Laptop Keyboard Cleaning Guide

This guide will show you techniques for cleaning a laptop keyboard, from routine maintenance to sticky or broken keys.

Written By: Taylor Dixon

This document was generated on 2019-09-19 05:00:51 AM (MST).

INTRODUCTION

Over time, keyboards tend to accumulate dust, grease, and other debris from our fingers. This makes them a great place for germs to hang out, and can ultimately lead to sticky or otherwise malfunctioning keys. This guide will show you how to clean your laptop keyboard.

Example photos are taken with a MacBook Pro keyboard, but these techniques apply to just about any laptop keyboard.

If you have an Apple laptop with a "butterfly" keyboard (as on any 2015+ MacBook or 2016+ MacBook Pro), we don't recommend attempting to remove keys from your keyboard. The butterfly mechanism and the extra-thin key caps are particularly fragile and difficult to remove intact. If you have keyboard problems with one of these laptops, you may qualify for the Keyboard Service Program.

This guide begins with routine maintenance cleaning steps, and progresses to deep cleaning techniques. Feel free to stop wherever you feel satisfied. Or, if you're here for a specific problem, you can skip straight to it:
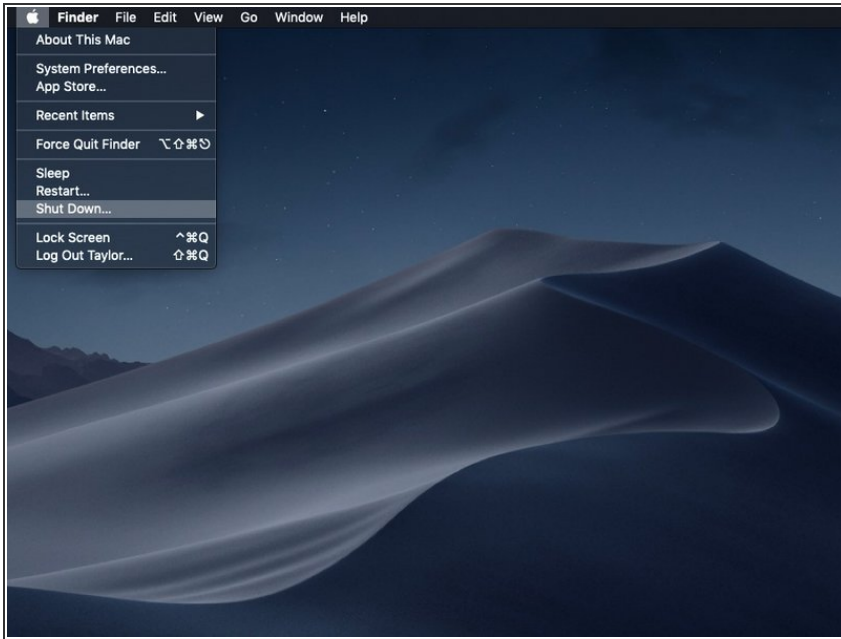
Loose Debris
Grease & Grime
Sticky Keys

🔧 TOOLS:

- Isopropyl Alcohol (1)
- Microfiber Cleaning Cloths (1)
- Cotton Swabs (1)
- Compressed Air (1)
- iFixit Opening Picks set of 6 (1)
- Q-Tips (1)

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Step 1 — Shut It Down

- Shut down the laptop.

Step 2 — Loose Debris

- Run compressed air back and forth across the keyboard.

- If you can, hold or rest your laptop upside-down (so the keyboard is facing the ground) while you perform this step so that the debris will fall down away from the laptop.

- ⓘ If you notice something stuck under a certain key, try tilting the laptop to different angles while blowing the compressed air to get it out. Laptop keys have [tiny edges](#) on them that can trap debris.

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Step 3

- Use a microfiber cloth or a vacuum to remove any debris that the compressed air dislodged from the keyboard.

Step 4 — Grease & Grime

- Dampen a microfiber cloth with >90% isopropyl alcohol and wipe down the entire surface of the keyboard, paying special attention to the space between keys, and areas that are noticeably grimy.
  - (i) Isopropyl alcohol that is >90% pure is generally free enough of impurities that it won't damage sensitive electronic equipment, but it's still a good idea to be careful with it! The cloth you use to wipe the keyboard during this step should be damp, not dripping wet.

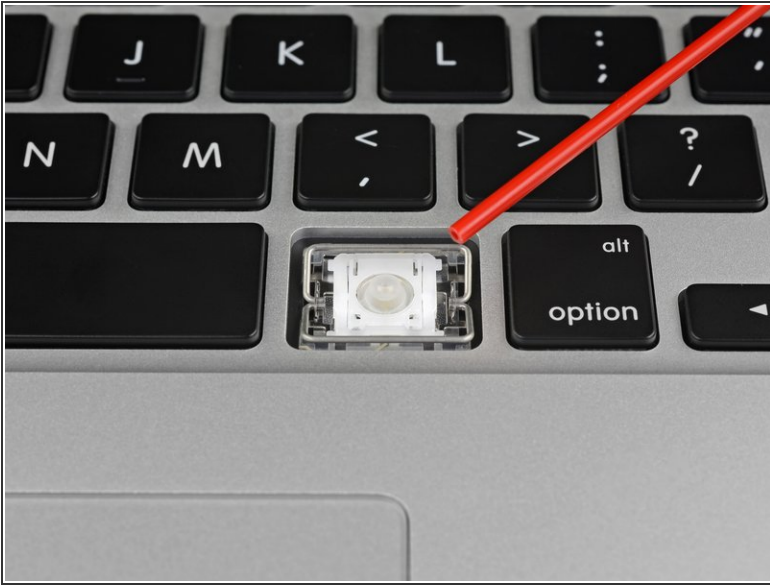This document was generated on 2019-09-19 05:00:51 AM (MST).

Step 5 — Sticky Keys

- If you've got a sticky key or large debris stuck under one of your keys, use an Opening Pick or another thin tool to carefully pry up the keys in question.

- This can be done by carefully inserting the opening pick into the small gap between the key and the chassis, and gently prying upward.

⚠ Don't attempt this on Apple laptops with a "butterfly" keyboard (any 2015+ MacBook or 2016+ MacBook Pro). The butterfly mechanism and the extra-thin key caps are fragile and difficult to remove intact. If you have keyboard problems with an Apple laptop made in 2016 or 2017, you may qualify for the Keyboard Service Program.

ⓘ Key caps are held on by tiny fragile clips. Be careful as you pry up any keys.

Step 6

- Once the key is removed, use compressed air to blow away any debris around the key retainer.

- To remove any grime buildup around the key retainer, wet a q-tip or a cotton swab with isopropyl alcohol and wipe the area.

- (i) If the key retainer is sticky, remove it and soak it in hot, soapy water for 5 minutes, then let it dry and replace it.

   ⚠ Note the orientation of the key retainer before you remove it!

Step 7

- To reinstall key caps, take note of where the clips are on the underside, then align the key with the key retainer and apply pressure with your finger to snap the clips back into place.

- ⚠ Be gentle as you reapply key caps— the clips that hold them in place are very fragile. If the cap doesn't snap back into place easily, don't force it. Check the alignment of the clips and try again.

Congratulations, your keyboard is clean! Repeat these steps every once in a while as needed to keep your keyboard squeaky clean and extend the life of your laptop.