

PRINTABLE GUIDE

Copy and paste text on a computer

Copy holds selected text on the clipboard; Paste inserts it at the cursor. Practise with harmless text. Some apps or websites restrict copying.

Windows or Mac | 2 min read | 5 steps

Before you start

- ☐ Two harmless lines of text
- ☐ A document or text box where you can type

1. Select the exact text

Click and drag across the words you want. Selected text usually changes background colour. Make sure you have selected the complete passage rather than placing the typing cursor inside it; the original remains in place when copied.

- ☐ Done this step

2. Copy using your keyboard

Windows: hold Ctrl and press C once, then release both. Mac: use Command + C. Alternatively, right-click the selection and choose Copy if the app offers it. Copy alone does not visibly insert anything.

- ☐ Done this step

3. Choose a safe destination

Open a practice document or another editable text box. Click where the copied text should appear. Avoid selecting existing text unless you want the paste to replace it; confirm the cursor position first.

- ☐ Done this step

4. Paste and inspect

Windows: press Ctrl + V. Mac: press Command + V. Read the inserted text before sending or saving. Some apps keep the original formatting; use their paste options if the appearance needs changing.

☐ Done this step

5. Undo a mistake

Use Ctrl + Z on Windows or Command + Z on Mac in an app that supports Undo. Cut removes the selection while copying keeps it. Copying something else replaces the clipboard content you were about to paste.

☐ Done this step

Try it for yourself

Copy a short sentence into a practice document and undo the paste once.

☐ I tried the task.

My notes

Why did nothing paste?

The selection may not have copied or the destination may not accept editing. Try again with a short word in a simple document.

Official help and the online guide

Windows keyboard shortcuts - <https://support.microsoft.com/en-au/windows/keyboard-shortcuts-in-windows-dcc61a57-8ff0-cffe-9796-cb9706c75eec>

Read online: <https://plaintech-guides.pages.dev/guides/copy-text-on-computer/>