Keyboard tricks for switching between programs

By Ed Bott

Do you know all the program switching techniques for Windows? The more programs you have open, the more you can benefit from these keyboard shortcuts.

Here are three worth memorizing:

- **Alt+Tab**: This is the classic shortcut, the one most Windows users are likely to know. Hold down the Alt key and tap Tab to see a list of running programs as thumbnails. If you continue holding down Alt and keep tapping Tab, you'll cycle through all of them.

- **Alt+Esc**: Use this shortcut if you want skip the thumbnails and just cycle through the actual programs. Keep holding down Alt and tapping Esc until you reach the window you want.

- **Ctrl+Alt+Tab**: Most people don't know this one. Press this combination and you get the same thumbnails as with Alt+Tab, with one crucial difference: When you take your hands off the keyboard the thumbnails remain visible. Use the left and right arrow keys to move through thumbnails. To choose one, tap the spacebar or press Enter.

And one last secret: Add Shift to any of these shortcuts to move in reverse.