

# Customizing the BlackBerry with Tweaks, Secret Codes, Hidden Keys, and Add-On Applications

part



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# Secret Codes and Hidden Keys

**W**elcome to *Hacking BlackBerry!* This book is all about how to do useful, interesting, fun, and different things with your BlackBerry device. I'm going to dive right in with this first chapter, and provide you with information on many undocumented keystrokes and codes that allow you to access and effectively use the helpful, interesting, or just plain obscure features on your BlackBerry.

For information on codes you can use for e-mail, web browser, and security purposes, see Chapters 2, 3, and 7, respectively.

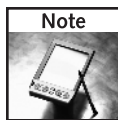
## Locating the Important Keys

Although you are already familiar with the BlackBerry keyboard, you should take special note of the key you use most often when executing the shortcuts and key sequences in this chapter. On some devices the ALT key has a half-moon shape on it and is located directly below the A key, in the lower-left corner of your BlackBerry keyboard (see Figure 1-1). On other devices such as the 8700, the ALT key simply has the label "ALT."

You will also use the CAP key a couple of times. This key has an up arrow on it and is located directly to the right of the SPACE key at the bottom of your keyboard.

The backspace key has a left arrow on it and says DEL; it is located on the far right-hand side of your keyboard (directly below the P key).

Finally, the ESC key is located on the right side of your BlackBerry device, just below the trackwheel. The ESC key is generally used to go back, cancel, or dismiss a menu.



### Note

All the techniques in this chapter work on my BlackBerry 7290 and should function on similar modern devices. If you own a 7100 series device, you may find that some either do not work or require a slightly different keystroke sequence because of the different keyboard configuration.

# chapter 1

## in this chapter

- ☑ Typing more efficiently
- ☑ Mastering shortcut keys
- ☑ Accessing hidden system screens
- ☑ Working with the built-in applications



FIGURE 1-1: The BlackBerry 7290 keyboard layout

## Using Typing Shortcuts

As nice as it is to have a QWERTY keyboard on your BlackBerry, typing on it is nowhere near as fast as it can be on your standard desktop or even laptop. Fortunately, the designers of the BlackBerry device were thoughtful enough to augment the keyboard with a number of shortcuts (see Table 1-1) that can be used to speed things up (or at least make it easier on your sore fingers!).

In addition, your BlackBerry has a fantastic feature called AutoText, whose main function is to correct common spelling mistakes. The great news is that you can also use it to define automatic replacement of shortcut letter combinations with any text you wish.

For example, suppose that you want to add a favorite sentence or phrase at the end of every e-mail you compose (such as “Best regards, Glenn”). All you need to do is define an AutoText entry that contains your sentence and select a short letter combination that you can use to invoke the sentence or phrase (such as “brg”).

To add an entry to AutoText:

1. Click the trackwheel while typing and choose Edit AutoText. You are presented with a list of predefined AutoText mappings.
2. Press the trackwheel again and choose New from the menu to create your entry.

**Table 1-1** Typing Shortcuts

<i>To insert . . .</i>	<i>Do this . . .</i>
A period	Rather than pressing ALT+M, press the SPACE key two times in succession. Not only will your BlackBerry insert a period but it will also capitalize the next letter you type.
A capital letter	Normally you would press the CAP key along with the letter you want to capitalize. With BlackBerry, you can simply press and hold the letter you want to capitalize.
A special character	Press and hold any key while scrolling the trackwheel up or down. You will see a rotating list of characters mapped to that key appear on the screen. Select the character you want by scrolling the trackwheel.
An @ symbol	In any field designed to accept an e-mail address (such as the e-mail field in an Address Book entry), simply type a space for BlackBerry to automatically insert an @ character. This trick works for the period used in e-mail addresses as well.

## Accessing System Information

A number of hidden screens and undocumented information codes are available on your BlackBerry device. The key is to know how to access them. This section describes a few system-level screens that can be useful or, at the very least, interesting to take a look at.

### The Help Me! Screen

The Help Me! screen is useful because it gathers key information about your device. It displays your operating system version, battery level, wireless signal strength, and available storage.

To access the Help Me! screen:

1. Go to the Applications screen and press ALT+CAP+H.
2. To close the screen, choose the Close menu or press the back button.

### The Event Log

The Event Log offers a view into system events that occur on your BlackBerry. It can also be a useful debugging tool to track down what might be going wrong with an application or service on your BlackBerry.

To access the Event Log:

1. Go to the home Applications screen and hold down the ALT key while entering the key sequence LGLG. After a second or two, the event log appears (see Figure 1-2).

Within the Event Log, you can click on the trackwheel to view more details about a given event, clear the log to reclaim some storage memory, or go into the Options menu to fine-tune the types of events that are logged.

2. To close the Event Log and return to your home screen, choose the Close menu.



FIGURE 1-2: The BlackBerry Event Log

## The Signal Strength Display Mode

The standard signal strength display on a BlackBerry uses the familiar “five bars” graphic — the more bars you have, the better your signal strength (as shown in Figure 1-1). If you prefer more precision, however, you can have the signal strength display in actual numbers (see Figure 1-3).

To change your signal strength display:

1. Go to the home Applications screen and hold down the ALT key while entering the key sequence **NMLL**.
2. To return to the standard graphical bar display, enter the same key sequence, **ALT+NMLL**.

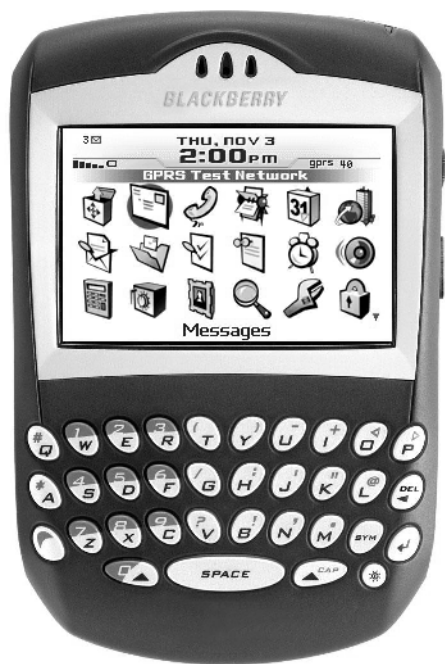


FIGURE 1-3: Signal strength displayed numerically

The numeric signal display represents your signal strength in decibels (dB).

## Smart System Codes

You can obtain various types of information about your system by using smart system codes (see Table 1-2). Simply enter the code into any input field, and then press the Enter (or space) key.

Table 1-2 Smart System Codes	
Smart Code	Information Returned
myver	Displays the device/version
LD	Displays the local date
LT	Displays the local time
mysig	Displays the information you entered in the BlackBerry Options ⇄ Owner screen
mypin	Displays your handheld's PIN

For example, typing `myver` in the body of an e-mail and pressing Enter displays the device name and the operating system version, as shown in Figure 1-4.

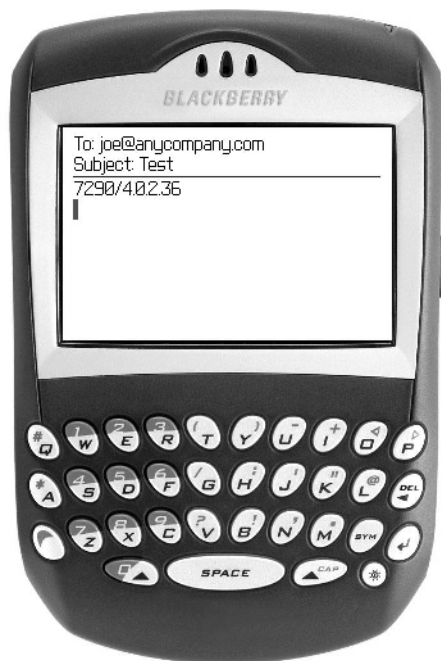


FIGURE 1-4: The BlackBerry information display after entering the smart code `myver` in an e-mail

## Working with the Built-In BlackBerry Applications

In addition to the more general-purpose shortcuts listed in the previous sections, many shortcut keys are specific to the built-in BlackBerry applications such as Calendar and Address Book, as well as the standard BlackBerry Applications screen (also known as the home screen). In this section, I present a number of these BlackBerry applications, along with shortcut keys and techniques that apply specifically to those programs.

### The BlackBerry Applications Screen

The BlackBerry Applications screen is often referred to as the Home screen or the Ribbon. It supports several shortcut letters to enable you to quickly jump to different programs. Table 1-3 lists known shortcuts you can use to access different applications while in the Applications screen. On newer devices, please note that in order to use these shortcuts, you will first need to disable the Dial from Home Screen option under Options ⇨ General Options ⇨ Phone. When this feature is on, the Home screen assumes that the keystrokes you enter are intended to be part of a phone number you wish to dial.



**Table 1-3** Shortcut Keys in the Applications Screen

<i>Shortcut Key</i>	<i>Associated Application or Feature</i>
A	Address Book
R	Alarm Clock
B	Browser
U	Calculator
L	Calendar
C	Compose E-mail
K	Keyboard Lock
M	Messages
D	Notes
O	Options
P	Phone
F	Profiles
V	Saved Messages
S	Search
T	Tasks
W	WAP Bookmarks

## Changing the Icon List

Modern BlackBerry devices come with more and more built-in applications, and constantly having to navigate to the same application icons over and over again can become tiresome, especially if these icons happen to be located on the second or third row of icons.

The key to changing the list of application icons that appears on your BlackBerry is to use the key sequence ALT+trackwheel. If you press these two keys together, a hidden menu pops up that allows you to customize the order in which your application icons are displayed, as well as designate which icons are displayed or hidden.

Suppose that you are a big BrickBreaker fan and you are tired of having to always scroll to the BrickBreaker icon. Wouldn't it be great to have BrickBreaker on the first row of icons? Accomplishing this is easy:

1. Navigate to the BrickBreaker icon so that it is the selected icon and press ALT+trackwheel.
2. In the hidden menu that appears, choose the Move Application menu option.
3. Use the trackwheel to move the BrickBreaker icon up to the top position in the applications screen.

The Applications menu can also be used to hide application icons you don't use. This can help you simplify your applications display so that you see only those applications you use regularly.

Suppose that you are not a games person at all and you actually want to remove BrickBreaker from your applications screen. To do this:

1. Navigate to the BrickBreaker icon so that it is selected and press ALT+trackwheel.
2. Select the Hide Application menu option.

Voilà! BrickBreaker is gone. Well, it is really not totally gone — it is still on your BlackBerry, but its icon is just hidden from the Applications screen. If you ever want to bring a hidden application icon back, just press ALT+trackwheel again and choose the Show All menu option. Doing this restores all of the hidden icons.

### Switching Between Running Applications

Many people are not aware that a BlackBerry can actually have multiple applications running at the same time. For example, suppose that you are browsing a web site and decide that you need to make a phone call. You can easily call up the list of currently running applications by pressing and holding the ALT key and then pressing ESC, which displays a horizontal ribbon of icons. Use the trackwheel to switch to the application icon you wish to return to.

## The BlackBerry Calendar Application

The BlackBerry has a fairly full-featured Calendar application that can synchronize appointments and other events with Microsoft Outlook and other popular calendaring solutions.

The downside of the built-in Calendar application is the awkwardness of navigating through days, weeks, and months using the trackwheel. Fortunately, you can use numerous secret shortcut keys to make navigating your calendar much more pleasant. Table 1-4 describes the various shortcut keys that can be used for quick navigation in the Calendar application.

**Table 1-4** Shortcut Keys in the Calendar Application

<i>Shortcut Key</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
A	Switch to Agenda view.
M	Switch to Month view.
D	Switch to Day view.
W	Switch to Week view.
G	Go to a specific date. A horizontal band pops up on the screen, enabling you to use the trackwheel to select the month, day, or year. You can then use the keyboard to modify the date component. Select the trackwheel again to jump to the specified date in the calendar. See Figure 1-5 for a screenshot of the Go To Date popup display.

Table 1-4 Continued	
Shortcut Key	Meaning
T	Go to the current date. Jump to the current date in your currently selected view.
SPACE	Navigate to the next day, week, or month, depending on the current view.
N	Navigate to the next day, week, or month, depending on the current view.
C	Create a new appointment.
ALT+trackwheel	In Day, Week, and Agenda views, navigate forward or backward among the days of the week. In Month view, navigate forward or backward among the weeks in the month.



Note

These shortcut keys will not work in the Day view if you are using the Enable Quick Entry option. When you start typing, Enable Quick Entry thinks that you are entering a new appointment rather than accepting what you're typing as shortcut keys. If you prefer to leave Enable Quick Entry on, you will be able to use these shortcut keys in only the Week, Month, and Agenda views.

To turn off Enable Quick Entry, use the trackwheel in the Day view to display the menu and choose Options to bring up the Day View Options screen, then scroll to the Enable Quick Entry item and make sure it is set to No.

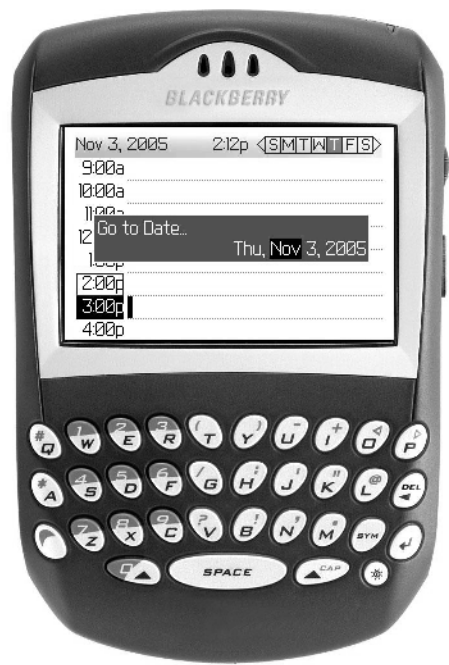


FIGURE 1-5: The Go To Date popup screen that appears after pressing G in the Calendar application

## The BlackBerry Address Book Application

BlackBerry users usually call up the Address Book application to quickly find a phone number or e-mail or to enter new contact information. Being able perform these actions quickly is important.

### Finding Contacts

If you are like me and have a fairly large list of contacts in your Address Book, quickly finding the right entry when composing an e-mail or making a phone call can be frustrating, especially if you remember only a tiny bit of the contact's information.

For maximum efficiency, start by keeping your Address Book sorted in the same way you are likely to look for contacts. If you are in sales and generally organize your contacts by company, sort your Address Book by company. Similarly, if you are more comfortable searching by last name, set your sort option to use last names.

To change the sort order:

1. Use the trackwheel to bring up the Address Book menu, and choose Options.
2. In the Options screen, change the Sort By field to first, last, or company.

One of the easiest ways to find a contact quickly is to use the proper search technique. In the BlackBerry Address Book list, you can quickly jump to the right contact by taking these simple steps:

1. Type the first few letters of the first name.
2. Insert a space.
3. Type the first few letters of the last name.

This method yields the name you were looking for with a minimum of typing and scrolling because you avoid having to type the full name or scroll up and down within many entries that start with the same letter. Note that this technique works regardless of the sort option you are using.

### Editing Contacts

When you add a contact to the Address Book in a hurry, you sometimes enter only the minimum amount of information necessary, such as name and phone number. When editing an Address Book entry, the phone fields (Work, Home, Mobile, and so on) all allow you to enter their values using the number keys. You do not have to use the ALT key when entering numbers for these fields.

## The BlackBerry Calculator Application

The BlackBerry Calculator application greatly benefits from the use of special keys. Without them, you are left with only the trackwheel as a means for pressing the various calculator buttons. Table 1-5 lists the known keyboard buttons that can be used with the Calculator application.

**Table 1-5 Shortcut Keys in the Calculator Application (Standard Keyboard)**

<i>Shortcut Key</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
+	Add
-	Subtract
*	Multiply
/	Divide
)	Clear Screen
(	Clear Entry
Return	Calculate and Display Result
V	Square Root
#	Positive (Negative)

The 7100 models with the more phone-centric keyboards do not have labeled keys for add, subtract, multiply, and divide. Instead, you must use the keyboard equivalents shown in Table 1-6.

**Table 1-6 Shortcut Keys in the Calculator Application (7100 Keyboard)**

<i>Shortcut Key</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
I	Add
U	Subtract
A	Multiply
G	Divide
Y	Clear Screen
T	Clear Entry
Return Key	Calculate and Display Result
V	Square Root
#	Positive (Negative)

## Summary

I collected the hacks, tips, and tricks in this chapter from a number of different sources on the Internet. As of this writing, there is no big list of secret BlackBerry codes posted anywhere (a good reason for the existence of this book!). Instead, you can find a few tips here or there in a great many places.

The BlackBerry site has some great information in its customer support materials. Another good source of information is your wireless carrier's website. Several carriers list Frequently Asked Questions and post various tidbits of information in the site's customer support area.

If you are interested in learning more about the codes and hidden screens that BlackBerry users have discovered, several online BlackBerry user forums have a Tips section where users freely post their discoveries or little-known tips and techniques they may have heard about or seen somewhere and simply felt like sharing with others. The following web sites have some good information:

- [www.blackberrycool.com](http://www.blackberrycool.com)
- [www.pdastreet.com/forums](http://www.pdastreet.com/forums) (navigate to the RIM and BlackBerry discussion forum)
- [www.ibbug.org](http://www.ibbug.org)

Who knows? You may even discover some of your own hidden key codes just by experimenting with your own BlackBerry!