

Excel & The Function Buttons on Your Keyboard

Across the top of your keyboard you'll find a series of function buttons: F1 through to F12. But what do they all do? For most of us they appear to be useless set of buttons on the keyboard and many will not dare to press them just in case they do something horrible to your computer.

However, they do have their uses and some are even VERY useful when used in Excel. All the features shown here relate to Excel 2010. There are variances from one version to another so check first.



F1: The **HELP** button. Press this when in Excel, or any other application for that matter and bring up the help window. Some may argue that the help window is not that helpful but that is what it opens. In the case of VBA the help files are context sensitive, so if you click on a keyword in your code and press **F1** it will take you straight to the help information relevant to that keyword (assuming the keyword you have is correct and/or exists)

CTRL + F1 will show/hide the ribbon for you

ALT + F1 will create an embedded chart in your worksheet

ALT + Shift + F1 adds a new worksheet to your workbook



Press **F2** to put a cell in **EDIT** mode i.e. when you want to make a change to a formula, press **F2** and you can edit the formula directly in the cell

Shift + F2 lets you to insert or edit a **COMMENT** in a cell

CTRL + F2 opens the **PRINT/PRINT PREVIEW** window

ALT + F2 opens the **SAVE AS** dialog box



Press **F3** to display the names of **NAMED RANGES** in your workbook

CTRL + F3 opens the **NAME MANAGER** dialog box

Shift + F3 opens the **INSERT FUNCTION** dialog box

CTRL + Shift + F3 opens the **CREATE NAMES FROM SELECTION** window

ALT GR + F3 opens the **NEW NAME** window to create a new named range



F4 converts a cell reference in a formula from **RELATIVE** to **ABSOLUTE** i.e. B5 > \$B\$5. Continue pressing **F4** to toggle through the various permutations of **ABSOLUTE** and **PARTIAL ABSOLUTE** referencing (B\$5 > \$B5 > B5).

F4 also repeats the last action or command for you e.g. formatting a chart for example, if you set the borders to NO LINE in part of a chart, click on

another series and **F4** it will repeat the formatting from the previous action

CTRL + F4 closes the active workbook

ALT + F4 closes Excel



Use **F5** as a shortcut to the **GO TO** dialog box. Alternatively use **CTRL + G**

Shift + F5 opens the **FIND AND REPLACE** dialog box



F6 switches between worksheet, ribbon, task pane, zoom control/macro buttons (use **TAB** to select the appropriate command)

Shift + F6 does as above but in opposite order

Note: also works if the screen is SPLIT moving to each sector of the split view

CTRL + F6 moves you between active workbooks



F7 opens the **SPELLING** dialog box

Shift + F7 opens the **THESAURUS** dialog box

CTRL + F7 allows you to **MOVE** a window that is not maximised. Use the up/down/left/right arrows to move the window and press enter or ESC to finish.



F8 turns the **EXTEND** mode **ON** or **OFF** i.e. allows you to select multiple contiguous cells without the need to press **Shift** at the same time.

Shift + F8 allows the selection of non-contiguous cells using the arrow keys

ALT + F8 opens the **MACRO** dialog box

CTRL + F8 activates the **SIZE** mode of the active window (when not maximised). Use the arrow keys to select a side of the window, then use the arrows to resize the window, press **ENTER** to finish.



F9 calculates all worksheets in all open workbooks

Shift + F9 calculates the active worksheet

Note: unless the CALCULATION OPTIONS are set to MANUAL, Excel recalculates every time you make a change to the sheet.

CTRL + ALT + F9 recalculates all sheets in all open workbooks regardless of whether changes have taken place or not.

CTRL + ALT + Shift + F9 checks dependent formulas, then calculates **ALL**

cells in all open workbooks.

CTRL + F9 MINIMISES the selected workbook to an icon at the bottom of the window.



F10 turns ribbon key tips **ON/OFF** (same as **ALT**)

CTRL + F10 MAXIMISES the selected workbook

Shift + F10 displays the **SHORTCUT** menu for the selected item

ALT + Shift + F10 shows the message or menu for a **SMART TAG**.



F11 creates an instant chart using whatever your default chart type is set to.

ALT + F11 opens the **VISUAL BASIC EDITOR**

Shift + F11 inserts a new worksheet to the active workbook



F12 opens the **SAVE AS** dialog box

CTRL + F12 opens the **OPEN** file dialog box

So now you can see that the "F" buttons are not just there to fill up the keyboard. Some of their actions are more useful than others and if you forget any of these there are always the mouse and ribbon options to fall back to.

Don't forget of course all the other keyboard shortcuts available to you within Excel (close on 200!); CTRL + C, CTRL + 1 etc. In fact there is a shortcut for pretty much anything....simply a case of remembering them all...and being able to touch-type would be a distinct advantage! For us lesser mortals a combination of ribbon, mouse and keyboard shortcuts is good enough to get the job done!