Handy Excel Shortcuts

Working in Excel—particularly for the purpose of financial modelling—can be very time-consuming, and increasing your speed and accuracy when modelling will increase productivity significantly. Excel users just starting out with using Excel would be very comfortable with using the mouse for navigation and editing purposes. However, with growing familiarity, the mouse is not the fastest or most efficient way of modelling. Excel offers a lot of shortcuts to tackle this problem, and as you become a faster modeller, you will find these shortcuts very handy.

There are many advantages of using Excel shortcuts:

- **Ease of use**: Whilst intuitively it may seem like a mouse is the more comfortable option, it a lot more comfortable for your wrist, arm, and shoulders to punch the keys on the keyboard than trying to align the cursor on the screen.
- **Easier on the body**: Given the natural placement of keyboard and mouse on any desktop, using the keyboard more often is less stressful on the body. Using the mouse constantly can cause stress on the wrists and shoulders. With the mouse most users typically end up using just the wrists and index finger, which can cause fatigue and long term problems.
- **Speed of execution**: Keystrokes are much faster than the mouse. To put this to test, try creating a new worksheet in Excel using the mouse by clicking on File (or Microsoft Button in Excel 2007), then New—Blank Workbook. Alternatively try the shortcut CTRL-N. There is a distinct improvement in speed with keystrokes over the mouse click.
- **Standard shortcuts**: Within the Windows environment, you will find that similar functions have the same shortcuts, so it is not like you are developing expertise in just Excel. The shortcuts in Excel are generally common across all other office suites and even other applications like browsers, Notepad, Paintbrush, etc.
- **No other choice**: There are some functions for which are necessary to get the desired results, unless you want to insert manual edits. For example, when creating an array formula, the Control-Shift-Enter shortcut is the only way to get your array formula to insert correctly.

Below is a small selection of some of the most common and particularly useful shortcuts that are invaluable in using Excel for the purpose of financial modelling.

Editing	
CTRL + S	Save Workbook
CTRL + C	Copy
CTRL + V	Paste
CTRL + X	Cut

CTRL + Z	Undo
CTRL + Y	Redo
CTRL + A	Select All
CTRL + R	Copies the far left cell across the range*
CTRL + D	Copies the top cell down the range*
CTRL + B	Bold
ALT + TAB	Switch Program
ALT + F4	Close Program
CTRL + N	New workbook
SHIFT + F11	New worksheet
CTRL + W	Close worksheet*
ALT + E + L	Delete a sheet*
CTRL + TAB	Switch workbooks

Navigating

CTRL + 9	Hide Row
SHIFT + CTRL + 9	Unhide Row
SHIFT + Spacebar	Highlight row
CTRL + Spacebar	Highlight column
CTRL + Minus sign	Delete selected cells
Arrow keys	Move to new cells
CTRL + Pg Up/Down	Switch worksheets
CTRL + Arrow keys	Go to end of continuous range and select a cell
SHIFT + Arrow keys	Select range
SHIFT + CTRL + Arrow	Select continuous range
Home	Move to beginning of line
CTRL + Home	Move to cell "A1"
SHIFT + ENTER	Move to cell above
TAB	Move to cell to the right
SHIFT + TAB	Move to cell to the left
ALT + Down Arrow	Display a drop-down list

Formatting

CTRL + 1	Format Box
ALT + H + 0	Increase decimal*
ALT + H + 9	Decrease decimal*
SHIFT + CTRL + ~	General format
SHIFT + CTRL + !	Number format
SHIFT + CTRL + #	Date format
SHIFT + CTRL + $	Currency format
SHIFT + CTRL + %	Percentage format

In Formulas

F2	Edit formula, showing precedent cells
CTRL + ‘	Edit formula, showing precedent cells (same as F2)
ALT + ENTER	Start new line in same cell
SHIFT + Arrow	Highlight within cells
F4	Change absolute referencing ("$")
ESC	Cancel a cell entry

= (equals sign)	Start a formula
ALT + "="	Sum selected cells
CTRL + ‘	Copy formula from above cell
CTRL + ~	Show formulas or values
F9	Recalculate all workbooks
SHIFT + CTRL + Enter	Enter array formula

Auditing

ALT + M + P	Trace immediate precedents
ALT + M + D	Trace immediate dependents
ALT + M + A + A	Remove tracing arrows
CTRL + [	Highlight precedent cells
CTRL +]	Highlight dependent cells
F5 + Enter	Go back to original cell
SHIFT + CTRL + {	Trace all precedents (indirect)
SHIFT + CTRL + }	Trace all dependents (indirect)

*Note that these are unavailable as preset keyboard shortcuts for Mac for Excel 2011. Create shortcuts for these functions by selecting Tools > Customize Keyboard.