

REPLACING YOUR LAPTOP'S KEYBOARD

It wasn't too long ago that laptop's were considered the top end of the computer market. Costing two to three times as an equivalent desktop computer, it seemed that only the well-to-do or the traveling business person were the ones with the "computer on the go." In 2011, times have changed. Not only do laptop's and **cheap netbooks** far outsell **desktop computers**, but more and more people have multiple laptop's in the home. One common component on computers that takes a lot of abuse is the lowly **keyboard**. On a desktop, it is a fairly straight forward process to replace the keyboard, however, on a laptop it can be something else altogether.

Daunting as it may seem, don't be intimidated by the prospect of replacing your own keyboard – truth be told, it is a lot easier than it looks. **In this Tech Tip we are going to give you a general overview to replace your laptop's keyboard.**

Easy Peasy

It's late at night and you're furiously typing away on your favorite refurbished laptop from Geeks.com and as you bang down on the "Z" key, it fails to spring back up. Pretty soon, you see a row after row of Z's going across your document. You carefully examine the key and realize that it is just plain worn out. Rather than spending beaucoup bucks to have some "geek" change out your keyboard, you decide to take on the challenge yourself. **Where do you start?**

Try tracking down a service or repair manual for your laptop. You'd be surprised how many manufacturers have them online for free. While laptop keyboard replacement pretty much follows the same procedures, finding a repair manual will certainly save you from any surprises you may encounter. You can try the manufacturer's website as well as a general Internet search to hunt down a service manual.

There are also entire websites dedicated to helping you repair your laptop (or computer in general). **One particularly valuable website I'd recommend (especially if you have an Apple laptop) is iFixit.** This is one of those sites run by people who not only love to tear

things apart to see what makes them tick, but will give you step by step direction in fixing it. They'll even sell you specialized tools if you need them. Speaking of tools, generally, for most laptop's all you need is a simple **Philips screwdriver** and maybe a credit card (as a tool – and to also buy the replacement keyboard).

For buying your replacement keyboard, the first place I'd recommend looking is eBay. **Generally you are looking at \$25 - \$50 for a new replacement keyboard** – but there are bargains as well. They are usually quite cheaper than they would be going back to the manufacturer. You can either search for the exact part number of your keyboard (it is usually on a sticker on the bottom of the keyboard - but that means you need to remove the keyboard to see the sticker) or you can search with your computer model number and series to hunt it down (for example: “Dell Studio 1747 keyboard” or “Apple MacBook Pro A1260 keyboard”).

Pumpkin Pie

One of the worst kept secrets is that, despite the name you see on the front, laptop's are actually built by a small number of Chinese companies. The upshot of this is that the keyboards are pretty much replaced the same way for most of them. **The following is the gist of what is generally involved for replacing a keyboard on a laptop.** I know it doesn't need to be said, but I'll say I anyway – be sure to power down the computer; unplug it and remove the battery. OK, now it's time to roll up your sleeves, get that screwdriver and get to replace that keyboard!



1. Remove the bottom keyboard screw. Flip the laptop over, and look for a screw hole that has a picture of a keyboard next to it and remove these screws. Note that some keyboards don't have a bottom screw.

2. Remove the trim piece between the keyboard and the screen. This is sometimes the tricky part – and where a service manual really comes in handy. If the trim piece between the screen and the keyboard is secured by screws on the bottom, then while it is flipped over, remove them. Turn the computer back over and open it up as if you were going to use it.



3. If the trim piece between the keyboard and screen is secured to the bottom assembly with clips, then using a credit card or similar (nondestructive) tool you can work your way along the edge in the seam between the trim piece and the laptop and carefully pop the piece up. In my experience, you don't want to use a screw driver, since this may mar the plastic. If some wires are attached to the trim piece simply unplug it and set the trim piece aside.



4. Remove the top screws that hold the keyboard in place. In the area where you removed the top trim piece, you should now see three or four screws on the top portion of the keyboard securing it into place – take these out and then carefully lift the keyboard up and back towards the screen and then flip it forward upside down on the palm rest.



5. Unplug the keyboard. You should see a ribbon cable running from the keyboard to the motherboard. This is usually a LIF (Low Insertion Force) or ZIF (Zero Insertion Force) cable/connector. These will usually have some kind of “latching” mechanism that holds the keyboard’s cable in place on the motherboard – CAREFULLY lift (or move back) the latching mechanism and pull out the ribbon cable from the connector on the motherboard. If your computer is backlit, there may also be a power wire for the light. The keyboard should now be free.



6. Put in the new keyboard. This is basically a reverse of what you did. A few screws later and you’re back in business!

Source : <http://www.geeks.com/techtips/2011/replacing-your-laptops-keyboard.asp>