

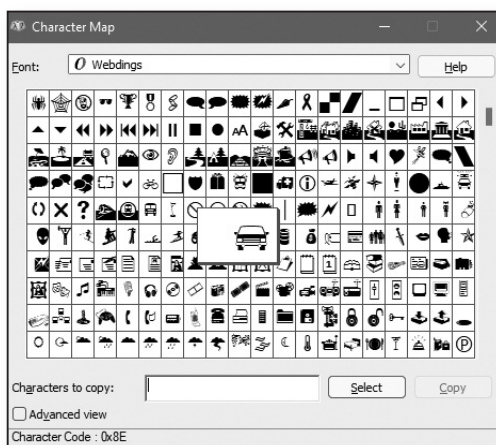
Quickly Insert Miniature Pictures, Signs and Symbols Using Special Fonts

This article shows you how to:

- Add a touch of style to your text with pictorial symbols
- Use Character Map to find the ideal symbol
- Insert symbols directly into Word documents

Perhaps you'd like to place a little ☎ symbol beside your telephone number, or a ✉ symbol beside your email address. Or maybe you need an arrow, a tick or cross, a playing-card suit or a zodiac sign.

All these symbols – and hundreds more – are available to use in your documents with just a few quick clicks. Read on to learn where to find them and how to use them.



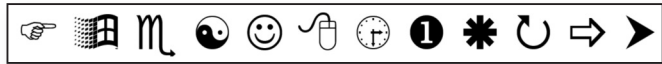
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Symbol Fonts: Hundreds of Little Pictures

Special fonts containing pictures

You've probably come across little symbols like the ones below in documents and articles, and perhaps you've wondered what trickery was used to conjure them up. In fact, there's no great secret to it: these little pictures are tucked away inside special 'symbol fonts', making them available in any program you use.



That might seem a little peculiar: after all, surely fonts are used for typing letters, numbers and punctuation, not pictures? But let's take a quick look at how fonts actually work.

Most fonts contain letters and numbers

On your PC, there's a collection of font files – probably dozens of them – with names like **Arial**, **Verdana**, **Times New Roman** and **Century Gothic**. When you're typing into a program, you could select the Arial font and press the **Z** key on your keyboard and the letter 'Z' would appear in your document.

You probably take that for granted, but your keyboard isn't really sending a 'Z' into your computer. It's actually sending a number – the number 90 in this case. Your computer looks inside the Arial font file to find the 90th character it contains, and that character happens to be a 'Z'. Helpfully, in all the other fonts I mentioned above, the 90th character is also a 'Z', so whichever of those fonts you use, if you press the **Z** key you'll get a 'Z'.

A letter or number is still just a 'symbol'

More precisely, though, what you're getting is a picture of something Z-shaped. A font file is really just a collection of pictures, but they're usually pictures we recognise as being the shapes of letters, numbers and punctuation symbols. It's just their design that varies from one font to another.

Following that logic, you can probably see that there's no reason why the 90th character in every font must necessarily be Z-shaped. It could just as easily be shaped like a heart, or a smiley face, or a telephone.

Fonts can contain symbols that are not shaped like letters or numbers

And that's exactly what these 'symbol fonts' do contain. Among the dozens of fonts on your PC, you have fonts named **Symbol**, **Wingdings**, **Wingdings 2**, **Wingdings 3** and **Webdings**, and these are all symbol fonts which contain pictures that have nothing to do with typography. As an example, if you select the Webdings font and type a capital **Z**, your keyboard sends the number 90 into your computer, as always, and you'll see the 90th character from that Webdings font: not a 'Z' but a bunch of flowers!

These five fonts contain pictures

Paste Symbols from the Character Map Program

You can probably see a problem in the example above: how do you know that typing a **Z** with the Webdings font will give you a picture of a bunch of flowers? And what if you wanted a telephone or a heart – which key would you have to type to find one? The markings on your keyboard certainly don't give you any clue!

It's not practical to type using a symbol font!

The solution is to use a built-in Windows program named Character Map. This handy program shows you all the different characters available in all your fonts and allows you to copy characters into a document, making it indispensable when you want to use one of these symbol fonts.

Instead, select symbols using Character Map

When you want to use a symbol in a document you're writing, Character Map enables you to do it. Here's what to do:



How to start the Character Map program

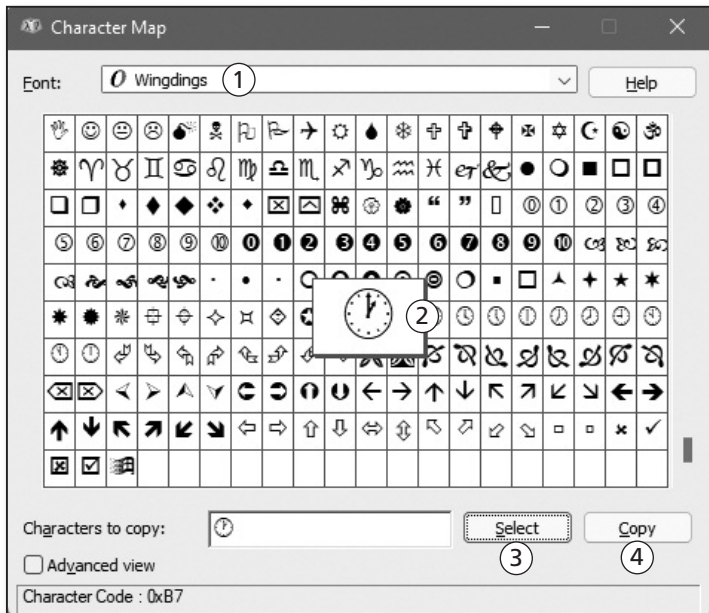
1. Begin by opening the Character Map program:

Windows 11, 10 or 8.1: press **Win+S** to open the Windows search panel and start typing the name **character map**. After typing the first few letters you should see the Character Map icon at the top of the results list: click it to start the program.

Windows 7: open the Start menu, go to **All Programs > Accessories > System Tools** and click on **Character Map**.

Select a symbol font from the list

2. In the Character Map window, open the drop-down list labelled **Font** and choose a symbol font such as **Wingdings** ①. The grid below now displays all the characters available in the font you've chosen.



Click a symbol to select it and see a larger view

3. The characters are shown at a rather small size, but you can click one to see a larger view of it ②. When you've done this once, you can use the four arrow

keys on your keyboard to move around the grid. You might prefer this to clicking – particularly since, after you’ve clicked one character, that larger view covers up some of the characters nearby and makes them impossible to click!

If you can’t see the symbol you’re looking for, open the **Font** drop-down list again and try choosing one of the other symbol fonts. **Wingdings**, **Webdings** and **Wingdings 2** all have a wide selection, **Symbol** has a few more, and **Wingdings 3** offers a huge variety of arrow shapes.



4. When you find the symbol you want to use, and you’ve clicked it (or selected it with the arrow keys) so that you can see the larger view of it, click the **Select** button ③. The symbol you chose now appears in the ‘Characters to copy’ box to the left of the button.
5. Now click the **Copy** button ④, which copies the character to the Windows clipboard.
6. Finally, switch to the program in which you want to insert the symbol, place the insertion point at the position where you want the symbol to appear, and press **Ctrl+V** to paste the symbol there.

Found the symbol you want?

Copy it to the clipboard

Paste it into a document

If you expect to need more symbols, you can keep the Character Map window open and switch back and forth between your document and the Character Map window as needed. If you want to copy the same symbol again, you can simply go back to step 5 (because that symbol is still shown in the ‘Characters to copy’ box). If you want to find a different symbol to copy, begin by deleting that symbol from the ‘Characters to copy’ box, leaving the box empty, and then go back to step 4.

You can keep Character Map open

Quick Access to Find Symbols in Word

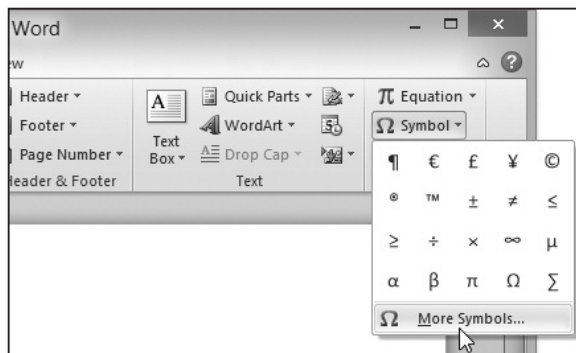
A slightly quicker method for Microsoft Word

While you can use Character Map to copy symbols into any program, Microsoft Word also has its own Symbol feature, and you might find this quicker and simpler when you want to include symbols in a Word document. (You'll find the same feature in Excel and PowerPoint too, and it works in the same way.) Here's how to use it:



Open the Symbol dialog

1. Place the text cursor at the point in your document where you want to insert a symbol.
2. Switch to the **Insert** tab on the Ribbon. At the far right, click the **Symbol** button and then click on **More Symbols**.



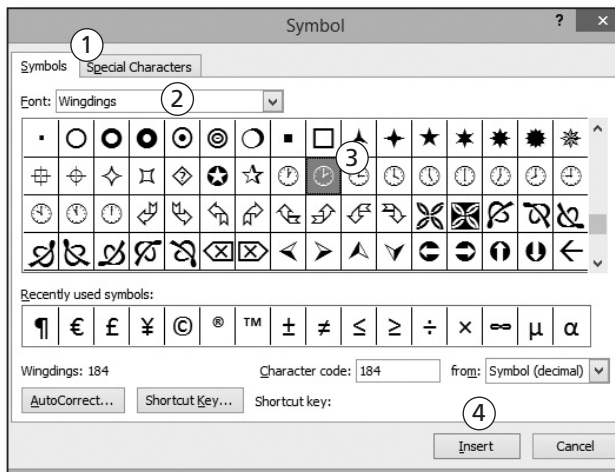
Select a symbol font from the list

3. Now you'll see the Symbol dialog pictured on the next page. Make sure the **Symbols** tab is selected ①, then open the drop-down list labelled **Font** and choose one of the symbol fonts such as **Wingdings** ②.

Choose the symbol to insert in your document

4. As in the Character Map program, you'll now see all the characters from your chosen font laid out in a grid. Find and click the symbol you want to use in your document ③ and then click the **Insert** button ④. (If you prefer, you can just double-click the symbol, which saves the need to click **Insert**.) The symbol

you've chosen is copied straight into your document and appears at the position you chose in step 1.

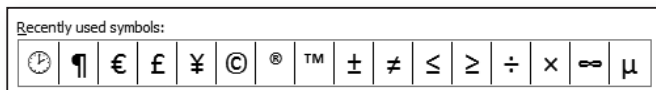


- If you want to insert several symbols consecutively, you can repeat step 4 as often as you like: each new symbol will be placed beside the last in your document.
- When you've finished using the Symbol dialog, click the **Close** (or **Cancel**) button in its bottom-right corner and you're done.

Close the dialog

Besides being slightly quicker to use than Character Map, the Symbol feature in Word has another benefit: it keeps track of the symbols you've used most recently. In any version of Word, you can follow steps 1 and 2 to open the Symbol dialog and then look at the section headed **Recently used symbols**: to reuse one of these, either click it and then click **Insert** or just double-click it.

Quickly find recently-used symbols



Also in Word (but not in Excel or PowerPoint), there's an even quicker way to find symbols you've used recently: click the **Symbol** button on the Ribbon and they'll be listed in the little panel that appears (pictured on page 6). To reuse one of these, just click it.

Resize and format symbols

Format symbols like ordinary text

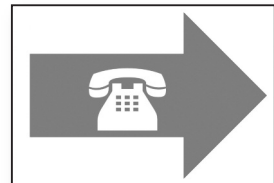
Once you've inserted a symbol into a document, you can treat it as if it were ordinary text. For instance, you can highlight it and then use the usual options on the Ribbon or toolbar to make it bold or italic, or change its colour.

Make a symbol as large as you like

Very usefully, too, you can change its size. Just as you do with 'ordinary' text, highlight the symbol and then choose a different font size for it. By clicking in the **Font Size** box, you can type in any text size up to a massive 1638 points – far larger than would fit on an A4 page.

Insert symbols inside Word's shapes

In Microsoft Word, you can also combine these symbols with Word's ability to draw shapes, as illustrated in the screenshot to the right. Go to the **Insert** tab on the Ribbon and click **Shapes**, select a shape, then click-and-drag on a blank space in your document to draw the shape. When you've done that, you can right-click inside the shape and choose **Add Text**, then insert a symbol in the middle of the shape.



Find More Free Symbol Fonts Online

Do you need more symbols?

The five symbol fonts included with Windows offer a fair assortment of pictures, but you may not always be able to find exactly what you're looking for among them. However, you can download and install additional symbol fonts for free. Just follow these steps:

1. Start your favourite web browser, type the address below into its address box and then press **Enter** to visit the web page:



www.fonts2u.com/category.html?id=3

2. When the page loads, you'll see a list of the first 10 symbol fonts available for downloading, with samples of some of the characters contained in each. On the blue bars above and below these 10 samples, you can move from page to page: at the time of writing, there are over 5700 symbol fonts available.

Browse through pages of symbol fonts

3. If you find a font you like (based on those few sample characters), click the blue **Download** button to its right. This takes you to a new web page which displays all the characters included in the font.

See all the characters in a font

4. If you're not so keen now that you've seen the complete set of symbols, you can press **Backspace** to return to the list of fonts and continue looking through them. If you would like to download this font and add it to your collection, click the blue **Download** button at the right of the web page and continue following these steps.

Download a font

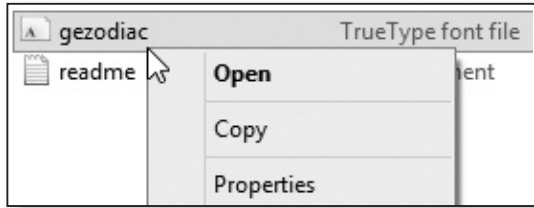
5. Your web browser now downloads the file and saves it in its usual place (normally your 'Downloads' folder). Now you need to open that file: either open your 'Downloads' folder or press **Ctrl+J** in your browser to see your list of downloads, and double-click the file.

6. This is a zip file (otherwise known as a 'Compressed Folder'), and in the window that opens you'll see a single folder named after the font you've just downloaded. Double-click this folder to open it.

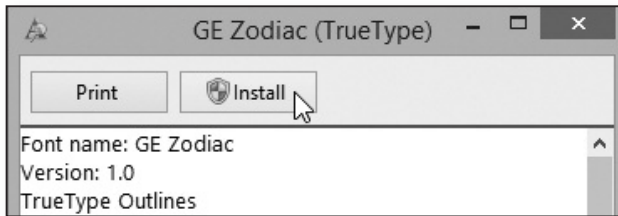
Open the folder shown in the window

7. Now you'll see two files. One is named 'readme' and you can ignore that. The other is the font file itself. Right-click this font file and choose **Open**.

Right-click the font file



- Install the font* 8. Another window will then open to show a preview of the font. At the top of this window, click the **Install** button.



- Close the open windows* 9. After a couple of seconds, the font will be installed and that 'Install' button will turn grey. When it does, you can close this window by clicking the **x** button in its top-right corner, and then close the folder window that opened in step 6.

Your new font is available to use The font you've just downloaded is now installed, and you'll find it in the list of available fonts whenever you use Character Map or the symbol feature in Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

In your web browser, you can press the **Backspace** key and continue looking through the fonts to see if there are any others you'd like to download. Alternatively, close the browser by clicking the **x** button in its top-right corner.