Smileys, and New Shortcuts

All of you upgraded to Windows 10, version 1909 after last month's newsletter, right? (Uh, probably not.) But for those of you who are running your computers with the newest version of Windows, there are new features.

Smileys

We've been inserting special characters into documents for years using the built-in program CharMap, or Character Map. And it's still there; just click Start (the Windows logo key), and type CharMap. Or for WordPerfect users, Ctrl-W does the same thing inside a document.

But these features don't have full-color emoji pictures. Press and hold the Start button, and tap the period for the new character inserter, which lets you add emojis, old-fashioned ASCII art of emojis, and special characters. The emojis don't work in all programs; old software doesn't know what to do with them ,The third section, marked with the Ω or Omega, holds a large scrollable selection of international

characters, and those work in nearly all programs that can edit text. At the bottom of each page, click that bottom row for more categories of pictures and characters.

Active Hours Gets a Little Creepy

Active hours in Windows 10 lets you set the time when it's OK to reboot the computer and install updates. The early versions of it were greedy, assuming that you can't work more than 8 hours, the same 8 hours, every day. There have been improvements, but now Windows can automatically track your activity and choose a time to restart outside of your typical work hours. It's watching you; not sure if that's an improvement in every way.

To turn on the new options, go to Settings (Start button, then the Gear icon), type 'active' in the search box, and go to 'Change Active Hours'.

Big Fonts

Adjusting the size of screen fonts is easier now, with more options, and it no longer requires logging out to see the results. Note that not every program will have larger fonts, and some programs may have larger fonts on some parts of the screen and not others. It depends on whether the programmer set the font sizes as numbers, or as a percentage of a Windows font size setting, so results will vary.

The option is also in Settings, as above, search for 'big', and choose 'Make text bigger. Adjust the slider, and click Apply to see what happens. Avoid extremes here; if you set the font size above 130%, some Windows messages may go off the bottom edge of the screen.

Big Mouse

If you work with multiple monitors, or a small monitor, sometimes the mouse pointer and the insertion point are hard to see Making them bigger and bolder was previously done in the settings for icon sets; choose Extra Large or High Contrast Now, go to Settings, Ease of Access, Cursor & pointer, and you can choose options for pointers and insertion points

Extending the Clipboard

This has been available since the 1809 update in late 2018, but it's worth repeating: Paste has been Ctrl-V for over 25 years now. You should all know the shortcuts for copy (Ctrl-C), Cut (Ctrl-X), and Paste (Ctrl-V); they're just the fastest way to work in Windows, and will frequently work even when there are no clipboard options in the program menu or right-click menu.

Now there's another, Win-V. That's the Windows logo key, pressed with V. That brings up the last few items you've copied or cut, and allows pasting any of them from the list. If that doesn't work, you will have to turn on the feature; it's in Settings, Clipbord. Turn on 'Clipboard History'.

Each item in the clipboard list has a menu icon; that's the 3 dots at the top right. You can choose to pin an item, if it's something you don't want to fall off the list as you copy and paste newer items.

More Keyboard Shortcuts & New Features?

Yes, there are many more new features in Windows 1909. You can look at a longer list than just those above by pressing Start (the Windows icon or keyboard button), typing 'Update', click on 'Check for Updates', and then tap on 'Explore new features' at the top right.
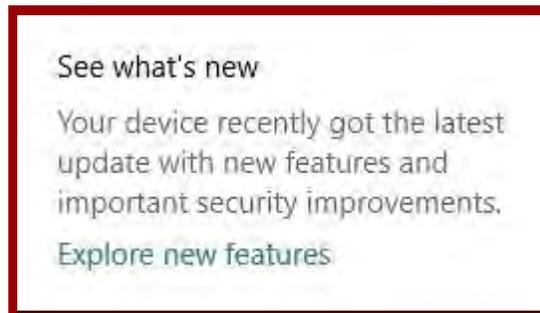
And for keyboard shortcuts for all versions of Windows 10, ask me for a shortcut card when you see me. Or you can download the keyboard shortcut chart as a PDF, here:
https://www.pc410.com/shortcut
On that page, there are also links for shortcut lists for Windows 7 and 8.1.

The Importance of Not Being Admin

So let me tell you about last week, and advance apologies if you recognize yourself, or congratulations for most of you. Most computer users received phishing emails, usually one or two lines of text stressing the urgency of opening the attached document. Being very, very short, they got past spam filters. As the senders' emails were clearly overseas or unknown, most of these were deleted immediately. Four similar messages remained, one of them in my account here.

Of those that remained, some users opened the mystery attachment, and were presented with a message from Microsoft Word to enable editing and enable

macros. One user stopped at that point, and asked me to look at it. My answer: The sending email address is in Japan, and no one you do business with, but just a minute, I'll drag that document into VirusTotal.com for a quck test in multiple security programs. Yes, it's a banking trojan, dangerous--that's software that steals bank credentials and email logins. Hold down Shift while clicking Delete to skip the trash folder. No damage. Three remaning, one here.

So I opened my copy, and opened the attached document manually in 'anything but Word', which means open the doc file in either WordPerfect or LibreOffice, and it showed a big graphic asking the user to enable editing and macros. WordPerfect and LibreOffice can't launch embedded Word macro code (software, basically) from inside a document, so that copy of the email was no danger. Two remain.
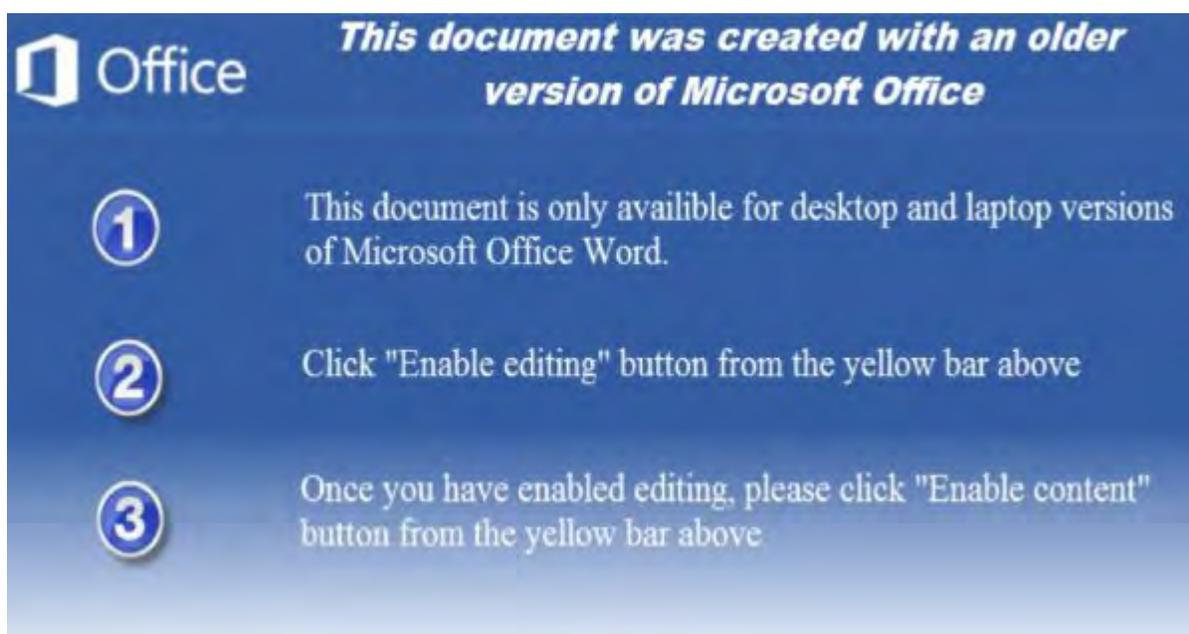
The next user opened the document, while using an Administrator-level account, enabled the document because it said to do so on the screen, and their security software quarantined the software, but not in time to stop it from grabbing the email address and password from Outlook and phoning home with them to the 'command and control system', which then logged into the email account and replied to every message it found with another copy of the malware; my copy of the message came from one of those replies. They're particularly sneaky, and only started showing up in 2019, where a message arrives that shows your message to someone, basically the replies at the bottom, plus an 'important' document attached with a message of fake urgency at the top. This user's systems needed some additional cleanup, new email passwords, and a switch to a non-admin account. And for some time, that user's name will appear on more malware messages to people they know.

And the last user did exactly the same thing: opened the document, and tried to enable editing, but did not have Administrator rights on the computer, so the

embedded software in the document could not run, which gave the security software an opportunity to quarantine it. Warning messages appeared, but no damage was done, and no additional cleanup was needed.

Never Admin

Microsoft did a study a few years ago, and found that over 90% of all malware is stopped by not having administrator rights. Nobody should be working in an administrator-level account for anything but installing software or configuring the system. Never web surf or answer emails from an admin account.

That other 10% ? That's stopped by running an up-to-date operating system, automated bug patching of third-party software, plus good Endpoint Protection software (formerly known as anti-virus), and adding user education (send me your employee email addresses to add to this newsletter). As always, call if you need help turning off those administrator accounts.