

# Typing a Special Character

by Fred Offenbach

The following applies to all Mac word processing applications, such as Pages and MS Word. This article was written using OS X.4, Tiger.

Long ago, there was a utility on the operating system called “KeyCaps”. In the OS X systems that has been replaced with a utility called “Keyboard Viewer”, and it looks identical to its predecessor. To get access to it, under the flag in the menu bar, select Show Keyboard Viewer. Don’t have it? Then go to Apple/System Preferences/International/Input Menu and then Turn On Show Character Palette and Show Keyboard Viewer. Also select “Show input menu in Menu Bar”.

Now you should have a US flag in the menu bar; click on it to drop it down and select Show Keyboard Viewer. To use it, select the font that you are using in the font box at the bottom of the Viewer; note that the keyboard shows representation of the font face; also note that when you depress the option, command, or shift, or control key -- and combinations of them -- the thumbnail changes. Now find the character that you want to type, remember the keys for it, return to the document, and type it. If you are typing in a particular font face for a certain reason, and you want to continue using that font face, and all you want to do is to find a special character, this is possibly an easy way to find the key combination for that character. Cons: it is hard on the eyes; the font face may not have the character that you are looking for; this is the way it was before OS X.

Enter OS X! It has the Keyboard Viewer for the diehards, and another utility called Character Palette. Situation is that you are looking for a font face with some special characters because the one that you are using does not have them; e.g., you want to type a smiling face. Under the flag, select Show Character Palette; View, select Roman. At the bottom of the window, in the search window, type ‘smiling face’ and enter key; two versions of a smiling face will appear, so double click on one of them (I choose the black one). In the panel called Collections (Font Faces), you will find all of the font faces that have a smiling face. Double clicking on any one of them and it will insert that face in the text at cursor position, and will change the font face from that point forward, until you change it back.

 **Ideally you want to stay with the font face that you have been using**, otherwise troubles are ahead .

To make life easy, if you are using the same character often in the same document, you might select the character, then Edit/Copy, the Edit/Paste it where you want it.



Don’t forget that you can increase the font size with these font sets and you will not have any

jaggies as you did in the old days. If you do not know the name of the special character, guess! Or look in one of the probable categories. The category named Accented Latin might be of interest if you are using foreign words, ¿Sí?

And yes, all of the above work with MS Word! And the temperature degree mark will be found under the Punctuation category.