

Computer Strategies for Tremor & Stiffness

Windows

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. It may be helpful to work with an expert to try some of these adjustments based on your needs.

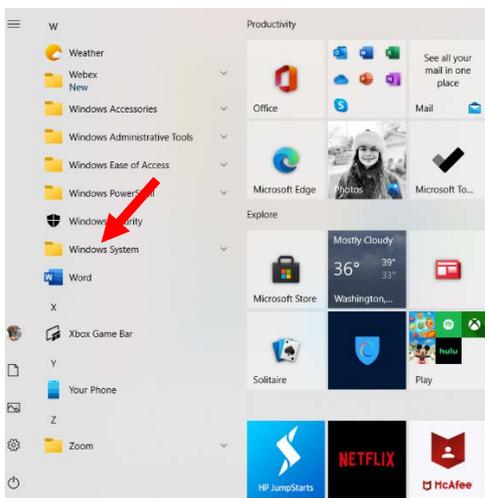
Before you adjust your computer, if you are using a laptop, be sure your computer is on a steady surface like a table or desk. Good posture can make the computer easier to use and reduce the impact a tremor or stiffness can have. For purposes of these instructions, the directions are for **Windows 10** users. **Instructions may be slightly different depending on which version of Windows you are using.**

Keyboarding

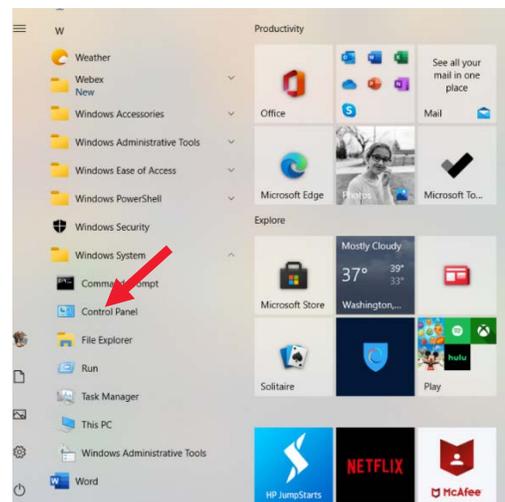
Filter Keys

Using the Filter Keys feature helps prevent unwanted keystrokes by adjusting the amount of time a key must be pressed before it is recognized by your computer.

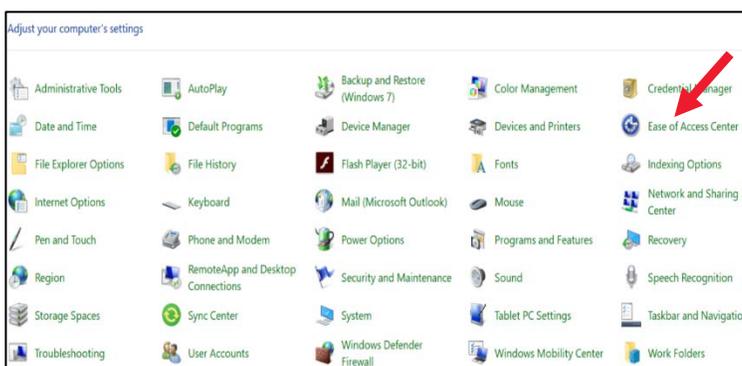
1. Click the **Start** button () at the bottom left of the screen.
2. Scroll down and select the **Windows System** option.



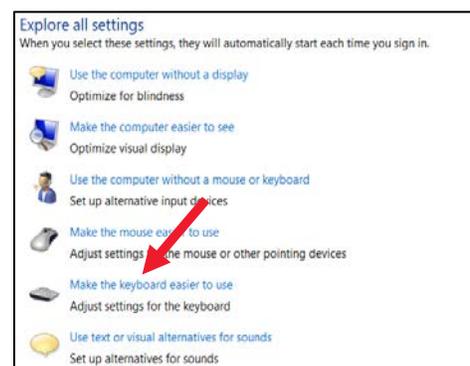
3. Select **Control Panel**.



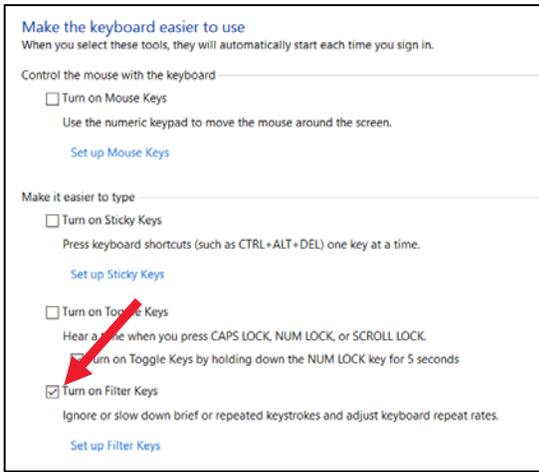
4. In the control panel, select **Ease of Access**.



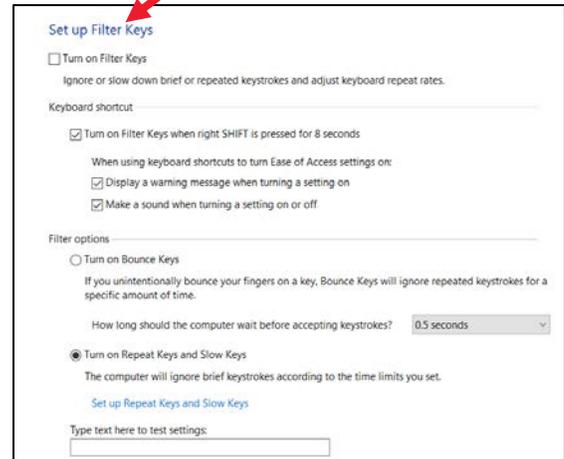
5. On the next screen, select **Make the keyboard easier to use**.



6. Check the box next to **Turn on Filter Keys**.



7. Select **Set up Filter Keys** to customize your keyboard.



Customizing the Filter Keys options allows you to adjust how your keyboard responds to keystrokes.

Slow Keys - The sensitivity of the keyboard can be a problem, especially if you have tremors or stiffness that cause you strike keys accidentally. Use Slow Keys if you involuntarily press several keys at a time when you type, or if you find it difficult to press the correct key on the keyboard first time.

Repeat Keys - Most keyboards allow you to repeat a key just by holding it down. If you cannot lift your fingers off the keyboard quickly enough, this can result in unintentionally repeated characters. Repeat Keys lets you adjust the rate that a key repeats or turns off the repeat function altogether.

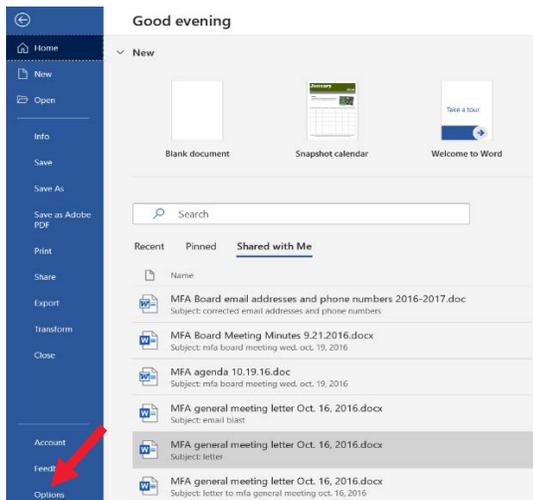
Bounce Keys - You may "bounce" keys, resulting in double strokes of the same key or other similar errors. Bounce Keys instructs Windows to ignore unintended key strokes and you can customize how long your computer will wait before accepting your keystroke. This option forces you to wait 5 seconds to type a double letter.

Abbreviation Expansion for Microsoft Word

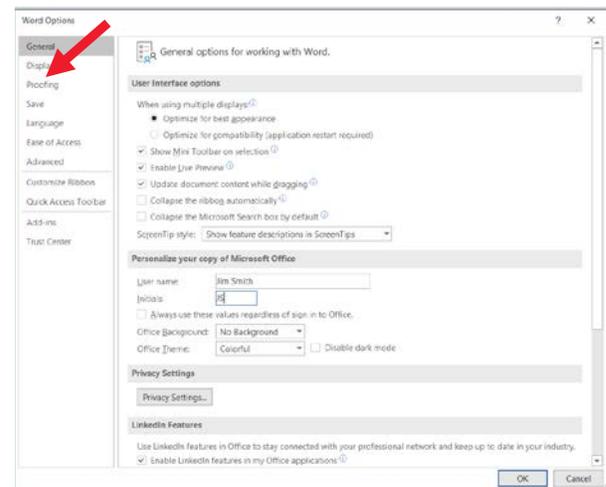
Microsoft Word includes many AutoCorrect features that help to offset typing (as an example, Word has the ability to automatically detect when you are starting a new sentence and then capitalizes the first word of that new sentence if you have forgotten to). Reducing the number of keystrokes required when typing by using **Abbreviation Expansion**, allows people with keyboarding difficulties to increase typing ease and efficiency. A strategy that follows this logic is called text-expansion. Some computers already have AutoCorrect default settings set up. See below to

To expand an abbreviation or sequence of characters follow these steps:

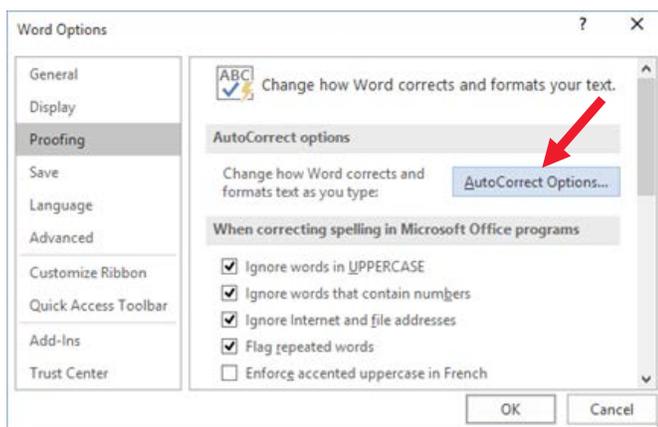
1. Go to the File tab in Word, scroll down, and select **Options**.



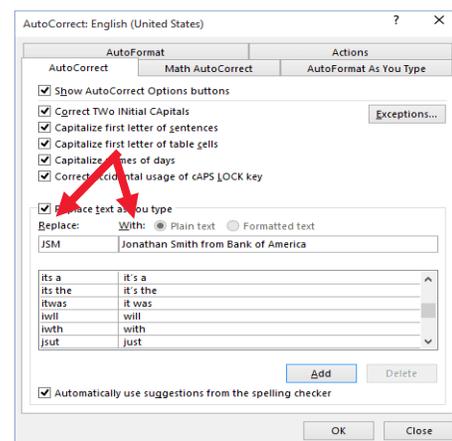
2. In the Options box, select **Proofing**.



3. Select the **AutoCorrect Options...** button.



3. When the **AutoCorrect** box opens, check the **Replace text as you type** box. Then type your abbreviated text in the **Replace:** box (in the example below, JSM) followed in the **With** box by your desired text (in this example, Jonathan Smith from Bank of America).



If you use Google Chrome, there is a free plugin called Auto Text Expander. This can be found by googling [Auto Text Expander for Google Chrome](#). It functions very similarly as the settings above, but enables text expansion for all your web-browser tasks which may include e-mail and website forms.

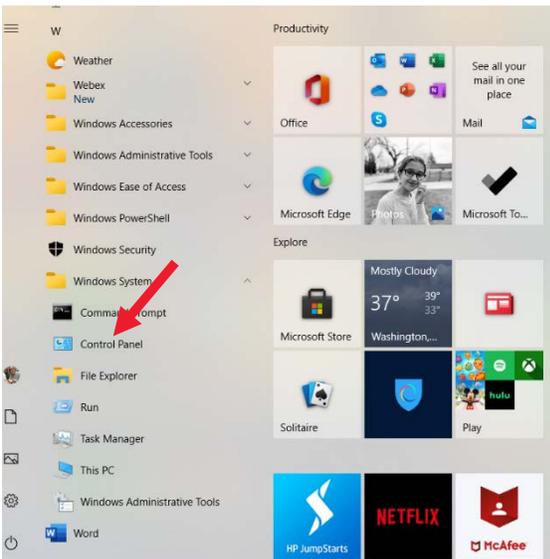
Sticky Keys

The Sticky Keys feature in Windows can be helpful to people with tremor or stiffness who may not be able to hold down several keys at once to enter a difficult keyboard shortcut such as Control, Alt, Delete. When Sticky Keys are turned on, pressing the keys in sequence rather than all at once can activate the keyboard shortcut.

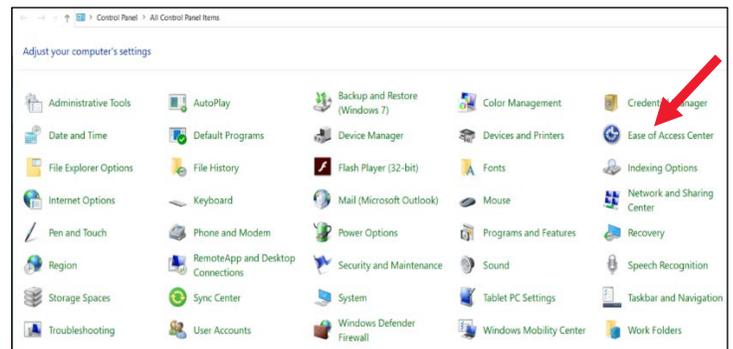
To enable the **Sticky Keys** feature:

1. Click the **Start** button () at the bottom left of the screen.

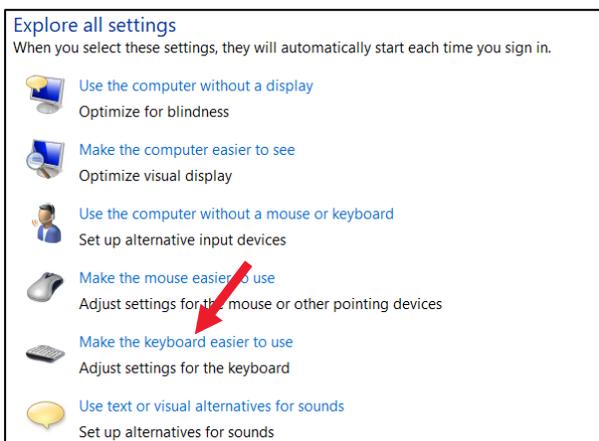
2. Select **Control Panel**.



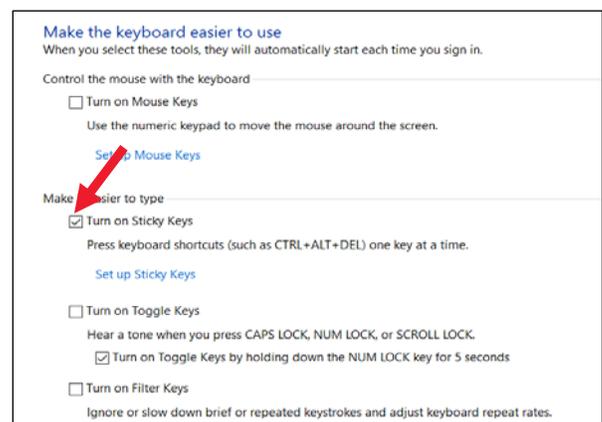
3. Select **Ease of Access**.



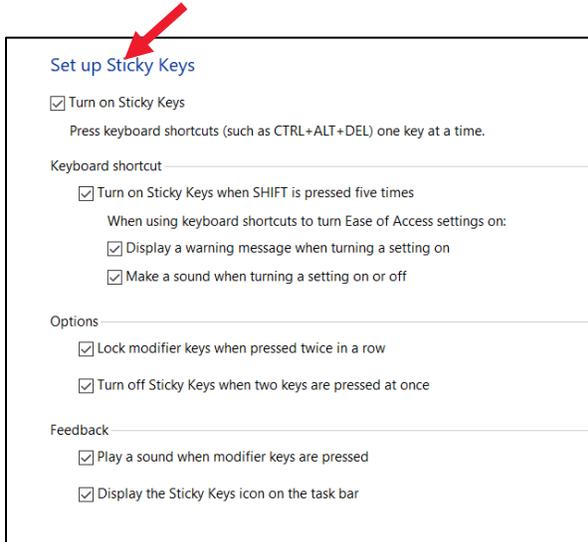
4. Select **Make the keyboard easier to use**.



5. Check **Turn on Sticky Keys**.



6. Select **Set up Sticky Keys** to customize your keyboard even further.



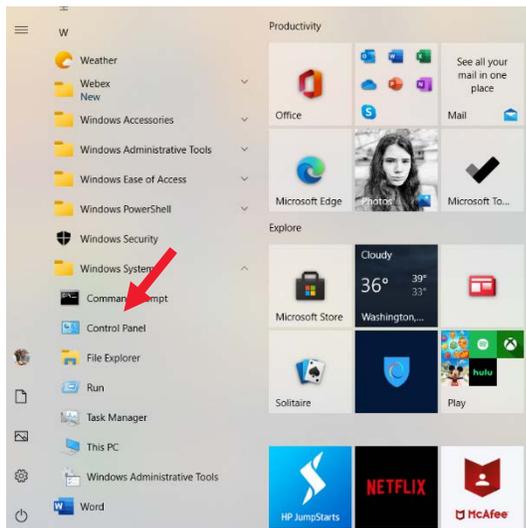
Mouse

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.

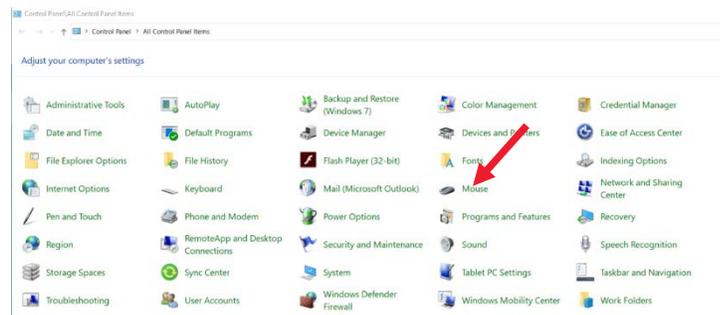
Follow these steps to change your mouse pointer speed:

1. Click the **Start** button () at the bottom left of the screen.

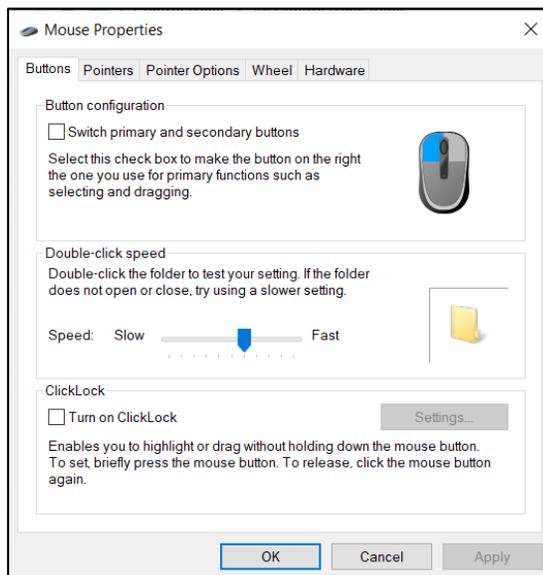
2. Select **Control Panel**.



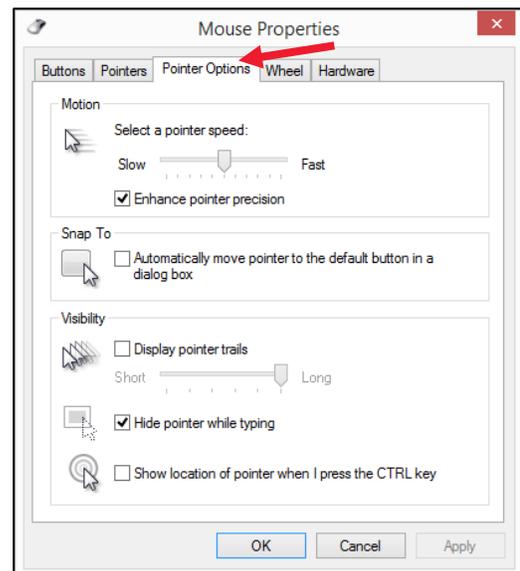
3. Select **Mouse**.



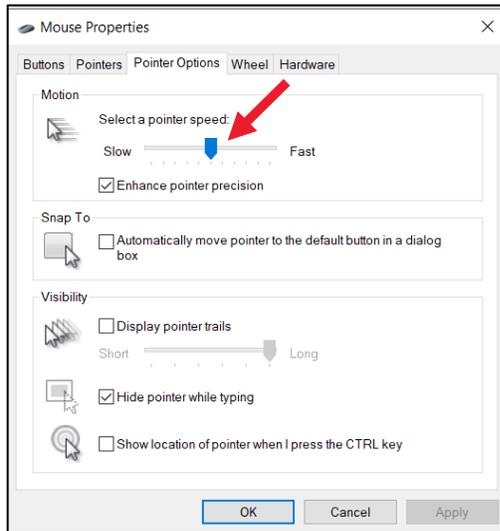
4. The **Mouse Properties** window will open.



5. Select **Pointer Options** tab.



6. In the **Pointer Options** tab, click and hold the slider 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 the 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 Ctrl + C on your keyboard to copy.

3. Press Ctrl + V on your keyboard to paste.



These shortcuts decrease the need to use your mouse and are more efficient. Google [Windows keyboard shortcuts](#), 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 or Voice 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.

Windows has a built-in voice recognition program called **Speech Recognition**. In Windows 10, 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 the control Panel and 'Ease of Access'. 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.