

Introduction to Personal Productivity

As I have said in another module, you will be working on computers for a long time - you should get good at it.

I spend literally 90% of the time in my office on my laptop. I watch lots of other people use computers. I'm not the worst, but, alas, I'm not a PC Virtuoso :(

Here are my top-five productivity tips (today):

1. [Ditto \(Links to an external site.\)](#) - allows you to 'stack' copy & paste. I use this every day.
2. [F.Lux \(Links to an external site.\)](#) - changes your screen color 'temp' - making it possible to use your PC or Mac at night until til you fall asleep.
3. Shortcuts, QuickAccess, Pinned items - make it easier/faster to get to stuff. Use liberally.
4. [AutoHotKey \(Links to an external site.\)](#) - Automates common keyboard routines
5. [Acronis True Image \(Links to an external site.\)](#) - works with local USB & Cloud. \$49/yr. You should ALWAYS have a backup plan!

The last section of this Module highlights one of my favorite paralegal resource sites: "[A Day in the Life of a Litigation Support Guru \(Links to an external site.\)](#)" written by Amy L. Bowser-Rollins. You'll find lots and lots of great tips there for anyone engaged in law firm automation and productivity. You should subscribe!

Outlook tricks

As another article in this Module states: ***Your Mouse is Evil!*** Learn every keyboard trick you can to avoid using it. These are my favorite Outlook keyboard tricks. (You will find many more [here \(Links to an external site.\)](#).)

- Use **Alt-S** to send a message instead of moving the mouse to the Send button
- Use **Ctrl-S** to save a message. Few things in life are as painful as typing a lengthy email and watching it disappear due to a power glitch, Windows/Mac error, etc.
- Use **Ctrl-N** to create a new email message
- Use **Ctrl-1** to move to email pane, **Ctrl-2** to move to Calendar pane, **Ctrl-6** to go to the folder pane.
- Use **Ctrl-O** to Open a message, **Ctrl-F** to forward a message, **Ctrl-R** to reply
- If you open a message and discover that you need to deal with it later, use **Ctrl-U** to mark it as unread.
- Use **Ctrl-Home** to go to the top of the inbox, **Ctrl-End** to go to the bottom.

Strategy tip: Only read email when you can deal with it. I look at mail all day - it is a drug I can hardly resist :(But the rule I try to enforce is: ***only look at mail when you have the time to deal with it.***

Seth just wrote an excellent article for The Indiana Lawyer *Start Page*: [Outlook Quick Steps can break email full-court press \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

P.S. I just can't help but mention my favorite Word shortcut: Alt+F R then 1, 2, 3 etc. It quickly allows you to open a recent file. I use it all the time.

Google tricks

Most people don't know that Google offers powerful search commands that can narrow your results to find more relevant information faster. I wrote about this in The Indiana Lawyer a few years ago.

[Start Page: Tips to make Google searches more effective](#)

Your Mouse is Evil!

I have been using computers since before they became the principal entertainment tool for the dimwitted. That basically means before the advent of the [GUI \(Links to an external site.\)](#). (Watch for this on the Quiz!)

With GUIs came [APA \(Links to an external site.\)](#) displays and mice. You will find a fascinating history of the computer mouse [here \(Links to an external site.\)](#).



Before the mouse, software developers had to be content with keyboards as the only input mechanism. Good news for humans: [almost] everyone has ten fingers and keyboards have evolved to make almost all of them useful.

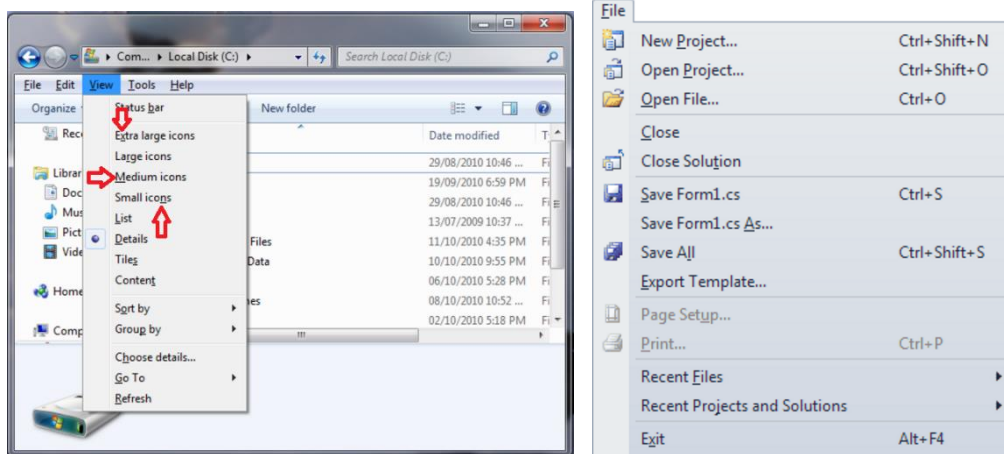
Mice allowed you to 'point and click' - liberating programs' input designs - but that required taking your hands off the keyboard. What is worse, a mouse needed to be positioned carefully with the cooperation of dozens of muscles and moving a pound or more of meat and bone (your arm!) There is nothing more frustrating than watching a person aim a mouse pointer at a tiny patch of screen, holding the mouse steady, then clicking on the space next to the target. Even when the aim is exact and the click is perfect, this choreography may take a few seconds for the round trip back to the keyboard and typing. (Don't get me started about the futility of using your finger to tap the screen - arghh!)

This advance in technology hurt productivity in many applications even though it made some programs easier to use. Many of my customers remember the days of 'green screen' computers where applications were less friendly but people got more done using them.

The answer is to eliminate the mouse wherever and whenever you can.

You may not have noticed the underlined letter in many menu commands. Those are there to alert you to the key-combination that performs the same function without

moving the mouse. Many programs have them - but few are used as much as they can be. You may also find shortcuts listed in the menu text itself.



[Ribbon menus \(Links to an external site.\)](#) have all but done away with those shortcut markers in modern programs, but shortcuts are still available - you just need to know where to find them. (Ribbons became important as the numbers of features of office programs spiraled out of control.) Someday I suppose you will just talk to your software to tell it what you want to do. I hope I'm not in the same room with you!

I found this great article on Lifehacker.com: "[Back to Basics: Learn to Use Keyboard Shortcuts Like a Ninja \(Links to an external site.\)](#)."

One final Windows trick on this subject: never click on program shortcuts to run programs - type the program name (sometime just part of the name will do) into the Start/Search box. This little trick saves me an hour a week. It starts by pressing the Windows Key. This presents you with an entry line in which to type the name of the program you want to run. On my PC all I need to do to start Word is press the Windows Key, then enter w followed by Enter. I start Excel by entering e.



You'll find alternative ways to start programs using shortcuts in this CNet article: "[Open programs with keyboard shortcuts in Windows 10 \(Links to an external site.\)](#)."

If you turn elimination of the mouse into a game you will be rewarded with hours more productivity a month.

As I've said elsewhere: you are going to be using a computer for a long time, you ought to get good at it!

Personal Productivity Files

Here are the files for this week's reading and comment. The principles are timeless.

Two of my favorite authors, Will & Ariel Durant, wrote [The Story of Civilization. \(Links to an external site.\)](#) In their summary of that work, [Lessons of History. \(Links to an external site.\)](#) they concluded:

"Means and instrumentalities change; motives and ends remain the same"

So it is with productivity using any tool. Keep learning better ways to get more done in less time and you will gain the prize of having more time to do whatever you want to do!

Readings:

1. [Technology for Time Management](#) 
2. [Secure Your Life with a Password Manager \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
3. [Start Page: to-do list adjustments to help beat procrastination \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
4. [Drag and Drop your way to a more productive day \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
5. [Make the most of your 24 hours with workflow planning \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
6. [A Matter of Time \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
7. [Keyboard shortcuts for Windows \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
8. Optional: Podcast [How Lawyers can do more in less time \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
9. Specially for the Attention Deficit like me . . .

I found myself having an idea pop into my head, or an important task, and just as quickly vanish. This really upset me because some of those lost ideas could have really made a difference.

There are lots of 'to-do' list managers. Microsoft thought enough of this category of software that they bought [Wunderlist \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and recently rebranded it [Microsoft To-Do \(Links to an external site.\)](#). I personally like (and pay for) [Todoist. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

The feature I liked best about Todoist is the widget they make for my Google Pixel. Now when I have a million dollar idea I can add an item to my to do list as quickly as I can press the widget icon on my home screen, click the microphone button, and start talking.

You may prefer to say: 'Hey Siri' or 'OK Google' and add a note or item to another to do list with voice commands. If you can improve on my '1 second' solution let me know. For me the difference of a few seconds was a deal breaker.