

Inserting Special Characters

“How to” Guide, Beginner Level: Instruction

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GOAL

This guide will teach you the importance of using diacritic marks and how to insert non-English letters on the computer.

INTRODUCTION

Diacritic marks are not usually used in English, but are vital components of most other languages. When doing research in a country that does not speak English, you should become familiar with the alphabet, including the diacritic marks they use and why they use them.

Diacritic marks are usually used for three purposes – to indicate stress, to separate syllables, or as separate sounds altogether. Some languages use diacritics in numerous ways, and a diacritic can be used differently in different languages. In Spanish, for example, an accent mark above a vowel indicates where the stress of the pronunciation falls (i.e. José, the diacritic mark indicates that the stress is on the final e), while the letter ñ makes its own sound, as in the surname Muñoz. In Dutch, umlauts (two dots above a letter) are used to indicate separate syllables, as in the name Henriëtta. German uses umlauts as well, but these are used as separate vowel sounds, such as the name Müller. German has come up with a long way to write these vowels without the diacritic mark (changing Müller to Mueller when necessary), but other languages have only one way to write their diacritic marks, such as the letter č for the ch-sound in several Eastern European languages.

Until recently, it was difficult or impossible to insert diacritic marks when recording genealogy. Typewriters, particularly English typewriters, simply did not have the keys available for recording diacritics. With the advent of computers, the problems of inserting diacritic marks have disappeared. To avoid any confusion, it is strongly encouraged that you use diacritic marks in your non-English research. In fact, many foreign websites require you to enter diacritic marks when searching their holdings, and will not return results if you do not include them.

HOW TO

There are several ways to insert diacritic marks on a website. In some languages, such as those in Scandinavia and Western Europe, it is much easier to insert diacritic marks, while those of Eastern Europe tend to be more difficult to manoeuvre. Note that if you are using a Mac computer, look at the section specifically for Macs.

Inserting diacritic marks using Alt key codes

Alt key codes are the easiest way to insert diacritic marks, as you can insert them while typing

without having to go to a specialized website. These codes are easiest to use for Scandinavian and Western European languages, but can be used for any language. The last page of this guide includes a comprehensive list of most European language diacritic letters with their Alt key codes, which are typically three or four digit numbers. Each letter may have up to two codes you can use to insert them. To insert Alt key codes, follow these steps:

1. Make sure your cursor is where you want the diacritic mark inserted.
2. From the list of codes, identify the diacritic mark you wish to insert.
3. While holding down the Alt key on your computer, type in the three or four digit code on the number pad to the far right of your computer, **not** on the numbers above the normal keyboard.
4. Release the Alt key. The letter should appear where your cursor was last located in your document, software program, or internet search box.

Note that if the Alt key code is larger than the number 255 or 0255, some genealogical software programs or websites, including FamilySearch, will not allow you to insert the diacritic mark. This is especially common in Eastern European languages. If you have access to Microsoft Word, do these steps to insert a diacritical mark:

1. Open a Microsoft Word document.
2. Follow steps 2-4 above.
3. Use your mouse to highlight the diacritic mark you have just inserted. Note that everything you highlight will be copied, so just highlight what you want to insert.
4. Right-click on the letter, and select "Copy" from the list. Alternately, you can use the keyboard shortcut by holding down the Control key while hitting the C key.
5. Put your cursor in the document, software program, or internet search box where you would like the letter to appear. Right click, and select "Paste" from the list. Alternately, you can use the keyboard shortcut by holding down the Control key while hitting the V key.

Inserting diacritic marks using online keyboards

There are several websites dedicated to inserting diacritic marks. The following websites are some of the most useful:

- **Typelt.org.** Go to the website www.typeit.org. Click on the language you would like to use. A large box appears where you can type in text. The diacritic marks appear above the text. To insert a diacritic mark, click on the letter you would like to insert. When you are done, use directions 3-5 above to copy and paste the letters/words into your document, software program, or internet search box.
- **Lexilogos.** This is a French website that has a wide array of keyboards, including non-

Roman alphabets. Go to the website www.lexilogos.com/keyboard/. Click on the language you would like to use. A box appears where you can type in text. The diacritic marks appear below the text. To insert a diacritic mark, click on the letter you would like to insert. When you are done, use directions 3-5 above to copy and paste the letters/words into your document, software program, or internet search box.

You may also do an internet search for “typing in” and the name of the language for which you need diacritical marks.

Inserting diacritic marks using a Mac

Alt key codes will not work on Mac computers. Instead, they have shortcut keys built into the keyboard. For directions on how to enter a diacritic on a Mac computer, go to the following website: <https://www.reed.edu/cis/help/diacritics.html>.

ALT KEY CODES

Western European languages

Umlauts				Accents			
Ä	142, 0196	ä	132, 0228	Á	0193	á	160, 0225
Ë	0203	ë	137, 0235	À	0192	à	133, 0224
Ï	0207	ï	139, 0239	Â	0194	â	131, 0226
Ö	153, 0214	ö	148, 0246	Ã	0195	ã	0227
Ü	154, 0220	ü	129, 0252	É	144, 0201	é	130, 0233
ÿ	376, 0159	ÿ	152, 0255	È	0200	è	138, 0232
Consonants				Ê	0202	ê	136, 0234
				Í	0205	í	161, 0237
Ç	128, 0199	ç	135, 0231	Ì	0204	ì	141, 0236
Ñ	165, 0209	ñ	164, 0241	Î	0206	î	140, 0238
ß	225, 0223			Ó	0211	ó	162, 0243
Nordic				Ò	0210	ò	149, 0242
				Ô	0212	ô	147, 0244
Å	143, 0197	å	134, 0229	Õ	0213	õ	0245
Æ	146, 0198	æ	145, 0230	Ú	0218	ú	163, 0250
Ø	0216	ø	0248	Ù	0217	ù	151, 0249
Ð	0208	ð	0240	Û	0219	û	150, 0251
Þ	0222	þ	0254	Ý	0221	ý	0253
French				Punctuation			
Æ	146, 0198	æ	145, 0230	¿	168		
Œ	338	œ	339, 0156	¡	0161		

Eastern European languages

Many of the accented or umlauted letters found on the Western European list appear in Eastern European languages. Utilize both lists for a full character set in the language required.

Polish				Czech/Slovak/Croatian				Estonian/Latvian/Lithuanian			
Ą	260	ą	261	Č	268	č	269	Ā	260	ā	261
Ć	262	ć	263	Č	262	č	263	Ā	256	ā	257
Ę	280	ę	281	Ď	270	ď	271	Č	268	č	269
Ł	321	ł	322	Đ	272	đ	273	Ę	280	ę	281
Ń	323	ń	324	Ě	282	ě	283	Ē	274	ē	275
Ó	0211	ó	162, 0243	Í	313	í	314	Ē	278	ē	279
Ś	346	ś	347	Ĺ	317	ĺ	318	Ģ	290	ģ	291
Ź	377	ź	378	Ň	327	ň	328	Ķ	302	ķ	303
Ż	379	ż	380	Ř	344	ř	345	Ī	298	ī	299
Hungarian				Ř	340	ř	341	Ķ	310	ķ	311
				Š	352, 0138	š	353, 0154	Ļ	315	ļ	316
Ő	336	ő	337	Ť	356	ť	357	Ņ	325	ņ	326
Ű	368	ű	369	Ů	366	ů	367	Š	352, 0138	š	353, 0154
Romanian				Ž	381	ž	382	Ū	370	ū	371
				Ū	362	ū	363				
Ă	258	ă	259	Ž	381	ž	382				
Ș	350	ș	351								
Ț	354	ț	355								