2012

What If...

50+ tips to boost your productivity

Try it to believe it

Ajay Balamurugadas

What if…

Hello Reader,

S pecial thanks to you for buying this book. This book is a small collection of tips, tricks and list of tools to help boost your productivity. This is entirely based on my experiences in software testing as well as using computer. Internet is so powerful. A simple Google search will yield you so many search results. Google for "Screen Capture Tools" and you will find a minimum of ten tools in the first page itself. Which one do you choose? Do you have the time to try each one of them? What about Windows command prompts? There seems to be more than fifty commands. Which one is useful for us, especially for a software tester?

I feel that one learns the best based on personal experience. Remember the time when you lost all your data and the lesson along with it - "Save your data frequently" Or the trick to use notepad as a diary. Some of the tips might be known to you but I hope that some of them are unknown to you as well. I have not written this book keeping a specific audience in mind. Anyone who uses computer should be able to benefit from this book. At the same time, I have tried my best to bring my experience as a software tester to the forefront.

How do you learn new tools and tips? Do you follow any specific websites? Do let me know. After my first e-book - "What If…" and the second e-book - "What If… 50+ tips to win testing contests" which can be bought from http://bit.ly/HKvTn0, I hope that you enjoy this book too. Hope you enjoy the snippets while I wait for your comments…

Please feel free to contact me via email, Skype, Twitter or GTalk.

Email: ajay184f@gmail.com Blog: www.EnjoyTesting.blogspot.com

Skype/Twitter/GTalk: **ajay184f**
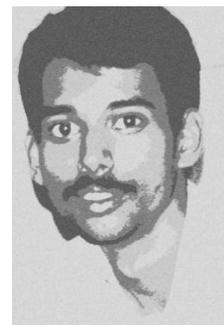
Foreword

If you're reading this book electronically (perhaps in Microsft Word), you may notice that automatically, the word "Microsoft" earlier in this sentence was underlined in red because it was misspelled.

If you're reading it print, maybe you saw it, maybe you didn't, but an electronic tool like Word's "Spelling & Grammar" is there to help you see things differently -- to alert you about problems that may escape your senses.

Reading this book is a little bit like watching a really good tester. They quickly know what tool can reveal a certain weakness, and they tend to know how to penetrate the illusion of the software "appearing" to work. Sometimes it's done in mere seconds, like enabling the WAVE plug-in for Firefox to find website accessibility problems like headerless tables, invisible content, and missing Alt text.

Ajay shares information like this because he's hoping he can solve a problem you have. It's likely he had that problem once, too, and he found a tool to help. You and he (and me) will always encounter testing problems, but it is the little tools you're about to see and use that help make you more valuable in your role as a tester.

It will make you more valuable at a time when others want to kill our roles by saying "Testing is dead." The problem is, those that say such things think testing done with automation is automatically good, and if you can't automate, you're a useless tester that should be made obsolete.

Testers don't need to know how to program to be successful, but they do know how to engage their brain (what many call "sapience") and use tools in pursuit of knowing how things could be different. It will partly be the grasp of tools and how you use them that make you as valuable as the Developer. While they're busy writing new code, you'll be using tools to quickly reveal the problems they either didn't or couldn't anticipate. Your grasp of tools can help you see them quickly.

So like Batman with his utility belt, collect tool ideas like those in this book and try them. Be fleet with your fingers and let Ajay help you augment your senses. And, by all means, return the favor by blogging any favorites you don't see here.

This is what's going to keep testing alive and well.

Jon Bach
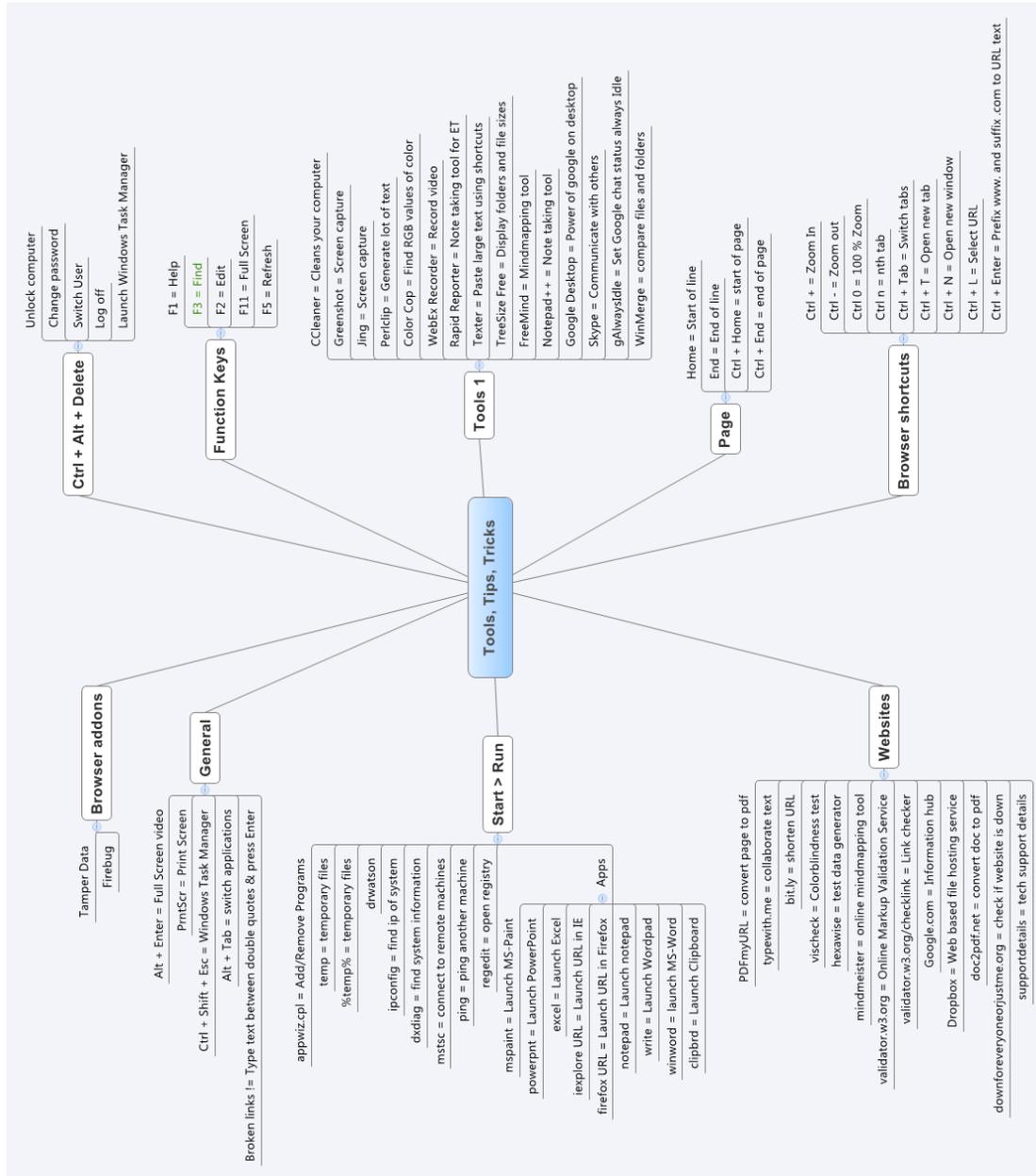*QE Director for Live Site Quality, eBay*
April 2012

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- mindmeister = online mindmapping tool
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- validator.w3.org/checklink = Link checker
- Google.com = Information hub
- Dropbox = Web based file hosting service
- doc2pdf.net = convert doc to pdf
- downforeveryoneorjustme.org = check if website is down
- supportdetails = tech support details
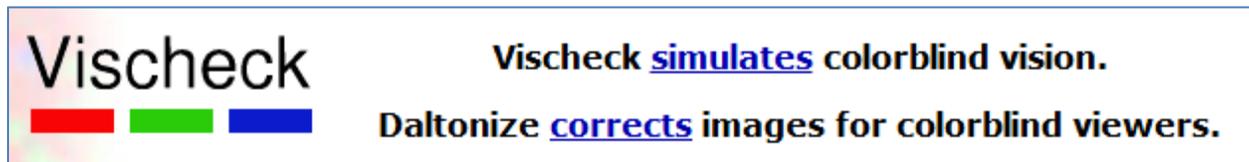
Useful Websites

The best part of using websites as tools is that they are operating system independent. In this section, I will describe the different websites which act as test tools and help me test faster and better.

Tip 1: Vischeck: www.vischeck.com

Category: Test for colorblindness compatibility.

This was the first tool tested during the paired testing session before starting Weekend Testing.

Purpose: If you wanted to know how your existing images and websites look to the different types of colorblind people, use this website.

Advantage: It is quick and simple. This can be done offline as well. One can run this tool on images as well as website.

Be careful about what you expect from this exercise. This website displays images as seen by color blind people. If you see no difference between input and output, either your website is colorblind friendly or *you are colorblind*!

Resources: http://enjoytesting.blogspot.in/2009/08/paired-testing-at-distance-part-1.html

 Tip 2: Hexawise: http://hexawise.com/

Category: Test Design

Ever worried about lots of combinations to test? Try this tool and be surprised.

Purpose: I use this tool to select the best combinations to test instead of n x n combinations.

Advantage: This tool will help you reduce your number of combinations to test. It helps you design better tests. It takes you very less time to know the best combinations to test.

Resources: http://www.slideshare.net/JustinHunter/hexawiseintroductionstc

http://www.developsense.com/pairwiseTesting.html

http://www.testingeducation.org/wtst5/PairwisePNSQC2004.pdf

Tip 3: MindMeister: www.mindmeister.com
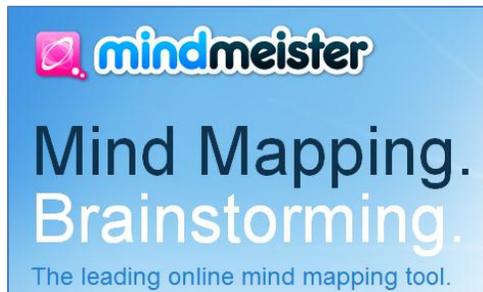
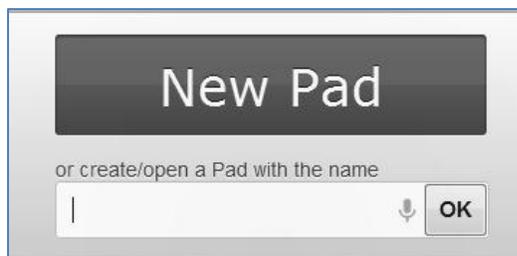

Category: Online mindmap collaboration tool

I use this tool to collaborate with my friends. Everyone can work on a single map at the same time without any problem.

Purpose: Use it to design test ideas, discuss test plan, strategy on a mind map.

Advantage: Free to register, saves time and a good collaboration tool.

Resources: If you are new to mind mapping, please read this very useful blog post by Darren McMillan http://www.bettertesting.co.uk/content/?p=956

Tip 4: Typewith.me: www.typewith.me

Category: Online collaboration tool.

Purpose: If you want to write a document together with your online friend, this document serves the purpose. It creates a new pad with a unique link for both of you to simultaneously edit the same pad. The maximum number of collaborators seems to be 15.

Advantage: Light weight, no sign-in required. Supports up to 15 users at once.

Resources: Feel free to go through the following reports where the testers used this tool in their testing

http://weekendtesting.com/archives/1779

http://weekendtesting.com/archives/1055

http://weekendtesting.com/archives/1031

Tip 5: Markup Validation Service: http://validator.w3.org/

*Category:* Online Markup Validation Service

Purpose: Test any website for any errors in the syntax of Web documents.

Advantage: Quick and effective test to find any warnings or errors.

Resources: If you want to understand what this tool does, it is explained well here:

http://validator.w3.org/docs/help.html#validation_basics

Tip 6: Link Checker: http://validator.w3.org/checklink
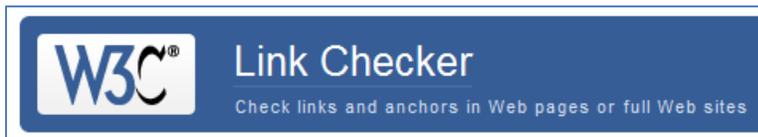
Category: Online link checker.

Purpose: Test any website or webpage for broken links.

Advantage: Quick and effective test to find any broken links.

Resources: http://www.w3.org/QA/Tools/

Tip 7: PDFmyURL: http://pdfmyurl.com/

Category: Online webpage to pdf converter

Purpose: I use this tool to convert a webpage into a pdf. It is quick and converts webpages which do not require login.

Advantage: Save webpages in offline mode. Sometimes, the formatting goes for a toss.

Tip 8: Google: www.google.com

Category: Search engine.

Purpose: I use this tool to find any information I need. Very few use this tool effectively.

Advantage: Why search when Google can help you? Ask Google

Resources: If you ask me for any information which can be found using a simple Google Search, I will definitely send you this link back http://lmgtfy.com/?q=what+does+this+mean

Tip 9: Dropbox: www.dropbox.com

Category: Web-based file hosting service.

Purpose: Sync your files across multiple computers and save online too.

Advantage: I love Dropbox. Even James Bach likes Dropbox a lot. You no longer will need to transfer files through USB or email. Every file is synched up across computers. You can even restrict which files to be synched to which computer from the overall list of files and folders.

Resources: My blog post on Dropbox: http://enjoytesting.blogspot.in/2011/07/dropbox-i-love-you.html

Tip 10: Bitly: https://bitly.com/

Category: URL shortener.

Purpose: If you want to share the long links with someone, use this shortener.

Advantage: It allows you to customize the link as well. You can also track the real time stats as well.

Resources: We had a weekendtesting session on URL shorteners. Maybe this will help you choose the best. http://weekendtesting.com/archives/749

Tip 11: Doc2PDF: http://www.doc2pdf.net/

Category: Word to PDF converter.

Purpose: Convert your word documents to pdf.

Advantage: I use it to convert every weekend testing session transcript into pdf before uploading. There are no watermarks on the final document and is pretty quick and reliable.

Tip 12: DownForEveryoneOrJustMe: http://downforeveryoneorjustme.org/

Purpose: It lets you know if a website is down for everyone or just you.

Advantage: It helps to troubleshoot the issue by identifying who is down - the website or your browser settings.

Tip 13: Support Details: www.supportdetails.com

Category: Tech Support Management.

Purpose: It provides an overview of the system information like OS, browser, cookies, JavaScript and screen resolution.

Advantage: It lets you know the details immediately. It allows you to save the data in a pdf and email it.

Useful Tools

This section highlights the different tools I use during my testing. Feel free to try them out and let me know if you are aware of a better tool.

Tip 14: Jing: http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html

Category: Screen capture tool.

Purpose: I use this tool to capture screenshots and video too. You can edit, annotate the screenshots. The video is saved in swf format and can be opened using a browser.

Advantage: The video output is OS independent. The only limitation is that the video duration is restricted to five minutes.

Resources: http://www.techsmith.com/jing-camtasia-studio.html?

Tip 15: WebEx Recorder: http://webex-recorder-and-player.updatestar.com/

Category: Screen recording tool.

Purpose: I use it to record my testing sessions, record bugs and review my testing sessions.

Advantage: I have found it useful to record training videos, bug reports. If you are trying to reproduce an intermittent issue, start your recording and keep testing. Review the recording after some time. Make notes and repeat the exercise.

Tip 16: Color Cop: http://colorcop.net/download

Category: Desktop color picker

Purpose: To find the RGB and Hex code of the color.

Advantage: There are many parameters that affect the display of a color to any user. Some of the factors include the monitor profile, screen brightness, light source. So, to avoid the influence of the majority of factors, I use this color picker tool. It gives me the RGB values of a color along with the Hex code.

Tip 17: Perlclip: www.satisfice.com/tools.shtml

```
Perlclip for Testers, v1.3
by James Bach and Danny Faught
This program is released under the GPL 2.0 license.
Type "help" for instructions.

Pattern:
```

Category: Text and pattern generator

Purpose: You will be able to test the limits of fields, generate lots of text within seconds and much more.

Advantage: Quick and very effective. You don't need to know Perl to use this tool.

Resources: http://www.developsense.com/blog/2009/09/letter-to-programmer/

Tip 18: Rapid Reporter: http://testing.gershon.info/reporter/

Reporter: |
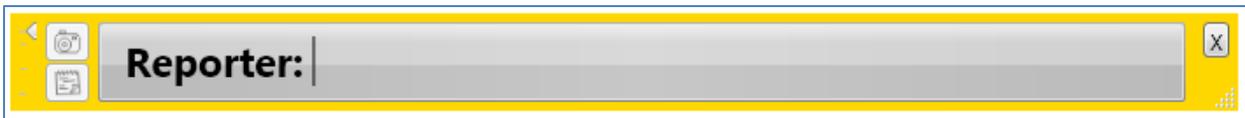
Category: Note taking tool.

Purpose: Take notes during your exploratory testing sessions.

Advantage: Lightweight, easy to setup, outputs notes in html or csv form.

Resources: http://testing.gershon.info/wp-content/uploads/Rapid-Reporter-Readme.pdf

Tip 19: Texter: http://lifehacker.com/238306/lifehacker-code-texter-windows

*Category:* Text substitution app.

Purpose: Substitute large chunks of text with hotkeys.

Advantage: Highly useful if you are repeatedly typing the same text with minor modifications. Saves lot of time. Infact, I have used this tool to type the Tip, Category, Purpose, Advantage, Resources text in this book using the shortcut "cvb".

Resources: http://weekendtesting.com/archives/1897

Tip 20: TreeSize Free: http://www.jam-software.com/freeware/
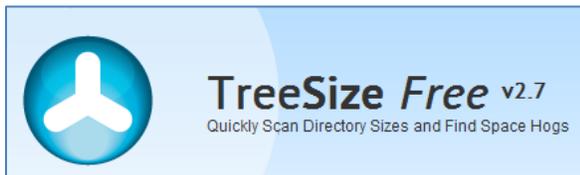
Category: Folder size finder

Purpose: It lists the folder and files sizes. Windows explorer lists the file size but not for folders in Details menu. Use this tool to sort folders by sizes, find which files and folders take up how much space.

Advantage: Instant display of folder and file sizes. Different options to sort by KB, MB, GB.

Resources: http://www.jam-software.com/freeware/. There are other tools listed on the website which I think will be useful. I will try them right after finishing this book.

Tip 21: FreeMind: http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

Category: Mind mapping tool.

Purpose: Brainstorm, generate ideas, capture ideas in mindmap format.

Advantage: Easy to create a mindmap, has few bugs but very effective. The map at the start of this book was created using FreeMind and then opened in XMind.

Resources: We had few weekendtesting sessions using FreeMind. Here are the links:

http://weekendtesting.com/archives/792

http://weekendtesting.com/archives/947

http://weekendtesting.com/archives/1618

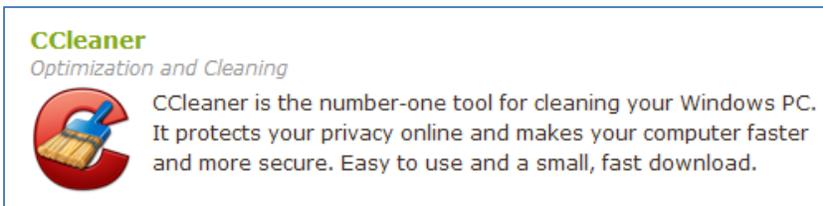**Tip 22: Notepad ++:** http://notepad-plus-plus.org/

Category: Note taking tool.

Purpose: Similar to notepad with additional features. It is highly recommended for programmers but useful for note taking even for testers.

Advantage: Opens multiple documents in tab style instead of individual windows for each document.

Tip 23: CCleaner: http://www.piriform.com/ccleaner

Category: Windows PC Cleaner

Purpose: I use this tool to clean my PC and get rid of temporary files created by browsers and other desktop applications.

Advantage: It cleans up without any issues or residue. Allows you to take backup of registry too if you are fixing some registry related issues.

Tip 24: Google Desktop: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Desktop

Category: Desktop search software

Purpose: I use this tool to search my files on my machine and in my mailbox.

Advantage: Pretty fast but it seems to slow down your machine. Worth it - saves time as it searches within seconds.

Tip 25: Skype: www.skype.com

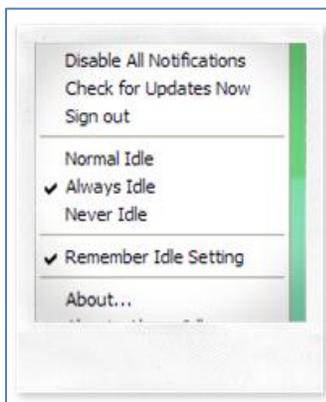

Category: Online communication tool.

Purpose: Call, chat online free with friends.

Advantage: Most of us have Skype ID. Free calls, desktop sharing and file sharing.

Resources: I wrote a post on Skype commands. http://enjoytesting.blogspot.in/2011/01/skype-paired-investigation-for-list-of.html

http://www.skype.com/intl/en/support/user-guides

Tip 26: gAlwaysIdle: http://www.killertechtips.com/2009/03/25/download-galwaysidle/

Category: Google Talk addon.

Purpose: To make your GTalk status Idle.

Advantage: Avoid pings when you are busy.

Tip 27: WinMerge: http://winmerge.org/

Category: Differencing and Merging tool.

Purpose: Compare folders and files. Merge changes.

Advantage: Very useful if you are comparing two files. As a tester, I use it to compare two setup folders, two log files. Take a backup before the tests and take another backup after the tests. Use WinMerge to highlight the differences. You will be surprised by what you see.

Browser Shortcuts

I highlight the most commonly used browser shortcuts. Some of them can be applied on File Explorer and individual files as well. Most of the shortcuts are the same across browsers.

Tip 28: Ctrl + T: Open tab

It is usually faster than using mouse to open a new tab. As you must be aware, a new tab is opened to the right of the last open tab.

Tip 29: Ctrl + N: New Window

This opens a new window. I usually open the same application on different windows if I want to compare different steps. This shortcut seems to work with many applications.

Tip 30: Ctrl + Shift + N: Open in Incognito Window

What happens if you open your application in Incognito mode? A quick way to open in Incognito mode is to press Ctrl + Shift + N.

Tip 31: Ctrl +: Zoom In

If I am presenting through WebEx or any other desktop sharing application, there are instances where I zoom in - Maybe to focus on a particular area of the screen or to test for different zoom levels. Ctrl + zooms in.

Tip 32: Ctrl -: Zoom Out

Now that you have zoomed in, you might want to zoom out. As we used + to zoom in, - seems to be the logical shortcut key. Ctrl - (Ctrl Minus) will zoom out.

Tip 33: Ctrl + 0: Original Zoom Level

Oops, have you zoomed out more than expected and you are not sure if the current view is the 100%. Press Ctrl 0 (Ctrl Zero) to zoom to 100% zoom level.

Tip 34: Ctrl + 3,4,5: Switch to corresponding tab

Suppose you have many tabs open and you want an easier way to switch to the corresponding tab. Press the corresponding tab number. Example, if you want to switch to fifth tab, press Ctrl + 5. This tip works well if there are less than nine tabs.

Tip 35: Ctrl + 9: Switch to last tab

Ok, there are more than nine tabs. You want to move to the last but one tab. I generally press Ctrl + 9, followed by Ctrl + Shift + Tab to switch to n - 1 tab. Ctrl + 9 always switches to last tab.

Tip 36: Ctrl + Tab: Switch between tabs

Pressing Ctrl + Tab switches between tabs.

I blogged about usage of Ctrl + Tab to switch between tabs and do a quick Browser Tab Blink test here: http://enjoytesting.blogspot.in/2012/03/blink-test-using-browser-tabs-blink-tab.html

Tip 37: Ctrl + L: Select URL

How many times have you tried to copy long URLs and lose focus only to select the URL again? Even without clicking on the address bar, press Ctrl + L to select the entire URL. This is an easy way to select any URL irrespective of the length of URL.

Tip 38: Ctrl + Enter: Prefix www. and suffix .com to URL

Do you always type the whole domain name in the address bar? Try typing just the domain name and press Ctrl + Enter. Observe that the hostname www and .com/.org/.net is added at end. This definitely saves time due to less keystroke.

Tip 39: F3: Find

Use the power of F3 to find any text in the browser window. To move to the next search result, press F3 again. Shift + F3 moves to the previous search result.

Tip 40: F5: Refresh

F5 refreshes the page. There is a difference between F5 and Ctrl F5. I will let you find the difference.

Tip 41: F11: View Full Screen

Do you take multiple screenshots to capture the entire webpage as it does not fit in one visible screen? Try F11. It displays the page in Full Screen mode. It does not display the address bar and the taskbar. To restore the address bar and the taskbar, press F11 again.

Tip 42: Tamper Data: https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/tamper-data/

This is an excellent add on to tamper the requests sent by the client to the server. Some of the interesting areas to test using this addon will be the features involving transactions, credit card details, password, and session cookies. This is very easy to use but my suggestion is that you start with a site where very few requests are sent to and fro. Don't try this on a site where there are lot of ads and dynamic content.

Tip 43: Firebug: https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/firebug/

Programmers use this addon a lot. As testers, we too can make use of this addon. If you want to view which element is governed by which part of code, which are the hidden fields and what values are being passed to the server.

Tip 44: Ctrl + Shift + T: Open last closed tab

Did you accidentally close any tab and you don't remember the URL? There is no problem. There is a shortcut for this functionality. Press Ctrl + Shift + T and the last closed tab is reopened. Every subsequent Ctrl + Shift + T reopens the closed tabs in the order in which they were closed.

General Shortcuts

I am a Windows user. I do use some of the general shortcuts which are not specific to any application. Let me take you through my list of shortcuts.

Tip 45: Alt + Tab

Whenever I have multiple applications open, I press Alt + Tab to switch between them. Alt + Tab helps you switch between open applications. Pressing Alt + Tab once toggles between two applications. If you want to browse through the list of open applications, have the Alt key pressed. Then press Tab key.

Tip 46: Ctrl + Shift + Esc

This was the first shortcut I learnt as a software tester. Pressing Ctrl + Shift + Esc opens up Windows Task Manager. There are many ways to launch the Task Manager but I am used to this shortcut and find it easier compared to right click or Ctrl + Alt + Del.

Tip 47: Home, End, Ctrl + Home, Ctrl + End

Each of these keys is powerful. On a page with long sentences, these help.

Home gets you to start of sentence. End gets the cursor to the end of sentence.

Ctrl + Home gets you to start of the page. In case of browser, it will shift the horizontal scrollbar to its initial position.

Ctrl + End gets you to the end of page. In case of browser, it will shift the horizontal scrollbar to the bottom.

Tip 48: Ctrl + Alt + Delete

I use this shortcut only to unlock the computer but there are other functions associated with this combination. One can use it to lock, change password, log off a user, switch user and launch windows task manager.

Tip 49: PrntScr

One of the most commonly used shortcut key, PrintScr captures the image of the screen at that instant and saves the image in Clipboard. If you want to take screenshot of a particular application instead of the entire screen, click on the application window and press Alt + PrntScr.

Tip 50: Alt + Enter

To view movie files in Full Screen, use Alt + Enter. Also, in Excel to get a line break, use Alt + Enter. This is a very effective but less known shortcut.

Command Prompt Commands

This section highlights the command prompt commands I use. Go to Start and click on Run to launch the Run window.

Tip 51: ipconfig

Launch Command Prompt pressing 'cmd' on Run window and clicking on OK. Once Command Prompt window is launched, press 'ipconfig' to view the Windows IP Configuration details.

Tip 52: appwiz.cpl

This command can be run directly on the Run window. This launches the Add/Remove Programs window.

Tip 53: temp

Use this command to view the temporary files of Windows.

Tip 54: %temp%

Use this command to view the temporary files for the logged in user.

Tip 55: dxdiag

This command launches DirectX Diagnostic Tool which displays all the system related information in a single window. The advantage of this tool is that one can export all the information to a text file.

Tip 56: mstsc

I use this command to connect to other machines on the same network. Have you used this command?

Tip 57: ping

If you wanted to check if a machine is online or not, just ping it. If it is up, you will receive a positive response in terms of packets sent and received.

Tip 58: regedit

I launch the Registry using the command regedit.

Tip 59: mspaint, powerpnt, excel, iexplore, firefox, notepad, write, winword

Most of the windows applications have a command associated with them.

Mspaint launches MS-Paint, powerpnt for MS-Powerpoint, excel for MS-Excel.

If you want to open any URL, type iexplore followed by space and the URL to browse. You can try the same with Firefox too. The command is firefox followed by space and the URL to browse.

notepad launches Notepad. write launches Wordpad and winword launches MS-Word.

These commands are very handy and save a lot of time.

Tip 60: clipbrd

If you are not sure what have you copied, just browse to Clipboard using the Run > clipbrd command. The Clipboard is launched and you can view what was copied.

Tip 61: charmap

As a tester, you might want to use special characters or Diacritics in your tests. Run > charmap fulfills that purpose. There is Simple and Advanced views too. Use the Advanced view if you want to search for a specific character.

General Tips

I hope that you now feel quite powerful by now having known more than fifty tips. I have three more tips to share with you.

Tip 62: Resize Canvas in MS-Paint

As testers, we take a lot of screenshots and paste them in MS-Paint. It could be to annotate, crop, or add some special effects. If the size of the screenshot you paste is less than the canvas size, you might spend time cropping or resizing the canvas. I use the Ctrl + E shortcut to open the image attributes window. Then, I change the width and height to 1 pixel each. Once you paste, the size of the image is always greater than the canvas size. This prevents the additional task of cropping the white space you see below the screenshot.

Tip 63: Count number of entries

Let me ask you a question. Suppose there are x number of contacts in a distribution list. How will you quickly find the total number of contacts without manually counting them? Please pause for a moment and try to think of how you would go about this task. Maybe you will have a better idea than mine. I use the power of Replace feature of MS-Word and count. Copy paste all the contacts to MS-Word. Find one symbol such as , or ';'. Use Ctrl + H to 'Replace All' with the same symbol. The count is displayed in the popup.

Tip 64: Avoid broken links

I learnt this tip from my friend in my old company. Whenever we received an email with network path, the link would be broken at the first space between words. She taught us how to avoid such broken links. Type " " and paste the network path between the " ". Then when you press Enter, the entire network path is converted to one link. I tried it in MS-Outlook.

Other Resources:

Browser addons

Some browser add-ons are especially useful. A good list of browser add-ons is mentioned on Santhosh Tuppad's blog: http://tuppad.com/blog/2011/10/26/how-to-test-better-with-add-ons/.

There are two mindmaps highlighting only browser add-ons. They are published on Moolya's blog.

http://moolya.com/blog/2011/03/04/addon-mindmap-for-testers-from-moolya/.

Use them and hunt for more add-ons which will support your testing.

Tools used by testers:

Jon Bach listed his toolkit here: http://jonbox.wordpress.com/2012/04/01/foreign-exchanges/

Stefan Zala listed his toolkit here: http://stefan-zala.ro/2012/04/03/the-tools-i-use/
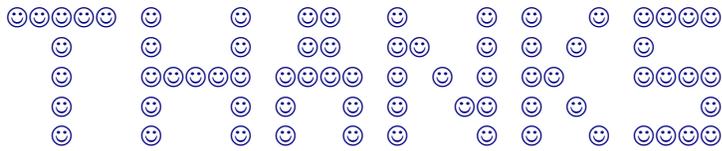
I hope this book is useful to you and your team.

If you have any comments on any of the chapters or the book in general, feel free to contact me. I will be more than happy to discuss any of the topics.

My contact details:

Email: ajay184f@gmail.com

Skype/Twitter/GTalk: ajay184f

LinkedIn Profile: http://in.linkedin.com/in/ajaybalamurugadas

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Ajay Balamurugadas