



Mini(mize) the Mouse

You probably know by now that overusing the mouse is a major source of problems for computer users. Even if you have a mouse (or other input device) that works properly and fits your hand, and you use it correctly, you are still at risk for experiencing symptoms associated with chronic muscle fatigue. When left untreated, the achy, tender, tight muscles become very painful.

We've written previous articles discussing the dangers of mouse use, and we have promoted the use of keyboard shortcuts for frequently needed commands. Now we'd like to introduce a few additional low-cost or no-cost options that will help you greatly reduce the use of the mouse, even beyond learning shortcuts.

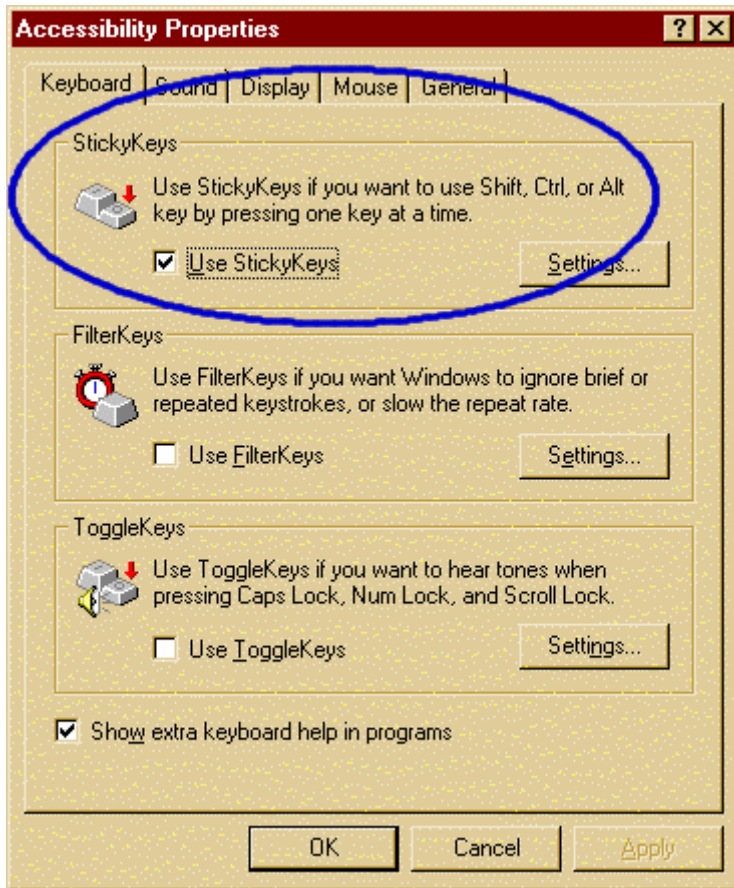
Mozilla is a browser that is absolutely free. Mozilla uses the source code from Netscape Communicator, but it is enhanced primarily through independent open source programmers. Among the enhancements to the Netscape browser, there is a "mouseless" way to navigate web pages using this unique browser. When viewing web pages, it's possible to simply type the first few letters of any link on the page. The software will highlight the links sequentially as you type more letters. Even on a webpage with tons of links, all you have to do is type the initial letters and the link will be activated. Then type the "Enter" key and bang...you go to that page!! No need to touch the mouse at all. The only time this doesn't work is when a link is represented by an image rather than by text (even if the image has been coded with an alternate text tag).

You can download the most recent version of Mozilla from www.mozilla.org. When installing Mozilla, it adopts the profiles you have already set up for Netscape, so it's very easy to get up and running.

PC Only:

One mouse-reducing software package is RSI Guard, which we describe on our Breaktimer webpage. One of the best features of this software is an "auto click" feature, otherwise known as a dwell. The software automatically clicks wherever you have moved the cursor so that you do not have to do any button-clicking yourself. The user can set the delay time before the click occurs. RSI Guard also has a break reminder program. The software can be downloaded from www.RSIguard.com. Try it out for 45 days at no cost! The Standard version (\$40) has the break reminder and autoclick features. The Stretch version (\$65) offers animated stretch exercises as well. This software is only available for Windows.

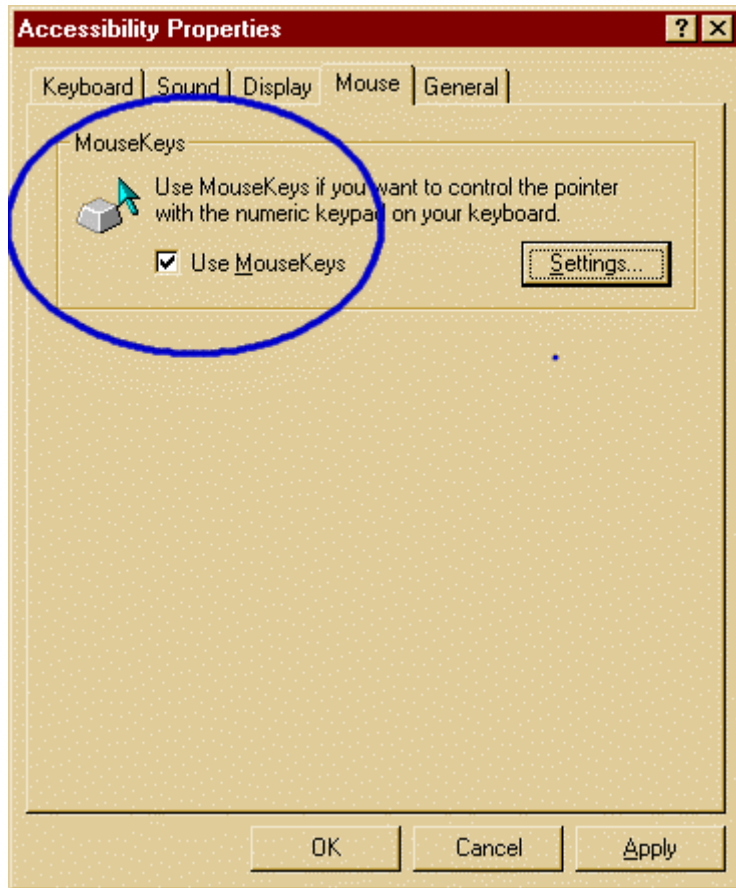
StickyKeys is a software keylatch which allows users to press the Shift, Control or Alt key and then release it, and then press the other key or keys without having to press and hold one or more keys simultaneously, which can cause hand fatigue. It is standard for Windows 95, 98, 2000, ME and XP. From the Start Panel, select Settings, then select Control Panel, then Accessibility Options. On the Keyboard tab, make sure Use StickyKeys is checked. This page is shown below:



Mouse Keys is software that transforms the traditional numeric keypad into a directional mouse. When activated, each number on the numeric keypad controls a direction for the mouse or cursor.

For example, pressing the 6 key on the numeric keypad directs the mouse to the "right". Pressing the 9 key directs the mouse "up & to the right". Pressing the 1 key directs the mouse "down & to the left".

Other keys on the numeric keypad have the functions found with the traditional mouse such as; single click, and drag-lock. Settings allow for adjusting the acceleration and speed of onscreen mouse. Mouse Keys is a standard feature of Accessibility Options in Windows, like StickyKeys is. Access the screen to set it in the same way you set StickyKeys, but choose the Mouse tab on the Accessibility Options panel. It should be set as shown below:



Mac Only:

Universal Access is a control panel extension containing a set of keyboard utilities allowing the user to minimize mouse usage and minimize keystrokes. StickyKeys and Mouse Keys, discussed above under the PC, are one of the Universal Access utilities. Universal Access is a standard part of the Mac operating system. The use of Universal Access features are described in more detail on their website: <http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/universalaccess/>.

Apple recommends that you turn Virtual Memory off when using the Easy Access features. To turn off Virtual Memory, select Control Panels --> Memory from your Apple Menu and click the "off" radio button next to Virtual Memory, then restart your Mac.

There is an incredibly cool website with a wealth of freeware and shareware Mac users. Go to <http://www.eskimo.com/~pristine/index.html>, otherwise known as Pure Mac. There is software available for almost anything imaginable. The "Disabilities" link under the "Education" column will lead you to the Keyboard Launcher 5.4.1 program (\$10) that allows you to program hot keys on your keyboard. Most of the products that will minimize mouse use are under the "System Enhancements" link under the "System" column. We think these three programs are definitely worth investigating:

1. Lite Switch (free) This program emulates the PC "Alt Tab" shortcut which allows you to move between various open windows and applications.
2. Okey Dokey Pro. (free) This is a lot like the RSI Guard software described above, but lucky Mac users get it for free. The software activates the default button in dialogues after a set time.
3. Typelt4Me (\$27) The user can define abbreviations and full text will be automatically typed.