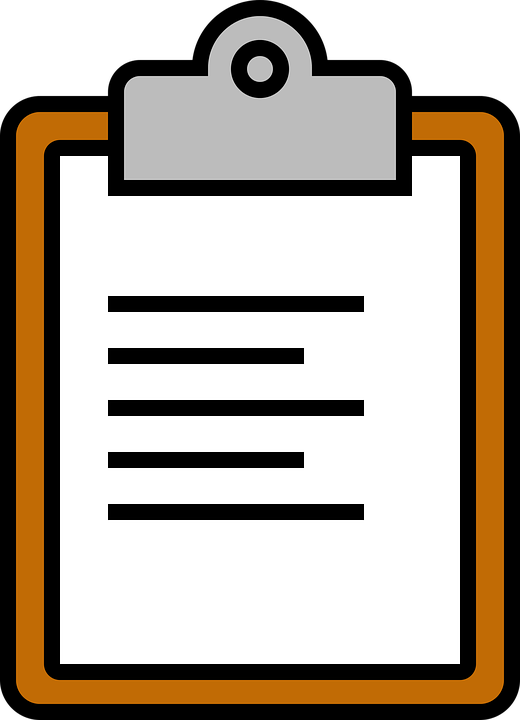
(Approx. 1005)

Where’s the Clipboard? – Still a good question

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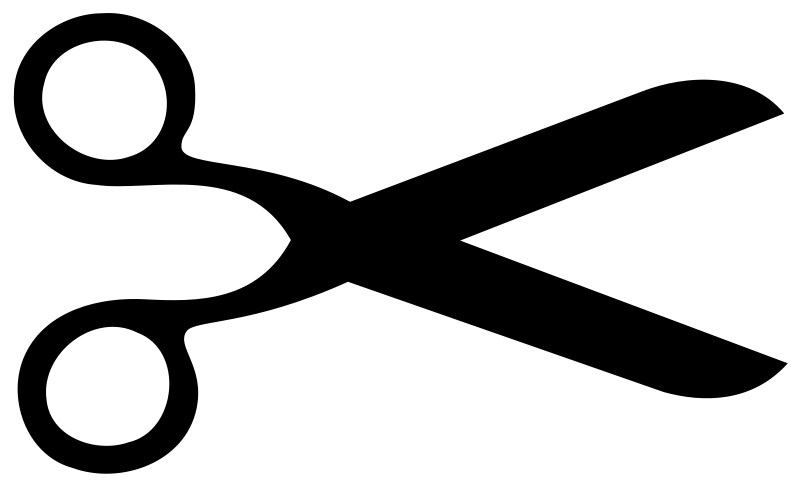
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The clipboard has been an integral part of Windows for as long as Windows has been around. And the question of its location has been around almost equally as long. (It was probably the first thought after we realized that the clipboard existed.)

We, the users, really don’t have to know where the clipboard is located to use it, though I bet some very technical individuals could give you a pretty good dissertation on its location. We just need to know how to use it to our benefit. Well, we still don’t know where the clipboard is, but we now can put more than one item onto it. As of the Windows 1809 build (the current version is 2004), Windows supports a clipboard that will hold more than one item, but more on that in a few minutes.

Even without knowing the location of the clipboard, we can still discuss how it works and how we can use it to our advantage. The clipboard is a buffer, (an area in memory that is used to temporarily hold data while it is being moved from one place to another within a computer), that the operating system provides for short-term storage and transfer within and between application programs. Its contents reside in the computer’s RAM (random access memory). And remember, RAM is “volatile” memory so when the power is turned off, the RAM contents are lost. (By the way, a cache, which is similarly a storage area in memory, is slightly different; it is an area in memory that is used to decrease the access time of data that is repeatedly accessed.)

Cut Copy Paste

Cut, Copy, & Paste is part of the Windows Operating System but these commands also function in many software applications, because Windows provides an API (Applications Programming Interface) by which applications can specify Cut, Copy, & Paste operations, which can be executed by key commands or menu operations. Fortunately, most professional software adheres to the now-standard key controls, Ctrl-X for Cut, Ctrl-C for Copy, and Ctrl-V for Paste. Hold down the Control key and simply tap the appropriate key for the corresponding action. (At this point in the development of software applications, I think any deviation from those definitions would be catastrophic, or at least foolish.)

That’s the “what it is,” now for a short review of how to use it. Some technical references may call the clipboard a “paste buffer” because we typically put items into the clipboard for eventual use when we “paste” the item into its final destination. Paste is the final action, as in “Cut & Paste,” or “Copy and Paste.” The Cut or Copy action puts an item into the clipboard (or Paste buffer), and the Paste action copies the item to its desired location. (Remember, Cut deletes the item you have selected, Copy does not.) The Paste action does not empty the clipboard, it only copies the contents, so you can paste the same clipboard contents over and over again until a new item is placed into the clipboard with a Cut or Copy. If the clipboard can only contain one item, then when the second item is put onto it, the first item is lost. It can be very frustrating if the item in the clipboard is a list of many items, and then another item is placed in the clipboard before the original collection had been pasted into all the places where it was needed.

Now if you’ve noticed, I use the term “item” to describe what is put onto the clipboard. The item can be anything that is currently selected, so it can be a single character like “A,” or a highlighted sentence, or a highlighted paragraph, or a picture, or a collection of pictures, or a document, or a collection of pictures and documents, or a folder, or a collection of folders, or even a collection of folders and pictures and documents. All of these items will go onto the clipboard when a Cut or Copy action is performed. The type or size is not important, anything selected goes onto the clipboard. So, here’s a quick review if you want to select many items to be Cut or Copied and finally Pasted. If the items are contiguous (items #3, #4, #5. and #6) in a list, select the first one, then hold down the Shift key and select the last item … all items in between will be selected. Then treat any item selected as if it were alone and all selected items will follow. If you want items in a list that are not contiguous (items #3, #5, and #8), select the first item, then hold down the Ctrl key and select all of the other items. Then treat any item selected as if it were alone and all selected items will follow.

As indicated way back in the first paragraph the current Windows 10 Clipboard can hold more than one item, although as installed, the clipboard defaults to only one item. To take advantage of this feature, go to Settings-System-Clipboard and turn on “Clipboard History.” This will allow multiple items to be placed on the clipboard and allow you to access these items by a simple “Windows key & V-key” combination. Pressing this key combination displays the Clipboard History in a window. With the Clipboard History window shown, you can choose and paste any item in the list. Another feature of the new clipboard is “Sync across devices,” which allows you to “Paste text on your other devices when you sign in with a Microsoft account or work account,” probably a useful feature in a work environment. Also provided here is “Clear Clipboard data” for those who like to keep a neat clipboard. So finally, we can put more than one item on the clipboard (without third party software), but sometimes I still wonder where the clipboard is.