



## Transcript for Session 012

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### Transcript:

Hey there. How are you? Welcome to episode 12 of chandoo.org podcast. This podcast is dedicated to making you awesome in data analysis, charting, dashboards and VBA using Microsoft Excel.

I hope you are having a wonderful day. I'm having a really exciting time, which comes once every four years! As you can guess, the FIFA soccer World Cup is currently going on and I have been having many late night sessions watching the matches, following the twitter stream and watching the match commentary etc. I will talk about some of the football observations maybe in a later episode of our podcast, but today I want to try a new format in our episode.

Once every few weeks, I would like to do a shorter duration podcast for about 20 minutes or so. This is based on the feedback that a few of the listeners have sent to me. They told me that while they like the longer sessions, they would like to have a mix of shorter sessions as well. And this also helps me get across some of the content and ideas that may not be of 40 to 50 minutes duration.

Today's episode is a perfect example of a situation where you don't need more than ten minutes to understand this particular concept but it can end up saving you tons of time.

The concept that I am going to talk about today is 'keyboard shortcuts' and I am going to share the top ten keyboard shortcuts according to me.

Before we jump into it, let's take a detour and understand a really nice concept that I came across just a while ago. I was looking at an article on Time talking about the rule of 20 minutes. I'm going to link to that article in the podcast session notes which can be accessed at <http://www.chandoo.org/session12/>. Let me explain what this 20 minute rule is.

Quite often, when we finish our workday (this used to happen to me as well), we come home and we are literally exhausted. We had a long day at work, and it was a mentally draining experience for most of us because we are working as an Analyst, Manager or Team Leader and most of the time we are working our brains at 100% levels. Not literally maybe, but you get the point. By the time I used to reach home, I was always exhausted. But then what we do after that is really the opposite of what we actually want to achieve - we want to do something nice, but we do something really wrong. What most of us do is - we come home, we're exhausted, we're tired and we kind of crash into the couch or we finish our dinner and watch some television mindlessly until we fall asleep. At least I used to do this quite often.

The 20 minute rule from Time is that as soon as you come home, instead of waiting to feel sleepy while



watching TV, you should allocate 20 minutes and do something else other than watching TV. They have some examples - you could play chess, learn a new foreign language, learn computer programming, learn how to play music, practice yoga or meditation, stretch your body or do some mild exercise that puts your entire body in motion or something that excites your mind. This is what they suggested and I really like their ideas. In fact, their top two recommendations are to read a book or write an article. And, I distinctly remember that the moment I started blogging about Excel in 2008 (I started working in 2006 and even though I had a blog back then, it was just random chatter, nothing serious) which I used to do as soon as I got home, I could see that my mind started staying active, I was much more productive and at peace with myself.

I wanted to pass on this suggestion to you because reading that article on Time reminded me how I experienced that personal transformation from a stressed out, exhausted and somewhat worried person back in 2008 to somebody who feels fresh, healthy, happy, peaceful, calm, nourished and skilled in 2014. You might feel the same! Again, I will link to the article in the session notes which can be accessed at <http://www.chandoo.org/session12/>.

Moving on to the topic of the day - a quick reminder that this is a short topic and we'll talk for about 10 to 15 minutes and hopefully we'll wrap it up in less than 20 minutes; and that I plan to do this kind of a session once a month or slightly less frequently depending on the response from the listeners.

This topic is '**Top Ten Excel Shortcuts**'. I want to warn you that as an Excel user, these are the keyboard shortcuts that I feel are the top ten. I have been using Excel for over a decade and I've been teaching Excel for more than 6-7 years now, so based on all these years of usage, these are my top ten keyboard shortcuts, as of today.

Before we talk about the ten shortcuts, let me take a moment to explain why shortcuts are important. When you are working with Excel, you are often doing a lot of intense, analytical work. You are thinking and doing the work at the same time. Your mind is working and your hands are kind of executing the instructions that your mind is passing on to you. This is a lot of intensity that you don't want to slow down by figuring out the exact menu or ribbon path for a certain feature, because your flow of thought will pause before you can locate how to insert a pivot table for instance. This is where a keyboard shortcut comes in handy as it can save you a lot of processing time as you instantly press the keys to insert a pivot table, or edit a formula or change a reference style etc. while continuing your thinking process. Not just this, but the keyboard shortcuts will make you appear fast and experienced. Beginners often struggle with every aspect of the Excel software whereas an experienced user can make a lot of difference because they can use shortcuts and hidden features very well. This is why I think keyboard shortcuts are a good thing to learn and I am sure many of you will agree with this. So I don't want to press the need for keyboard shortcuts anymore.

Let's jump into the top ten keyboard shortcuts. My top most keyboard shortcut which I use quite often is the '**ALT**' key located right next to the space bar on most computer keyboards. When you are working in any latest version of Excel (2007 and above), if you just press the ALT key and hold it for a fraction of a second, Excel will give you keyboard shortcuts for everything that you see on the ribbon. This works not only for Excel, but for any other application where you see a ribbon, i.e. PowerPoint, Word, or Outlook. Just hold down the ALT key for a fraction of a second and you'll see the screen tips displayed for everything. Excel will tell you that if you press 'H' after the ALT key, you'll access the Home ribbon, if you



press 'I' after the ALT key, you'll jump into the Insert ribbon. So this is like a cheat for the keyboard shortcuts. Many people say, "Hey, I want to learn how to use the keyboard shortcuts, but I can't remember all those hundreds of shortcuts." Here is your secret! All you have to do is remember one keyboard shortcut 'ALT+I'. It's like accessing the 'Help' section of Excel without going through pages and pages of a user manual. All you have to do instead is press the ALT key and Excel will tell you which keyboard shortcut to use to access a certain feature.

Let's say that you want to insert a pivot table. What would you do? You know, by usage, that the Pivot table command is in the Insert ribbon, and presently you're on the Home ribbon and you've already set up some data and you're inside it. So you press 'ALT+I' and then Excel tells you that if you press 'I' next, you'll jump into the Insert ribbon. You press 'I', and then within the Insert ribbon, Excel will display the shortcuts for every button that you see on the screen. It'll tell you that if you now press 'P' (for pivot table), Excel will insert the pivot table! There you go. Using the onscreen help and suggestions, and just pressing the ALT key for a fraction of a second, you can use any feature of Excel right from your keyboard. You don't have to touch your mouse. This is a very beautiful and powerful shortcut that I use quite often. Personally, I think that anybody who cares to remember this one shortcut will end up saving a lot of time over the period of a month or year of their Excel usage.

That's my number 1 shortcut.

My second shortcut is '**Ctrl+1**'. This is something that I use quite often. I format my workbooks, cells, charts, axis, text boxes, drawing shapes and pictures etc. in Excel. No matter what I am trying to format, all I have to do is to select that particular item (cell, pivot table item, chart, drawing shape or picture) and press 'Ctrl+1'. This will immediately take you to the 'Format' dialog box of that particular item. Those of you who have migrated to Excel 2013 (the latest version of Excel) will notice that Microsoft has started doing away with some of the dialog boxes that Excel usually throws up. Earlier, the format tool used to appear in a dialog box or a separate window, but in Excel 2013, the format tool sits on a side panel. When you press 'Ctrl+1', you'll need to shift your focus to the side panel to do the formatting. It doesn't matter where the formatting is being done as long as you can quickly get to it and change things. That's where 'Ctrl+1' comes handy. It's very easy to remember. Formatting is probably the top priority of any of our work. There is a saying in the management world - "We don't care whether something is right or wrong, as long as it looks pretty!" Most of us try to add lipstick to our workbooks and that's where formatting comes in handy and 'Ctrl+1' is an easy to remember shortcut for that.

The third shortcut that I have for you is '**Ctrl+arrow keys**' - you press Ctrl and use the arrow keys - this is a navigational shortcut and you can jump to any part of your workbook very easily by using this. By using 'Ctrl+down arrow' you'll go to the last cell in that particular set of data, and 'Ctrl+right arrow' will take you to the right-most column. This 'Ctrl'+ arrow key combination is very useful for quickly navigating in your workbook or worksheet and accessing everything. You could also use 'Ctrl'+ 'Page Up/Page Down', but I guess you've figured that out by now.

The fourth shortcut that I have is '**paste special values**'. Often, when I'm working with data or formulas and I finish the calculations, I usually want to paste the values somewhere. Or, once I copy something, I don't want the formatting but I just want the numbers to be pasted. So I use the 'paste special' shortcut quite often. The original shortcut that I used to work with was the 'Alt' key followed by the key sequence E-S-V. Although this worked perfectly all right, I don't use it now because I prefer to use a shorter



shortcut. On many keyboards you can find the right click button. You right click on the mouse and it does something. The same thing can be invoked from the keyboard also. It's called the 'Menu' key and is usually on the right hand side of the keyboard. On the left side of the keyboard you find a 'Windows' key and on the right hand side of the keyboard you would usually find a 'Menu' key. Once you've copied the values, press the right click button on the keyboard (called the 'Menu' key) and then press 'V' for pasting the values. That's another shortcut.

Then come three more shortcuts, all of which are function keys - 'F2', 'F3' and 'F4'.

**F2** is for editing a cell. No matter what the cell contains (a formula or a value), when you select the cell and press F2, Excel immediately takes you to the end of the cell so that you can start editing the formula or the data very quickly.

**F3** is for showing all the names in your workbook. Again, this is very useful. Many times when I am working with Excel, I have created some named ranges and I want to call them again in my formulas etc. When I press F3, all the names are shown, and I can quickly select from the names.

The **F4** key is particularly useful when you are writing formulas and you have set up a reference and you want to change the reference style. Let's say you're writing a formula for summing up cells A1 and A2 and you've written a formula:

```
=sum(A1:A2);
```

and you want to make this reference to cells A1 and A2 absolute because you're dragging the formula down and you don't want the references to change. You could write the formula as:

```
=sum($A$1:$A$2).
```

But, that's too cumbersome. Instead, you can just select the range A1:A2 and press the F4 key to add the \$'s for you. It's a very powerful, useful and simple shortcut when writing formulas. You press F4 and it gives you various referencing styles. If you press F4 multiple times, it switches between different reference styles. Again, this is something very tricky to visualize while listening to the podcast but if you are working within Excel, write a formula and select any cell or portion of the formula that contains some reference and press the F4 key to see what happens and you'll understand.

So these are the three shortcuts - F2 for editing a cell, F3 for showing the names and F4 for changing the reference style.

Then comes the eighth shortcut which is '**Ctrl+T**'. 'T' stands for table. Since Excel 2007, Microsoft has introduced a feature called 'Table' so that we can structure all our data in a beautiful and simple way. Again, this podcast is not meant to go into all the intricate details of tables, so I don't want to go there. But if you are already using tables, the quickest way to create a table is - select any cell in your data and press 'Ctrl+T' and it immediately creates a table for you. 'T' is for table and is very easy to remember.

Then comes the ninth shortcut which is '**Ctrl+Shift+L**'. 'L' for Larry. 'Ctrl+Shift+L' is the shortcut that I use to quickly set up filters on any data set and quickly remove them. It's a toggle key shortcut. If you press it once, it'll set up the filters. If you press it again, the filters will be gone. This is very useful because most of the time I have the raw data and before I go and build something with it, I usually do some ad hoc analysis with it. For doing ad hoc analysis, filtering is a very easy way to do it if I just want to filter by



a region or product range etc. Setting up auto filters is a cumbersome process because you have to go to various ribbons to set it up. So I use this shortcut very often and it quickly gives me the filters to work with.

The last but very important shortcut is '**Ctrl+S**'. 'S' for saving. No matter what you're doing in Excel, you need to save your work quite often. Although there is a feature in Excel called 'auto-save', you don't really want to risk your work by leaving it to Excel to figure out when to save your work. So I suggest that you press 'Ctrl+S' quite often so that your work is saved and Excel has back-up if you lose something or if Excel crashes etc.

There you go. These are the top ten shortcuts according to me.

In a quick recap, they are:

- 'Alt' key to show on-screen tips and to quickly teach you what shortcut will do what
- 'Ctrl+1' for formatting
- 'Ctrl+arrow keys' for quickly navigating
- 'Ctrl+E-S-V' or 'Menu Key+V' to paste values
- 'F2' function key for editing
- 'F3' function key for showing the names
- 'F4' function key for changing reference styles
- 'Ctrl+T' for inserting a table
- 'Ctrl+Shift+L' for inserting or removing filters
- 'Ctrl+S' for saving a file

There you go with the top ten shortcuts. I would love to know what your top ten shortcuts are. So go to <http://chandoo.org/session12/> and leave your comments so that I can hear from you about the shortcuts that you are using and learn from them.

That's all for now. I hope you have enjoyed this short but very useful episode of <http://chandoo.org/> podcast and I will see you again in another episode.

But for right now, I must rush because there is a football match going on! Bye and see you again.