

Windows XP

COPY TEXT FROM MOST ERROR MESSAGES

“Windows Secrets” email, July 31, 2007

Neil Krish Goundar sent in a trick to copy the text of Windows error messages when there’s no obvious way to do so. This can make it easier for you to send the information to support sites or anyone else who needs the information.

“In Windows, if you want to copy the text out of any message without typing it manually, press Ctrl+C on your keyboard when the message appears. Then, in an e-mail or word-processing program, press Ctrl+V to paste the text found in the title, message, and buttons.”

Ctrl+C means “copy” — even in Windows message boxes that don’t allow text to be selected using your mouse pointer. Many people don’t realize that the standard Ctrl+C shortcut will copy the text of many error messages, whether or not the lines appear to be “selected.”

In many cases, the old Ctrl+Insert shortcut will copy the same error messages as Ctrl+C. But this key combination was long ago replaced in Microsoft’s documentation with the easier-to-remember “Ctrl+C Means Copy.”

Unfortunately, I doubt that either Ctrl+C or Ctrl+Insert will copy any error text if your PC is so hosed that it’s displaying a Blue Screen of Death, as described in the previous tip.

