

Computer Strategies for Tremor & Stiffness

Apple

There are various options to make using your computer easier when you have tremors or stiffness due to Parkinson's disease. Some small adjustments on your computer may result in your feeling much more confident in your ability to control your device.

Before you adjust your computer, if you are using a laptop, be sure it is on a steady surface. A table, with proper posture can make the computer easier to use and reduce the effect a tremor or stiffness can have.

Keyboarding

Sticky Keys

The **Sticky Keys** feature on your computer can makes keyboard shortcuts easier for people who have tremors or stiffness. When this feature is on, you can press the keys for a shortcut in a series instead of needing to hold them down at the same time.

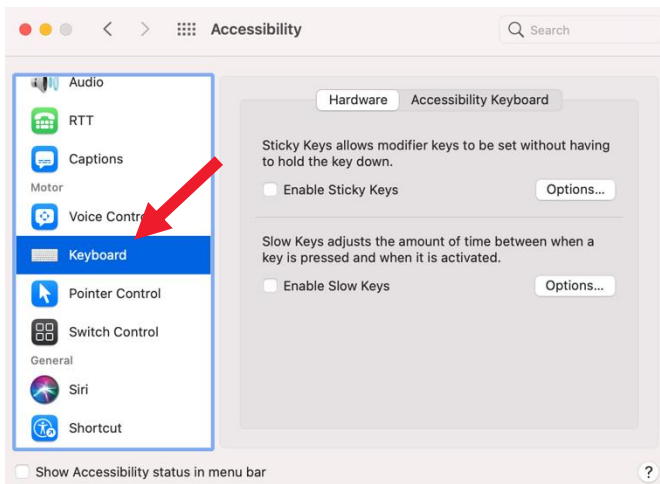
1. To enable **Sticky Keys**, go to your Desktop.
2. Click on **System Preferences**.



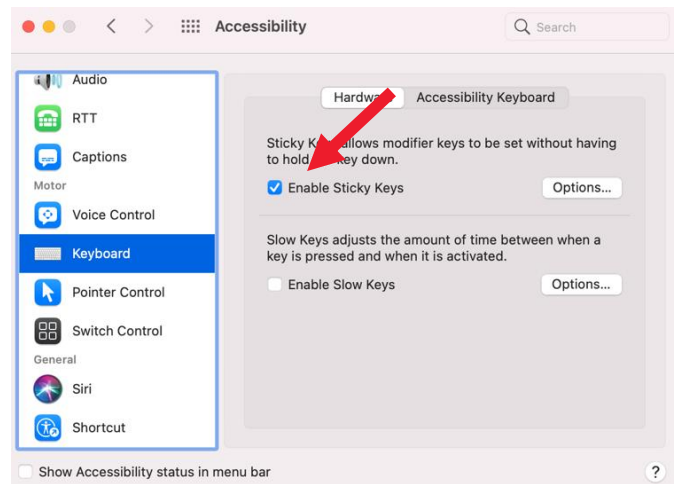
3. Click on **Accessibility**.



4. Click on **Keyboard** tab.



5. Check the box to **Enable Sticky Keys**.



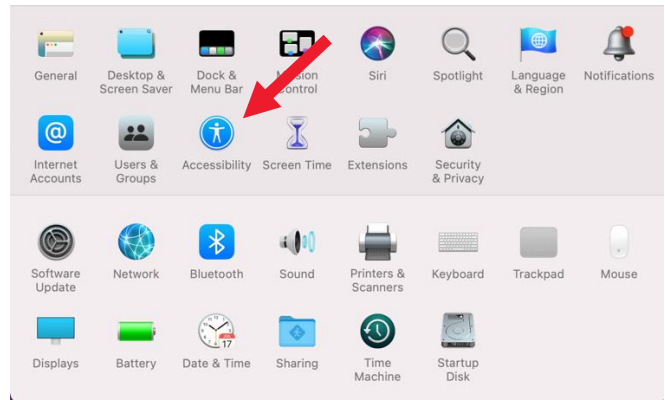
Slow Keys

The **Slow Keys** feature can be helpful for people who have tremors or stiffness that result in repeated keystrokes, by adjusting the delay between when you press a key and when it is activated. This feature can be personalized to change how long a key needs to be pressed before it is recognized by your computer and you can also set it up so the computer makes a clicking sound when you press a key.

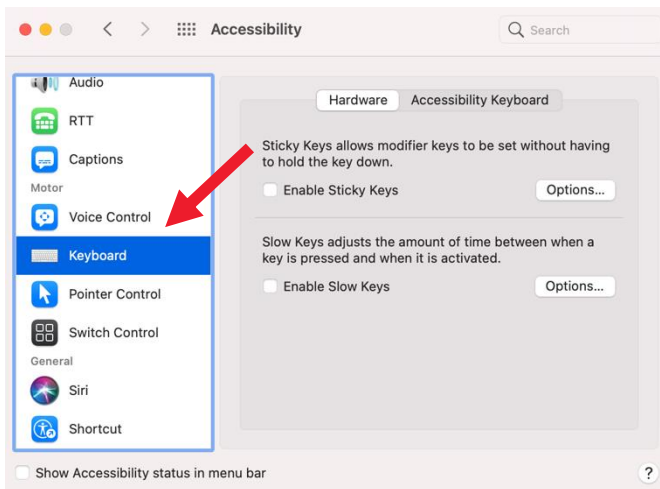
1. Click on **System Preferences**.



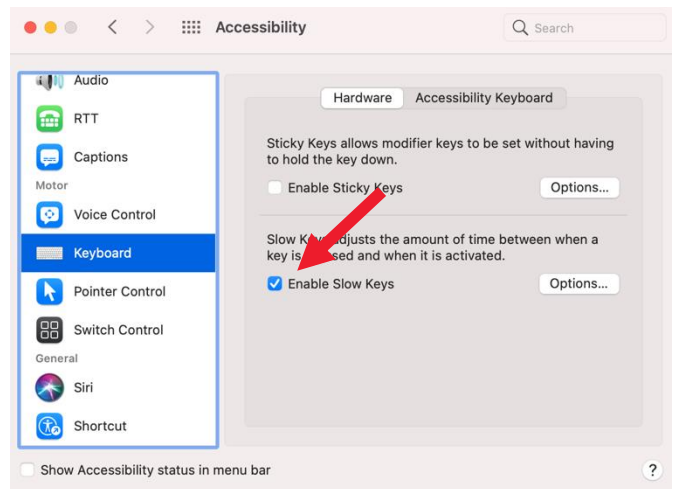
2. Click on **Accessibility**.



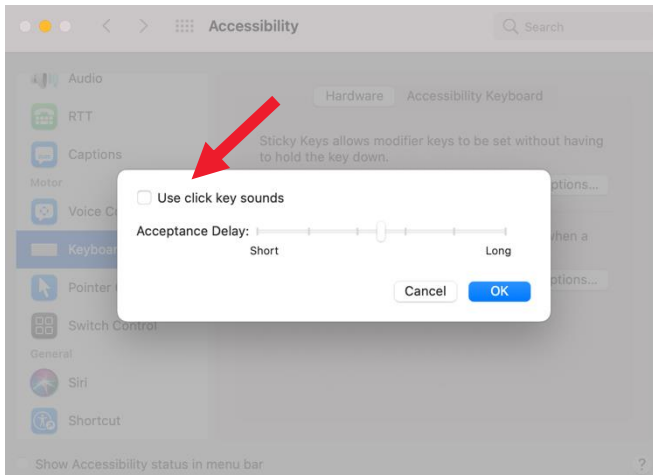
3. Click on the **Keyboard** tab.



4. Check the box to **Enable Slow Keys**.



5. To turn on the click key sounds feature, click on Options, and then check the box to **Use click key sounds**.

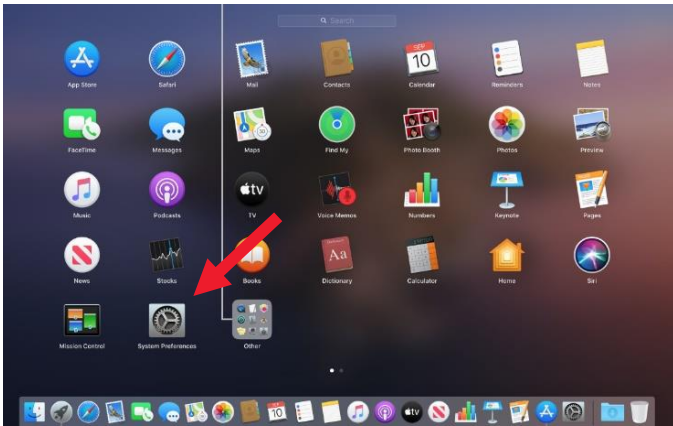


Mouse

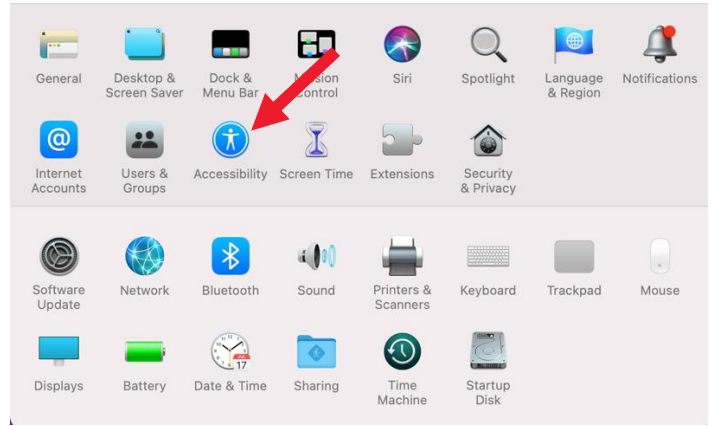
There are many options to make using a mouse easier when you have tremors due to Parkinson's disease. Some people who have difficulty using their mouse find that making a few simple adjustments to the settings on their computer can make a huge difference. There are several settings built into your computer that can be adjusted to make your mouse easier to use. Often, the cause of difficulty is the speed the pointer travels on the screen when the mouse is moved.

Follow these steps to change your mouse pointer speed:

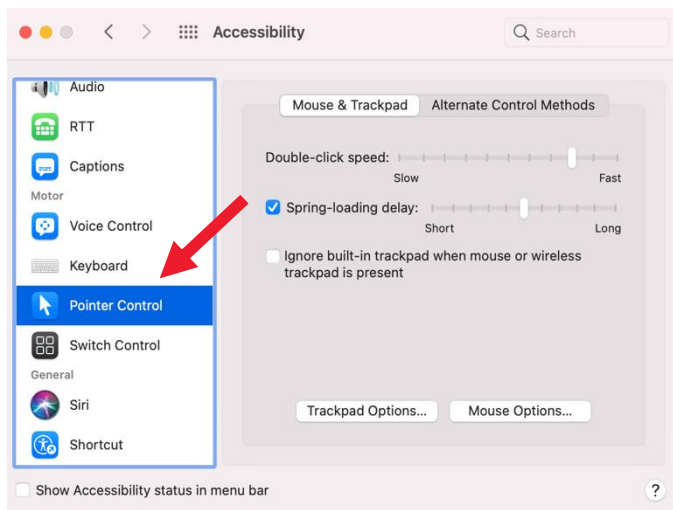
1. Click on **System Preferences**.



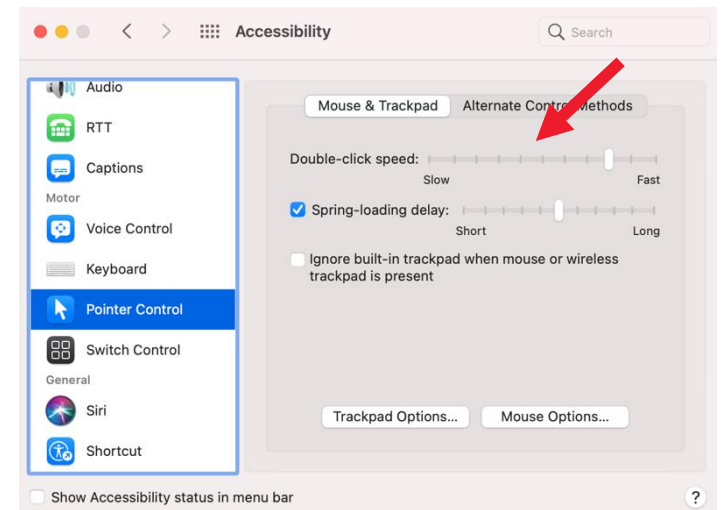
2. Click on **Accessibility**.



4. Click on the **Pointer Control** tab.



5. In the **Mouse and Trackpad** tab, click and hold the sliders while moving the mouse to the right or left. This will allow you to adjust the mouse to the speed that works best for you.



Mouse Types

Some people with Parkinson's find it easier to change what mouse they are using. This is because, with the right ergonomic setup, your arm joints are supported on a stable surface, thereby reducing the impact of a tremor.

1. If you are using a touchpad (see picture below), which is what is included in most laptops, a simple switch to a traditional mouse may help.



2. This is an example of a traditional mouse. A traditional mouse can be corded or battery operated.



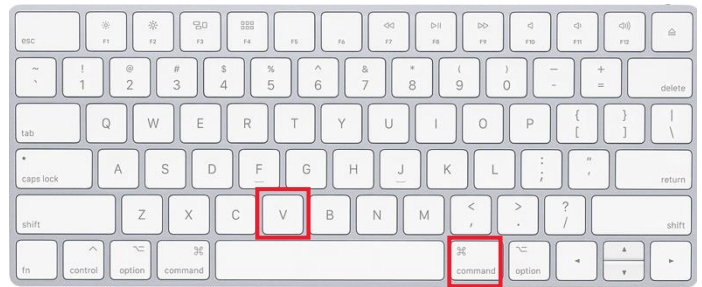
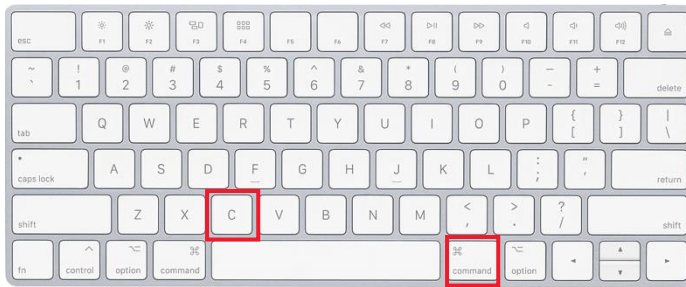
3. Some users prefer what is called a trackball mouse. There are many different brands and models of trackballs. The features vary widely, including shape of the mouse itself, and size of the trackball.



Keyboard Shortcuts

One simple way to minimize trouble with the mouse is to reduce mouse use. This can be done by using keyboard shortcuts instead of using your mouse. This will not take away the need for a mouse, but it will reduce how often you need it. As an example, follow these steps to use the **Copy and Paste** function.

1. Select the item you want to copy.
2. Press **Command + C** on your keyboard to copy.
3. Press **Command + V** on your keyboard to paste.



These shortcuts decrease the need to use your mouse and are more efficient. Google [Mac keyboard shortcuts](#) and you will get pages of them. Pick out the ones that you most commonly use, and then learn 2 at a time, using them every day, then learn 2 more and use them continuously throughout the day.

Speech Recognition

Speech Recognition makes using a keyboard and mouse optional for people with tremor or stiffness due to Parkinson's. It allows the user to control the computer with their voice and dictate text instead of typing. Mac has a built-in voice recognition program called **Voice Control**. This allows users to control the computer with voice commands. It can be set up and used to do things such as navigate, open and close applications, and dictate text. It is accessed through System Preferences > Accessibility. This feature was specifically designed to help people with disabilities who find it difficult to use a mouse or keyboard. There are also commercial products available such as Dragon which offers products specifically targeted for both general use and several different professions. If you are interested in using Speech Recognition, we suggest that you consider the resources below.

If you are still having trouble after making these adjustments or if your needs change, there are also exercises that an occupational therapist can guide you through to work on the basic skills needed for phone access. If you are in the Chicago area, you can schedule an appointment at the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's Tech Center (312-238-2988). If not, please ask your neurologist or VR counselor for a recommendation for an occupational therapist that specializes in working with people with Parkinson's and/or access to technology in your area.