The Function keys at the top of many keyboards provide shortcuts to do things in the Windows operating system. If you are using a program such as a word processing application or spreadsheet, the function keys can have different uses in the program. To find out if a function key is available in the program you are using, open the index for Help in the program and type the words function key.

Many programs extend the uses of the function keys through key combinations. The most common combinations are Shift + a function key, Alt + a function key, and Crtl + a function key.

Following are the usual uses for the function keys in Windows.

F1
The F1 key opens a help window. If you are working in a program and want to see the Windows help window, instead of the program help, press the Windows key (the key with the Windows logo on the bottom row of keys) on the keyboard and press F1 at the same time.

F2
Select any folder or file name and press F2 in order to rename it. Type a new name for the file, then click outside the name box or press the enter key to make the name change.

F3
The F3 key opens the Find Files window.

F4
Press the Alt key and the F4 key at the same time to close the Window that is currently active. If you press the F4 key when you are working in Internet Explorer, the Address bar is selected so you can type the address of a Web page.

F5
Press F5 to refresh the screen, for example, if you are viewing a directory of files and you delete or add files, press F5 to see any changes. Press F5 when viewing a Web page to see the most current version of that Web page.

F6
Press F6 to cycle among open windows to make each one active in turn. F6 often moves the mouse pointer around the structure of the program.

F7
The F7 key does not have any function in Windows. It is used for spell checking in many word processing and email programs.

F8
Press the F8 key during the computer's startup to start the operating system in Safe Mode.

F9

The F9 key does not have any function in Windows. It may be used in some individual programs.

F10
Press the Shift key while pressing F10 to open the shortcut menu. The F10 key activates the menu bar in many programs. Press F10 to highlight the first menu choice, then use the arrow keys to move around the menus.

F11
Press F11 when you are working in Internet Explorer to open the window to full and make all the toolbars disappear so you can see more information on the page. Press F11 again to toggle back to your normal page size.

F12
The F12 key does not have any function in Windows. It may be used in some programs.