

## Fix Annoying Problems with Your Keyboard in Simple Steps

This article shows you:

- ✓ Why your keyboard is producing the wrong characters
- ✓ How to stop repeated key presses and ACCIDENTAL CAPITALS
- ✓ How to salvage text you've lost by accident

The keyboard has been with us as long as the computer itself, and apart from the addition of a few keys, it's barely changed. It's tried and tested, and absurdly simple. So what could possibly go wrong?

Well, quite a lot as it turns out! In this article, I'll explain the common ways in which the keyboard can catch you out, and show you the steps to put things right.



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### Why Does My Keyboard Think I'm American?

Your keyboard behaves as if it has a US layout

In fact, your keyboard might equally think you're German or Italian or Norwegian, but in the most common examples of this problem it thinks you're American. In other words, it behaves as though it's a keyboard with a US layout rather than a British layout.

Locations of characters are swapped around

There isn't much difference between the two layouts, but there's enough to cause you problems. When you press **(Shift) + (2)** to type a double-quote symbol (") you get an '@' sign, and when you press **(Shift) + ')** for an '@' sign you get a double-quote. If you try to type a £ symbol (**(Shift) + (3)**) you get a '#' symbol, and no combination of keys will give you a £ symbol any more.



What causes this? Well, it's been known to happen spontaneously for no obvious reason: apparently Windows has simply got confused and has reverted to its default keyboard layout, the US layout.

It can also happen if your PC has been away for repair and Windows was reinstalled. During the installation, Windows offers a choice of keyboard layouts, with the American layout selected by default, and a slapdash technician might just skip past this without bothering to change it.

Switch back to the familiar UK layout

Whatever the reason for this, you want to return your keyboard to the familiar British layout, so follow the appropriate steps below for your version of Windows:

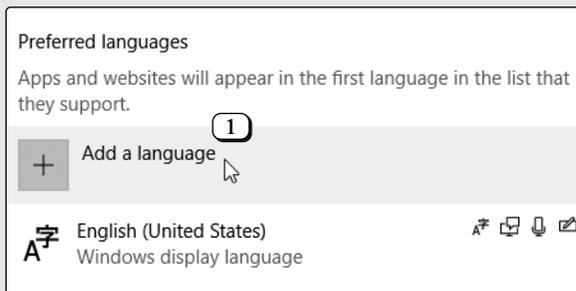
#### Windows 10



1. Open the Start menu and click the cog icon near the bottom-left corner (or press the key combination **(Windows) + (L)** to open the Settings app.

## Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems T 996/3

2. In the Settings window, click on **Time & Language**, then click on **Region & language** at the left of the window.
3. Below the heading **Preferred languages**, you'll see an item named 'English (United States)' (or named after whichever 'wrong' language you've found yourself stuck with). Do you also see one named 'English (United Kingdom)'? If you do, jump ahead to step 6.
4. If you don't see an 'English (United Kingdom)' item, you need to add it, so click on **Add a language** (1).



5. In the panel that pops open, click in the box at the top containing the text 'Type a language name...' and type **english**. The list below will change to show all the variants of the English language. Scroll to the bottom of the list, click on **English (United Kingdom)** and click the **Next** button followed by the **Install** button. This takes you back to the 'Preferred languages' list you saw a moment ago, where you'll see that your new language has been added.
6. Click on **English (United Kingdom)** and several buttons appear below it. Click on **Options** (2).

Is UK English shown in the list?

If not, it must be added

## T 996/4 Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems



Make sure it has a UK English keyboard

Move this language to the top of the list...

...and remove the unwanted language

7. On the next page, below the 'Keyboards' heading, do you see **United Kingdom|QWERTY**? If you do, that's ideal – click the arrow in the top-left corner of the window to go back and then jump to step 9.
8. If you see some other keyboard instead – the 'wrong' keyboard! – click on **Add a keyboard**, and choose **United Kingdom|QWERTY**. With that keyboard now added to the list, click the unwanted 'wrong' keyboard and choose **Remove**. Now click the arrow in the top-left corner of the window to go back.
9. Now, once again, you're returned to that 'Preferred languages' list, which now contains 'English (United Kingdom)', properly set up with its matching keyboard. Click on **English (United Kingdom)** and click the upward-pointing arrow-button (3) to move this language to the top of the list.
10. The final step is to delete the unwanted language you were saddled with: click on **English (United States)** (or whichever language it was) and click the **Remove** button. You can now close this Settings window by clicking the x in its top-right corner.

# Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems T 996/5

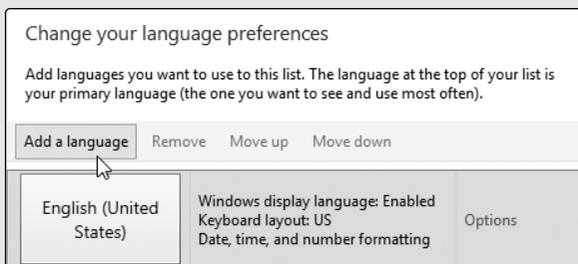
## Windows 8.1

1. Starting at the desktop, press  +  to open the Charms bar at the right of the screen and then click **Settings** followed by **Control Panel**.
2. In the Control Panel window, below the large words 'Clock, Language, and Region', click on **Add a language**.
3. In the page that appears, pictured below, you'll see an item named 'English (United States)' (or named after whichever 'wrong' keyboard language you've been saddled with). Do you also see one named 'English (United Kingdom)'? If so, jump ahead to step 7.
4. If you don't see an 'English (United Kingdom)' item, you need to add it, so click on **Add a language**.



Select the UK  
English  
keyboard...

...or add it to  
the list



5. This takes you to a page containing a large box listing languages in alphabetical order. Scroll down to reach the 'E' section and double-click on **English**.

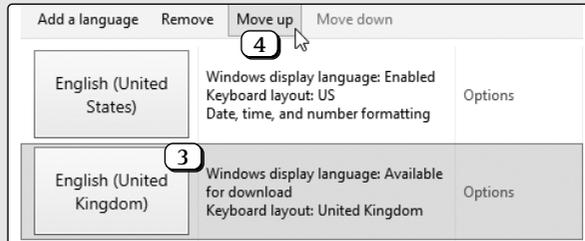


# T 996/6 Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems

6. Now you'll see a list of all the possible variants of English. Click on **English (United Kingdom)** (1) and then click the **Add** button (2). This takes you back to the page you saw in step 3.



7. Click the **English (United Kingdom)** item (3) to select it and then click the **Move up** button (4) to move it to the top of the list.



Move the UK layout to the top of the list

8. Now click the **English (United States)** item (5) (or whichever 'wrong' language it is that you're seeing in the list) and click the **Remove** button (6).



9. Now the list contains only **English (United Kingdom)**, and your keyboard will be behaving itself again. Close the Control Panel window by clicking the x in its top-right corner.

Remove the US layout

## Windows 7

1. Open the Start menu and click on **Control Panel**.
2. Below the large words 'Clock, Language, and Region' click the words **Change keyboards or other input methods**. In the dialog that opens, click the **Change keyboards** button.
3. Now you'll see the dialog pictured in the following screenshot. The drop-down list at the top (1) will currently show **English (United States)** (or whichever unwanted keyboard layout you've been saddled with). Open this drop-down list and see whether **English (United Kingdom)** appears in the list. If it does, select it and then jump to step 7. If it doesn't, continue following these steps.
4. As you didn't have a UK English option available in the drop-down list, we need to add it, so click the **Add** button (2) and another dialog will open.



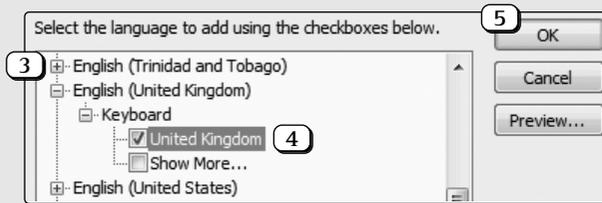
Select the UK English keyboard...

...or add it to the list



## T 996/8 Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems

5. Scroll down the alphabetical list of languages until you find **English (United Kingdom)** and click the little + sign to its left (3). Next, click the plus sign beside the word **Keyboard** that has just appeared, tick the box beside **United Kingdom** (4) and click **OK** (5).



Choose the  
UK layout

Done!

6. This returns you to the dialog you reached in step 3. Once again, open the drop-down list at the top of the dialog where you'll see that **English (United Kingdom)** has been added. Select that item.
7. Click the **OK** button at the bottom of this dialog, then **OK** again in any other dialogs you opened along the way, and finally close the Control Panel window by clicking the x button in its top-right corner. You'll now find that your keyboard has been returned to its usual British English layout.

## The Numeric Keypad Has Stopped Typing Numbers

The group of  
keys at the right  
of the keyboard

On a full-sized keyboard, the 'numeric keypad' is a rectangular group of keys at the right of the keyboard. (On smaller keyboards, such as those built into notebook computers, you'll find the numeric keypad somewhere else, and we'll turn to that in the next topic.)

## Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems T 996/9

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This group of keys is mainly used as a finger-friendly way of entering numbers and arithmetical symbols when using a calculator or spreadsheet program. It tends to be easier than using the number keys on the top row of the keyboard, and it allows you to type a + or \* sign without needing the Shift key.

So, if you start tapping the number keys here and nothing seems to happen, you might well wonder if you've broken something. In fact, though, there's a simple answer: the numeric keypad only produces numbers if the **Num Lock** key is switched on. If it isn't, those keys act as a second set of navigation keys (Home, End, Page Up, Page Down, Insert, Delete and arrow keys).

On most full-sized keyboards, you'll find the **Num Lock** key in the top-left corner of this little group. One press turns it on, another press turns it off again, and it's easy to press it by mistake. (On some keyboards, a little lamp lights up to indicate that Num Lock is switched on and the numeric keypad is in 'numbers mode'.)

On a slightly-smaller keyboard, you may not have a dedicated **Num Lock** key, but one whose function is combined with another key – often one of the function keys (**F1** to **F12**). Have a look around for a key that includes the words **Num Lock** along with something else: if you see one, it's quite likely that your keyboard also has a key labelled **Fn** – probably on the bottom row – and pressing **Fn** + **Num Lock** toggles the numeric keypad on and off.

Easily type numbers and arithmetical symbols...

...but only if **Num Lock** is enabled!



### Some of My Letter Keys Have Started Typing Numbers

This is a lovely little trap for users of compact keyboards – the sort built into notebook PCs or bought as accessories for tablet computers.

Numbers and symbols rather than letters?

# T 996/10 Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems

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You try to type a 'u' and you get a '4', or you press the 'm' key and get a '0'. But there's no obvious logic to it: most of the other keys are still behaving themselves, so the 'd' or 'w' or 'g' still work as expected. The answer: it's that Num Lock feature at work again!

Some keys  
double as a  
numeric  
keypad...

On compact keyboards, there isn't space to provide a separate numeric keypad, so some of the keys towards the right of the keyboard do double duty. When the Num Lock key is switched on, the letter and punctuation keys grouped around the JKL area behave as a numeric keypad instead, producing numbers and arithmetical symbols, while the keys further to the left still behave as normal.

...when Num  
Lock is enabled

If you find yourself in this situation, the reason must be that you've accidentally switched on the numeric keypad, so the solution is to turn it off again. As explained above, it's quite likely that one of the function keys at the top of the keyboard will toggle Num Lock on and off when combined with the **(Fn)** key.

## Some Keys are Repeating Several Times

Repeated  
characters?

Do you sometimes find that the same character appears two or three times in quick succession while you're typing, when you only wanted it once? If so, there are two possible reasons.

The first is that there may be dust, crumbs or hairs under the keys which are causing them to stick a little. If so, turn the keyboard upside down and try giving it a few shakes and taps to dislodge the debris.

Increase the  
'repeat delay'

The second reason may be a combination of your typing technique and a setting in Windows. If you tend to type slowly and deliberately, you may pause on a key a little longer than normal. However, unlike a typewriter, the keys on a computer keyboard repeat: when you hold down a key, it fires once (giving you one character) and, after a short pause, fires repeatedly until you release it.

# Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems T 996/11

Rather than changing your technique, the simple solution is to change this setting so that Windows gives you a longer pause before repeating the key:

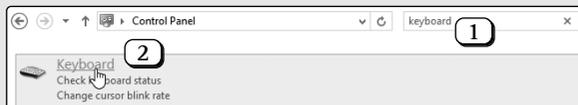
1. We need to begin by opening the Windows Control Panel, so follow the appropriate step below for your version of Windows:

**Windows 10:** open the Start menu, type the word control and then click the link to **Control Panel** that appears in the search results.

**Windows 8.1:** at the desktop, press  +  to open the Charms bar, then click **Settings** followed by **Control Panel**.

**Windows 7:** open the Start menu, click **Control Panel**.

2. Click in the 'Search' box in the top-right corner of the window and type the word **keyboard**  then click the large word **Keyboard** that appears below .



3. In any version of Windows, you'll now be looking at a dialog similar to the one pictured on the next page. At the top there are two sliders, and it's the upper slider (**Repeat delay**)  you need to adjust. The current delay time is too short for your typing technique, so drag the slider a notch or two to the left, towards 'Long'.

The second slider, **Repeat rate**, determines how fast a key repeats once that initial delay has passed, ranging from about 3 times a second at the 'Slow' end to about 20 times a second at the 'Fast' end. This setting should never cause you any problems as such, but feel free to adjust it to taste while you're here.



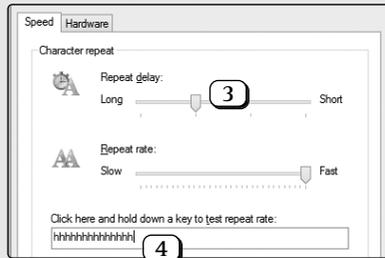
Drag the slider a little to the left



# T 996/12 Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems

Try typing to test the result

4. After making changes, you can click in the text box below the sliders (4) and test the result by typing whatever you like or by simply holding down a key. If keys were repeating unexpectedly while you typed, try typing in your normal manner here and see whether your adjustment to the repeat delay has solved the problem. If it hasn't, you may want to move that slider further to the left.



4. When you're happy with the new settings, click OK and then close the Control Panel window.

## Text is Vanishing as I Type!

You're typing over existing text

You've been cheerfully typing a document or an email message, and there are no apparent problems. But you decide that you want to add or replace a few words somewhere in the midst of what you've typed. You move the text cursor to the required point in the text and begin typing, and that's when things get peculiar!

The new text you're typing should be inserted into the middle of the paragraph, pushing away the text that follows it. Instead, though, each new character you type deletes the next character in your document: before you know it, you've typed half a sentence, but in doing so you've lost half of the next sentence!

# Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems T 996/13

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What you've done is to switch accidentally into 'Overtyping mode'. I say 'accidentally' because this is a mode that no-one ever uses on purpose; it seems to exist solely to catch you by surprise!

All it takes is a tap on the **Insert** key, usually when you're trying to press the Home, End or Delete key. When you're typing normally and adding text to the end of a document, you don't notice anything unusual. It's only when you try to insert extra text further back in your document that you find you're 'typing over' existing text.

When you notice what's happening, the first thing to do is to press the **Insert** key again, switching from 'Overtyping mode' back to 'Insert mode'. Unfortunately, that won't bring back the text you've just typed over, so you have two options:

- Hopefully you can remember what that lost text was, and you can type it again.
- Failing that, press **(Ctrl) + (Z)**, several times. This will undo the last bit of typing you've just done, removing it but also bringing back the text you'd typed over.

## Avoid Overtyping mode in Microsoft Word

As you'll know if you've ever found yourself using it by mistake, Overtyping mode is a pest. Luckily, if you use Microsoft Word, you can tell Word to ignore the Insert key and never switch to Overtyping mode, and this is well worth doing:

1. In Word 2016, 2013 or 2010, click the **File** tab and then choose **Options**; in Word 2007, click the circular Office button and choose **Word Options**.
2. At the left of the Word Options window that opens, click on **Advanced**.

Overtyping mode is switched on

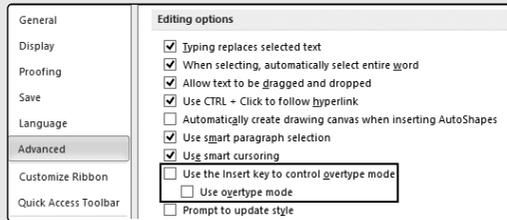
An accidental tap of the **Insert** key

Press **Insert** again to switch it off

A useful tip for Word users



3. On the right, remove the ticks beside Use the Insert key to control overtype mode and Use overtype mode.



4. Click OK, and from now on (although only in Microsoft Word) you'll never find yourself accidentally using Overtyping mode.



A similar kind of problem can occur if you accidentally press **Ctrl** + **A**, perhaps when aiming for **Shift** + **A** to type a capital 'A', but here the results are far more dramatic. Pressing **Ctrl** + **A** selects all the text in your document, and the very next key you type replaces it all! In this situation, as soon as you've noticed what has happened, press **Ctrl** + **Z** (perhaps several times) to undo your latest typing until all that lost text returns.

## I Keep Finding I'm Typing in Capitals

You're suddenly typing in capital letters

Like the aforementioned Overtyping mode, this is another of those frustrating things that can happen to you while you're typing: you look at the screen and discover that you've just been typing in ALL CAPITALS. If you're more of a hunt-and-peck typist, you might have typed quite a lot this way before you looked up and saw the result.

In Word, the 'All Capitals' effect

There are two ways in which this might have happened, and the solution depends on which was the cause:

# Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems T 996/15

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- If you're using Microsoft Word, you might have pressed the key combination **(Ctrl) + (Shift) + (A)** (perhaps when trying to type a capital 'A'). This switches on the 'All Capitals' text effect so that whatever you type, with or without the Shift key, you get a capital. Fortunately, this has an easy solution (although it's wise to check the status of the **Caps Lock** key first, covered below, just in case this is the culprit). Highlight all the capitalised text you've just typed and then press **(Ctrl) + (Shift) + (A)**. This removes the effect and should leave your text looking exactly as you wanted it (with any intentional capitals in place).
- In any program at all, you've pressed the **Caps Lock** key. It's easily done when you're aiming for the Shift or Tab key, or trying to type an 'a', and it reverses the action of the **Shift** key for letters: with Shift you get a small letter; without it you get a capital. Pressing the **Caps Lock** key again will turn this off. Again, though, it won't convert the capitals you've just typed back to small letters, and in most programs your only option is to retype the text properly. (In Microsoft Word, however, you could select the capitalised text and then press **(Shift) + (F3)** one or more times: this cycles the selected text through sentence case, then uppercase, then lower-case, with each press.)

An accidental press of the **Caps Lock** key

## Hear a beep whenever you press Caps Lock

A handy way to avoid the unwanted effects of pressing **Caps Lock** accidentally is to switch on a Windows feature named **Toggle Keys**. This causes your PC to give a 'beep' whenever the **Caps Lock** (or **Num Lock**) key is pressed. Follow these steps to switch on **Toggle Keys**:

An audible warning when you press **Caps Lock**

### Windows 10

1. Open the Start menu and click the cog icon near the bottom-left corner (or press the key combination **(Windows) + (I)**) to open the Settings app.

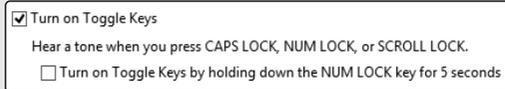


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Switch the Use Toggle Keys setting to On

2. In the Settings window, click on Ease of Access and then, below the 'Interaction' heading at the left of the window, click on Keyboard.
3. Below the large heading 'Use Toggle Keys', click the switch to turn it to On.



4. Finally, close the Settings window by clicking the x in its top-right corner.



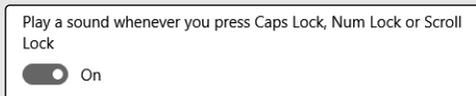
Switch on the Toggle Keys feature

## Windows 8.1 and Windows 7

1. **Windows 8.1:** at the desktop, press  +  to open the Charms bar, then click Settings followed by Control Panel.

**Windows 7:** open the Start menu and click Control Panel.

2. Click the large words Ease of Access and then click the smaller words Change how your keyboard works.
3. Tick the box beside Turn on Toggle Keys.



4. Click OK and close the Control Panel window.

Typing appears elsewhere on the page

## Notebook Problem: The Cursor Jumps About

It's the curse of the notebook computer: you're happily typing away, you glance at the screen, and you discover that the last few letters or words you've typed have landed some distance

# Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems T 996/17

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up or down the page from where you were typing – in the middle of a paragraph, or even in the middle of a word!

This is caused by the rectangular touchpad, that sits between you and the notebook's keyboard, acting as a replacement for the mouse. As you type, you might brush or tap the touchpad with a sleeve, or, on some notebooks, the vibration from the keyboard's keys can cause 'ghost taps' on the touchpad.

However these taps occur, they can cause all sorts of peculiar things to happen. A common one is that the pointer jumps to a different point in your document and clicks, and that's suddenly where you're typing. But just as easily it might tap a button in the program (leading you to be suddenly typing in bold, or bright red), it might select some text (leading you to then type over it), or it might dart off to the bottom of the screen and click a taskbar button (leading you to type into a completely different program).

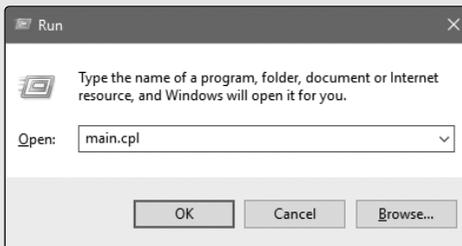
The solution is to try to disable the touchpad while you're typing, and the software that makes your note-book's touchpad work may include an option for this. To find out, follow these steps:

A 'ghost click' from the touchpad

It can 'click' anywhere on the screen

Check in the Mouse Properties dialog

1. Press the key combination  +  to open the Run dialog.
2. Type the command **main.cpl**.
3. Press  or click the **OK** button.



## T 996/18 Typing Trouble: Solve Common Keyboard Problems

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Can the touchpad disable itself when you type?



In the Mouse Properties dialog that opens, you'll see several tabs along the top, and the rightmost tab should be the one added by your touchpad's software. It will vary from one touchpad to another, so I can't tell you exactly what you'll see here, but have a look through its options and settings: you're hoping to find an option that says **Disable touchpad while typing** or something similar. If you find it, tick its box and click **OK**.

If there's no option to disable the touchpad while typing, a second-best would be an option to disable tapping (or clicking). This would then mean that you have to use the trackpad's buttons whenever you want to click something, but it will prevent any 'ghost clicks' from occurring while you type.

Remember that you don't want to disable the touchpad itself, unless you want to plug in a mouse instead. If you disabled the touchpad and closed this dialog, you'd be effectively mouseless. And, to re-enable it, you'd have to navigate back to this dialog using only the keyboard!

Try the free TouchFreeze program

If you can't find any suitable option in the touchpad settings, a little free program named TouchFreeze could be the solution. To download it, start your favourite web browser, type the address below into its address box and press **Enter**: [code.google.com/p/touchfreeze](http://code.google.com/p/touchfreeze)

Download and install

When you arrive, you'll see a mostly-empty page containing a blue **Download TouchFreeze-1.1.0.msi** button. Click that button and it will download the TouchFreeze program. When the file has finished downloading, double-click it to start the installation and then follow the few simple setup steps.

It disables your touchpad whenever you type

Once installed, TouchFreeze takes care of itself. It silently disables the touchpad when you start typing and re-enables it when you stop, ensuring that accidental taps and keyboard vibrations can't cause trouble.