourceful, and most of us have found workarounds to inserting law-specific symbols and citations.

That said, it doesn't mean that there may not be a better way - not just for others who haven't mastered the workarounds, but even for those who have.

I worry that many of us will never take advantage of the new advancements being developed -- intelligent document automation and AI - because we have become set in our ways. Part of it is necessity - we solos and smalls already do so many things, it's hard to change to a new system every 6 months. And there's always the adage, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Even so - and particularly as I grow older - I try to make a conscious effort to be open minded about new tools so that I don't become irrelevant.

Carolyn Elefant, District of Columbia

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Thanks so much for sharing that. It will take me a few hours to digest and set up but realize I am WAY underutilizing the functions to my detriment!

Micah G. Guilfoil Payne,, Kentucky

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Sorry, all! I didn't mean to offend anyone by my post. I was just pointing out that being an atty requires a lot of multi-tasking, so we are constantly switching our brains anyway, whether it's inputting symbols while typing, answering phone calls while we are drafting a brief, listening to opposing counsel's argument while you are you taking notes and thinking of your rebuttal, etc. But, of course, we love things that make our lives and jobs easier and more efficient, so if this keyboard helps, then that's great!

Again, apologize if anyone thinks I was being rude. It was certainly not my intent.

Tracia Y. Lee

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Carolyn, I agree. Solos are used to wearing many hats and being their own techies. But in BigLaw, lawyers are the exact opposite, they become highly specialized cogs in a big machine. They don't have the time or the inclination to learn how to push three different keys to produce a paragraph symbol. I actually think this keyboard is going to do very well with BigLaw.

Eugene Lee, California

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I suspect we are all getting a little bit hung up on the stated reason for the creation of the keyboard, which seems like nonsense to me. I also suspect that someone bright enough to design a keyboard probably has the savvy to figure out the alt-codes for section and paragraph symbols, so the story about the keyboard macro woes was probably the spark for the idea of the keyboard rather than the driving impetus for getting one made.

That said, there are a lot of keyboards with "hot buttons" these days that can probably do much of what this keyboard does. The Microsoft ergonomic keyboard, for example, has 5 of these buttons that can be programmed for various functions. And it's not clear whether the function keys on the Legalboard can be changed to suit one's practice (I have little need, for example, for the paragraph symbol, nor do I need a key to set up line spacing for briefs).

Kevin W. Grierson

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Oh, I'm not saying it's a bad idea and won't sell. It is convenient, at the price it certainly isn't a budget buster and can be used by anyone in law office- from oldest technophobe lawyer to just trained paralegal; it'd probably save the cost of the keyboard the first time it is used and someone doesn't have to flounder around figure out how to do a section sign. It's just, having been trained in Alt Codes 25+ years ago, I am sort of amused at people reinventing a wheel and not realizing there is an existing wheel.

Ronald Jones

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I love the idea of keyboards tailored for various professions, but the two deal-killers are:

1. It's not ergonomic. I can't stand straight, curve-less keyboards.
2. It's not wireless or Bluetooth.

jennifer j. rose, Mexico

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There are hard programmed ALT commands (in essence already established shortcuts) to do the same thing.

Phil A. Taylor

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Excellent points. I think he would have been better off finding the "best" keyboard and using that as the base. It should be wireless.

Straight v. curve can be too user specific. Having the option may be a good idea.

One issue I have is that I am very particular about my keyboard when it comes to the "feel."

If someone wanted to make a good keyboard for me, I would like to have built in speakers. Small speakers that are on the keyboard so they are always near me to hear.

Phil A. Taylor

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Quick... let's make one that is also ergonomic! <g> Actually, I don't think the keyboard is going to do anything other than get IT departments in trouble for not thinking to code like that already. :(

Andrea Cannavina, nope notta ... I have absolutely no need but my keyboard is not a chunk of a rectangle with hard edges ... WT - would NEVER buy just because of that

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Many keyboards have programmable macros. Basic knowledge with one can achieve same result without a special purchase.

Darrell G. Stewart, Texas

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