

Cut, Copy and Paste

Time-saving power at your fingertips

Pull down the Edit menu on almost any Windows program and you will see *Cut*, *Copy* and *Paste* on the list of options. Almost everyone uses the tools at one time or another—whether it's in a graphics program or a word processing program. But unless you've experimented with your software and dug a little deeper into its functions, you may be missing out on some of the power of those three little commands.

Most commands in most Windows programs have shortcut keys associated with them. Shortcut keys allow the user to combine two keyboard keys together to cause the action to occur. In the case of *Cut*, the shortcut keys are <Ctrl>-X. Press and hold the Control key then hit the X key. For *Copy*, the shortcut keys are <Ctrl>-C and for *Paste*, use <Ctrl>-V. If you are ever unsure, click the Edit menu. When that drops down, you will see the shortcut beside each command. Of all the shortcut keys available in Windows, these three may be the most important ones to remember. (See *My top 10 Windows Shortcut Keys* on page 24 for more helpful shortcuts.)



Here's a typical Edit pull-down menu. This one is from the Graphix Advantage Composer in Gerber's Omega software. Note the shortcut keys beside many of the commands. The optional shortcut keys you can use while in the pull-down are underscored.

How they work When you cut or copy a "selected" block of text or a graphic, it is temporarily stored in RAM in an area called the Clipboard. RAM stands for Random Access Memory. These are the memory chips that are the "workspace" your computer uses to hold the portion of the program you're using plus the data you've entered. That data is not stored to the hard disk until you save it—it's just sitting on a memory chip while you use the program to work with it. When the computer is turned off (or the power fails!), these memory chips go blank.

In most cases, the Clipboard can store one item at a time. Once placed there, it remains on the Clipboard until replaced with another item—or until the computer is shut down. Say you use *Cut* to place a graphic from your design onto the Clipboard, and then use

Copy to place some text to the Clipboard. The graphic will be replaced.

You can use this to your advantage. When a large graphic or block of text is copied or cut to the Clipboard, it uses some of the system resources—mainly the RAM. This can slow your system down. Some programs, such as Adobe Photoshop, have a command (click *Edit* | *Purge* in Photoshop) that will let you purge the information stored on the Clipboard to free these resources. But, a simple trick is to select a small element such as a single letter or word and copying that to the Clipboard. Presto! Your available RAM may have increased by a few megs.

Let's take a closer look at these commands

CUT (<Ctrl>-X): You can use this command similar to the Delete key, but it gives you a safety net. I use it more often than the *Delete* command. The *Cut* command places the information on the Clipboard for an extended period. You can cut (or copy) information to the Clipboard and close the file. Then you can open or create a new file and the information on the Clipboard is still available to be pasted into that same file—or any other file. Unlike the Delete key, you can change your mind and place the cut image back in the open file.

Some programs will let you undo a command, or even a series of commands. That's a great tool. But, as soon as you save the file the information stored in the *Undo* command is usually tossed. So be careful if you rely on *Undo* to save you!

COPY (<Ctrl>-C): I probably use this command more often than the *Cut* command. While the Windows Clipboard is not 100% cross-program compatible, text, charts and graphics and so forth can often be copied and pasted from one program to another. This feature gets better and more reliable with each new version of Windows. For the most part, however, I rely on the power of this feature while working within a program.

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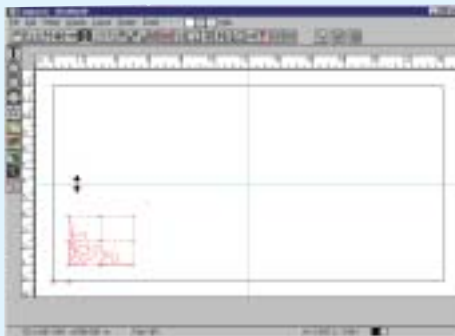
Cut and Paste makes creating this border a two-minute project

With the *Copy* and *Paste* (*Paste Back*) commands, it is easy to create borders, corners and symmetric shapes in most programs. I use Gerber's Graphix Advantage and Omega software, so here's how it works there. I usually create a box that represents the size and shape of the sign panel (on my screen, of course, it's smaller than actual size). Once the panel is established, I add in a horizontal and vertical centerline to help with alignment. If I place a corner ornament in the lower left corner at the exact position I want it, I *Copy* the corner (to the Clipboard). Then I do a *Horizontal Flip* of the lower left corner over the horizontal centerline with *Snap to Guideline* turned on.

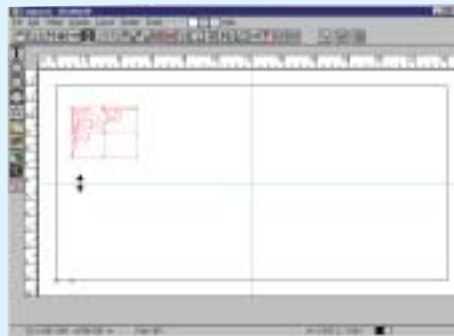
Now the corner is upside down in the upper left

corner of my sign. I hit the *Paste Back* command and the original corner is replaced in its exact position. I select both corners and *Copy* both of them with $\langle \text{Ctrl} \rangle - C$ and do a *Vertical Flip* over the vertical centerline. At this point I have an exact duplicate (flipped) of the original corners on the right side of the panel. When I hit the *Paste Back* command, the first two corners are replaced in their original positions. Now I use the *Node Editing* tools to connect all the lines from the corner ornaments to create my border. In Graphix Advantage and Omega, the shortcut command for *Paste Back* is Alt-E and then B. You can make a panel with a decorative border using an imported or placed corner ornament in less than two minutes with the help of the shortcut commands.

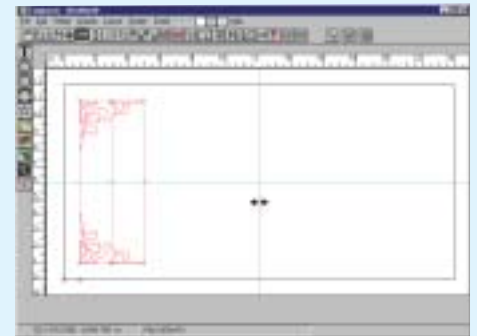
This sequence was intended to show the *Copy* and *Paste* commands in action. Ordinarily, I would have deleted the two little end segments on the corner ornament when I first placed it—before I ever copied it to the Clipboard. Then the flipped and pasted back corners would have both had open ends. I would have connected the corners on the left side, and then copied the resulting left side design to the Clipboard. Once that design was flipped over the vertical guideline and *Pasted Back*, I would have only had to connect the line segments at the top and bottom using the node editor—saving myself a few more steps. —M.J.



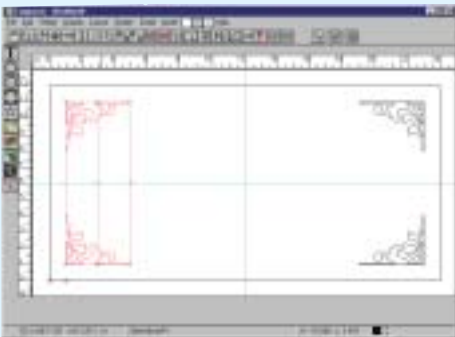
I started with a 12-by-24-in. panel. Then I added centerlines to aid with positioning—a horizontal guideline 6 in. from the top and a vertical guideline 12 in. from the left. I chose a corner ornament from our Main Street Collection [Golden Era Studios, 800-361-0815, www.goldenstudios.com] and positioned it 1 in. from the left and bottom edges in the lower left corner. With $\langle \text{Ctrl} \rangle - C$, I copied it to the Clipboard.



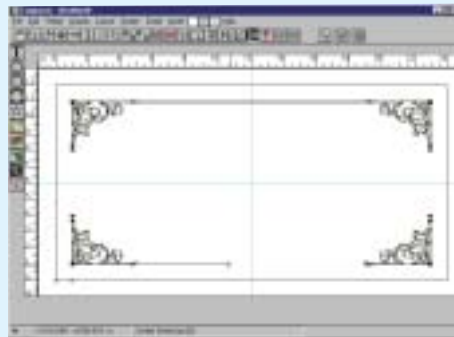
I flipped the selected ornament (which had already been copied to the Clipboard) over the horizontal guideline (with *Snap to Guideline* turned on) with the *Flip* tool. You can click on the tool icon, or just press F, which is the shortcut, once the image is selected.



Once the original corner was flipped to the top over the centerline, I used the *Paste Back* command to replace the original corner in position. Then I selected both corners and copied them to the Clipboard with $\langle \text{Ctrl} \rangle - C$. I flipped both of the currently selected corners over the vertical centerline. Again, you can click on the *Flip* tool icon, or just press $\langle \text{Ctrl} \rangle - F$, which is the shortcut, while the image is selected.



Again I used the *Paste Back* command to paste the two corners I had copied to the Clipboard earlier back in their original positions. Now all four corners were in position.



I used the node editor to delete the line segments at the ends of the ornaments and then connected all the open segments to create "closed" cuttable shapes.



Here's how the finished border looked. This entire process takes less than two minutes to produce (using a pre-existing corner).

Copy works basically the same as Cut, except Copy places an exact copy of the selected object or text into the Clipboard without removing it from the screen. If I have a line of text that I want to distort, I copy the selected line of text, then play with distortion using the utilities. If I make a few distortions but don't like the result, I simply delete the unsatisfactory element and paste the original back into the design and try again. I don't even have to make a new copy of the original text, because it remains on the Clipboard. If I don't like the second distortion attempt, I delete it and replace it again using the Paste command.

PASTE (<Ctrl>-V): I never liked the letter they chose for the shortcut key, but <Ctrl>-P was already used as the shortcut key to Print! Paste will put whatever you have stored on the Clipboard into the current open graphic or text box. The Paste command works the same in most programs, but there are a few distinctions. Quite a few graphics programs will paste the image back on the work surface at the exact coordinates that it was originally cut or copied from. That's my preference, but some programs require you to locate the new position of the graphic

CorelDraw, for example, pastes graphics back to its original position. Gerber's Graphix Advantage and Omega give you two options. If you use the Paste command, the pasted object will be placed in the center of the computer screen—even if you are off center or zoomed in. It is a nice feature if you know what to expect. If you use *Paste Back* (also found under the Edit Menu), it pastes the Clipboard information back to the original coordinates. Experiment with your software to see how it handles pasting.

A few Cut/Copy/Paste tips and tricks Most information stored on the Clipboard is either in the form of a graphic or ASCII text. These are apples and oranges—they're different. You can't paste a graphic image into a box that is looking for text or vice versa. For example, I use the Windows Calculator (Start | Programs | Accessories | Calculator) a lot—often when figuring the sales tax required in a field in an Excel spreadsheet. Once I calculate the amount, I use the Copy command (<Ctrl>-C) to copy that amount to the Clipboard. Then I click on the appropriate cell on the spreadsheet to put the cursor there and I use the Paste command (<Ctrl>-V) to put the calculator's total there. That data, the total, is ASCII text.

If a client sent you a Word document, you can select the text you need (say the copy for a menu sign) and copy it to the Clipboard.



I keep a shortcut on my desktop for the Windows Calculator, but you can also click Start | Programs | Accessories to get to it. In this example, I multiplied or divided to get this amount. I copied the amount to the Clipboard to be pasted into another dialog box.



In this case, I picked the *Absolute Size* tool. You can pull down the Shape menu and click on *Absolute Size*. I pressed the shortcut, Alt-F+S, then used <Ctrl>-V to paste in the result from the Calculator as the Height entry. Not only is this fast, but it reduces typing errors.

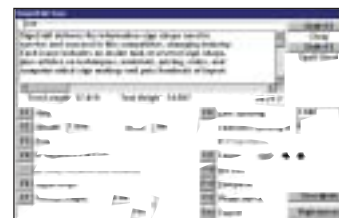
Open your sign program, go to the section of the program where you would normally enter all the text and click there to place the cursor. Use the Paste command (<Ctrl>-V) and the text is there, ready for you to start working with. You save the typing, plus you're sure you are using the exact spelling and punctuation the client gave you.

The catch is that many programs do not make this feature easy to find—you have to know the standard Windows shortcut keys for Copy and Paste. The feature may not even be shown as an option within some menus. You can even use this command while on the Internet by selecting a long URL Web address then copy and paste it easily wherever you need it.

There are many other places within your programs where you generate ASCII text, which can be copied and pasted. In Gerber's Graphix Advantage and Omega programs, there is a tool called the Measure Tool. You click the cursor at one position on the graphic



You can select and copy text from word processing documents, Web pages or an E-mail and paste it elsewhere. In this example, I went to the *SignCraft* Web site [www.signcraft.com], selected a paragraph and copied it with <Ctrl>-C.



Next, I opened the Edit/Enter Text window in Gerber's Graphix Advantage 6.2. I used the <Ctrl>-V shortcut command to paste in the text from the *SignCraft* Web site.

Mike Jackson

to set the beginning point and move the cursor to the end of the item you want to measure. The distance between the points is displayed in the dialog box along with the angle from horizontal that those points lie. That measurement might end up being something like 6.2367 in. If you want another shape on the drawing board to be the exact size, you can select that item or shape, select the *Absolute Size* command, then hit <Ctrl>-V. This pastes that long value in the box—no typing, no errors. Click Okay and the selected object will be changed to exactly that size. Explore your program and watch for instances where copied and pasted information will save you time.

Copying and Pasting graphics It's obvious that you can copy and paste graphics within your programs with little or no effort. Curves remain smooth. Points and Bezier curves of a pasted object will be exactly the same as the original. While within your favorite program's environment, all's well. While some programs can maintain smooth curves and exact points

when files are copied from one program to another, some stumble a bit. The smooth Bezier curves of the original graphic may have been chopped into a series of line segments, creating larger files and ones that are much harder to edit. When this happens, I export the files into a compatible file format instead of using the Cut, Copy and Paste commands.

This article won't make you a power shortcut user, but if you're not using them now, you'll see some of their power. Mac users have access to similar shortcut keys, but the Mac keyboard uses a command key instead of the control key. *SC



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My top 10 Windows Shortcut Keys

Microsoft established a few keyboard combinations to be used as program standards. They work within just about any Windows program. Usually, you first hold down the Control key and then one more key to execute the action.

There are often several ways to get to a specific shortcut command. Along the top of a Windows program screen are the pull-down menu headings such as "File | Edit | View | Tools | Window | Help" and so forth. One letter (usually the first one) of most menu headings is underscored. To access that pull-down menu from the keyboard, simply hold down the Alt key and press the underscored letter. Alt-E, for example, will bring down the Edit menu. Once the Edit menu is pulled down, you will see a list of various options or commands.

To the right of most commands are the Windows shortcuts. However, under the actual word there will usually be a single letter underscored. That is the optional shortcut key for that command, and while the pull-down menu is down, you only need to type that letter to use the command. For example, <Ctrl>-S is the standard Windows shortcut to save the open document. But I have been using the Alt-F + S command for so long, I rarely use <Ctrl>-S.

Within any Windows-based program you will find a variety of shortcut commands that will work in only that program. The *Paste Back* command in Gerber's software might not exist in other graphics programs. In those cases, you need to learn how to access the optional "non-standard" shortcut keys. Most programs include a Shortcut key and Menu Quick Reference Card to help you find and understand the commands.

This Top 10 List is compiled from the basic commands that you might use dozens of times in a single session in front of the computer. Many people have a hard time leaving the mouse alone since it is so easy to use, but if you try to use some of these basic commands, you'll see their power and the time they can save you. —M.J.

New File: <Ctrl>-N or (Alt-F + N)

Open File: <Ctrl>-O or (Alt-F + O)

Save File: <Ctrl>-S or (Alt-F + S)

Print: <Ctrl>-P or (Alt-F + P)

Copy: <Ctrl>-C or (Control-Insert)

Cut: <Ctrl>-X

Paste: <Ctrl>-V or (Shift-Insert)

F1: Help

Select All: <Ctrl>-A or (Alt-E + L) (In Gerber F2)

Undo: <Ctrl>-Z or (Alt-E + U)