

Those Function Keys

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2023-02-17

There is a somewhat unspoken standard in the functionality exposed by function keys in Windows and Linux, only partially shared with macOS, particularly since the introduction of that abomination called the Touch Bar. Here is a very simple recap of those functions.

- F1 = Get help.
- F2 = Edit or rename the current selection.
- F3 = Open the search dialog box, or repeat the previous action.
- F4 = Open the find dialog box.
- F5 = Refresh the screen, or recalculate.
- F6 = Select the browser bar in most browsers.
- F7 = Trigger spell and grammar check in some text editors.
- F10 = Open the menu bar in various apps, like Emacs and Firefox.
- F11 = Toggle fullscreen mode in many apps in Windows and Linux.
- F12 = Open the “save as” dialog.

In developer-centric apps, the keys from F5 to F8 also serve to launch and debug applications, moving from one instruction to the next and eventually jumping in and out of functions.