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Computer CAT-tastrophe!

Your four most common cat-keyboard catastrophes solved.

BY STEPHANIE BOUCHARD

AS I WORKED ON MY LAPTOP, my cat leaped up and placed her furry black butt on my keyboard. She was hungry and, deadline be damned, wanted to be fed NOW.

Immediately, my screen went black. I didn't get a panicky feeling in my chest until after I'd removed her from the laptop and couldn't get my screen back. I tried jiggling my mouse, hit the space bar, frantically pounded on the ESC key. Nothing.

As I do with all tech questions I have, I went to Google. On my smartphone, I typed in "cat sat on keyboard now screen is black" and found a solution to my problem (see below). I was relieved at how quickly and simply my IT problem was solved, but what struck me most was that I wasn't alone.

Apparently, many, many people have gone online in search of IT help when their cats have put them in technology crisis mode, because I found a ton of similar hits, some of which read like this:

"Help! Cat sat on keyboard!"

"Cat ran over keyboard and my screen has turned black and white."

"My cat sat on the keyboard and now everything on my screen is GIANT."

"Cat walked on my laptop — now a sideways screen."

"Cat walked on the keyboard again."

There are IT support forums all over the internet tackling requests like mine. According to the most recent pet owner's survey of the American Pet Products Association, 47.1 million households in the United States have at least one cat. That's a lot of potential for cat-related IT mishaps. (Just a thought: This could be how cats will execute their world domination plan.)

In order to help the countless human companions of cats with the anxiety and sheer panic caused by IT — dare I say it? — cat-tastrophes — here are the four most common cat-related IT mishaps and their simple solutions.

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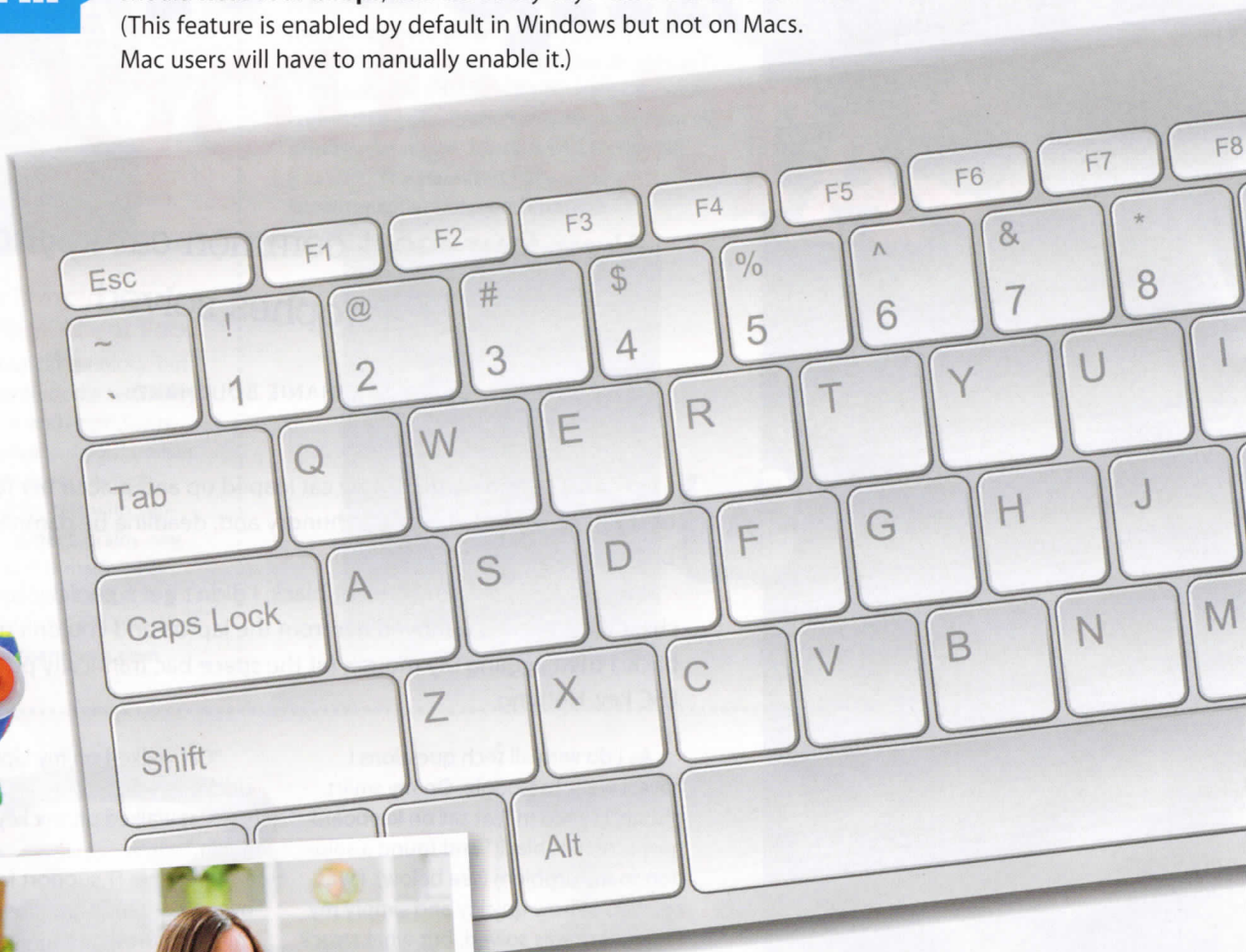
Crazy things happen when you type

Your text appears in all capital letters or it randomly highlights or even disappears, and your windows keep minimizing. This insanity is caused by "sticky keys" says Jaco Toledo Gerrish, a systems engineer with a technology blog at ubuntuboss.com. It's caused by hitting (or in this case, probably sitting on) the shift key five times in a row.

the FIX To fix this in Windows, says Jaco, tap the **shift key five times**. You should **hear four beeps**, and the sticky keys feature should turn off. (This feature is enabled by default in Windows but not on Macs. Mac users will have to manually enable it.)

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Your screen is sideways or upside down

This is probably the most common cat-caused IT problem, say IT support specialists. It happens when your cat miraculously hits the Ctr, Alt (Option) and one of the arrow keys all at the same time. Your screen will flip in the direction of whichever arrow key your cat lands on.

the FIX To fix it, you need to hit the **Ctrl, Alt (Option) and Up Arrow keys** all at the same time.

What once was **black is now white**

Your cat has somehow inverted the colors on your screen. To restore your regular colors, use the magnifier feature, which has an option for turning on color inversion, and thus restoring your screen colors, says AJ Santos, owner of technology services company TechOTG in Orlando, Florida.

the FIX ▸ **Press and hold** the **Windows key** and then **press and release** the **+ (plus) key. Release the Windows key.** The magnifier should be on now, which you'll notice because everything on your screen will be really large. To return your screen to normal size, **press and hold** the **Windows key** and **press and release** the **– (minus) key** until the screen reduces to whatever size is acceptable to you. To turn color conversion on and restore your normal screen colors, press the Ctrl, Alt and i keys.

On Macs, the option for inverting colors is in the **Accessibility Options**. Shortcut should be **Option + Command + F5.** See the display option here: **https:// support.apple.com/en-us/HT202562.** ✉

Stephanie Bouchard is a Maine-based freelance pets writer trying to protect her laptop from further cat incursions. Find her at stephanie bouchard.net.

Your **screen goes black**

A blackened or darkened screen is likely caused by your cat hitting the decrease brightness key, says Marcel Vachon, owner of CIO Main Street, a tech consulting company based in Maine. Marcel has experienced this situation firsthand. When his cat, Butterscotch, interfaced with his keyboard and his screen went black, he didn't know what happened at first. (It is reassuring to know that even IT specialists have that moment of bewilderment when faced with trying to determine just what their cat did to cause whatever is happening on their computers.)

the FIX In this case, simply **tapping** on the **increase brightness key** will restore your screen, he says.