

An OPCUG Product Review



Cursor Highlighter

By Chris Taylor

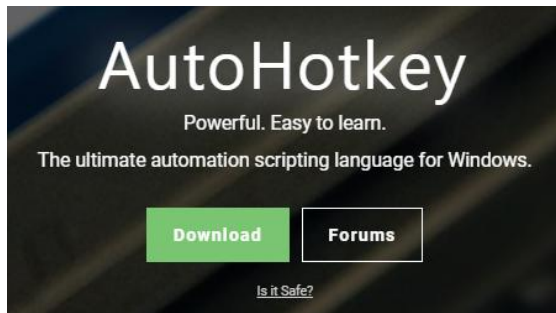
Windows 10 provides at least four ways to highlight the location of the mouse pointer. Two of them, as I showed in Quick Tip 06—opcug.ca/Articles/2009NEWS.pdf—are the size and colour of the pointer. The other two are pulsing circles when you press the Ctrl key and pointer trails (*Control Panel | Mouse | Pointer Options* tab). Sometimes it is nice to emphasize the location of the mouse pointer even more. When I give a presentation or demo, I want people to be able to easily follow what I am pointing at. Those four options don't cut it. And two of them—larger mouse pointer and mouse trails—are not seen by those watching over a Zoom video-conference.

For the rest of the article, I will refer to the mouse pointer as a mouse cursor because the utility I am going to discuss is called *Cursor Highlighter*.

Two downloads

You will need the program *AutoHotkey* and a script. Both are free and open source. If you worry about cluttering up your computer, don't! Later, I will show how you can replace both with a single program file that requires no installation to use.

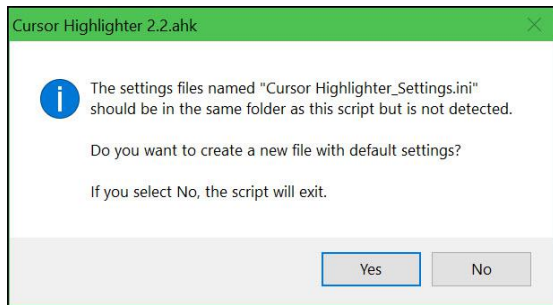
Start by installing *AutoHotkey*, which is available at www.autohotkey.com/. Click the green *Download* button and install it, accepting the defaults.



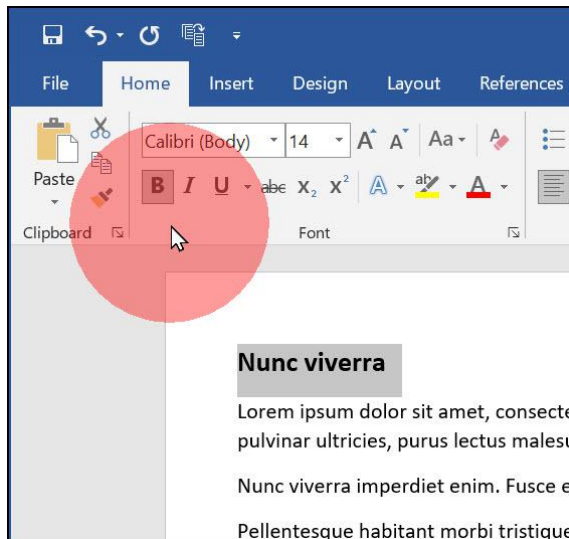
Once *AutoHotkey* is installed, browse to the *Boisvert lab* web site at sites.google.com/site/boisvertlab/computer-stuff/online-teaching and scroll down to *Cursor Highlighter*.

Click *Download the .ahk script for version 2.2 of Cursor Highlighter* to download the file *Cursor Highlighter 2.2.ahk*. You can move this file to a more permanent location where you can easily find it in the future.

Double-click *Cursor Highlighter 2.2.ahk* to run it. You will be prompted to create a new *Cursor Highlighter_Settings.ini* file. Click *Yes* to continue.



Cursor Highlighter will load and activate. The mouse cursor will be surrounded by a highlighted circle.



In the notification area of the taskbar, there will be an icon named *Cursor Highlighter*.

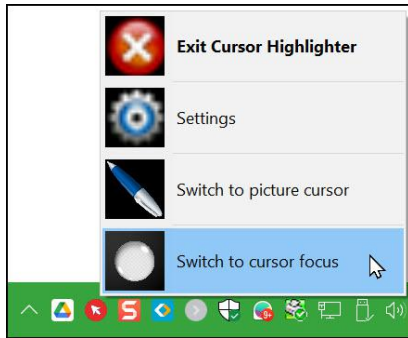


If it is not visible, click the chevron to *Show hidden icons*. You can drag it from the hidden section to the visible notification area of the taskbar.

Customizing

Left-click on the notification area icon to toggle *Cursor Highlighter* on and off. The icon shows as a blue circle when active and a red circle when inactive.

Right-click it for a pop-up menu where you can switch between its main modes; *highlight cursor*, *picture cursor*, and *cursor focus*.



Cursor Highlighter is highly customizable. Right-click the notification area icon and choose *Settings*. There are many options and all are worth exploring to customize things to your liking. They are pretty self-explanatory and I will just mention a few.

You can choose the colour, size and opacity of the highlight. I found the default yellow too small and pale. I changed to a larger, opaquer red. For *cursor focus*, you can choose the size for the circle around the cursor and the colour and opacity to shade the rest of the screen.

When customizing the specifics for *Highlight*, *Picture*, and *Focus*, you have to be in that mode before you can change options. If the options are greyed out, close *Cursor Highlighter Options*, switch to that mode and then go back into *Settings* from the notification area icon.

You can choose hotkeys for various functions. I set Ctrl-Shift-CapsLock to toggle *Cursor Highlighter* on and off, Ctrl-CapsLock to switch to highlight, and Shift-CapsLock to switch to focus. These three keys, aligned the way they are in the bottom left of the keyboard are easy for my feeble brain to remember.

Create a stand-alone program

If you want, you can replace the installed copy of *AutoHotkey* and the *.ahk* script with a single executable file. On the start menu run *Convert .ahk to .exe* in the *AutoHotkey* program group. In the *Source* field, use the *Browse* button to point to your copy of *Cursor Highlighter 2.2.ahk*. Click the *Convert* button. It will create a tiny (2.5MB) *Cursor Highlighter 2.2.exe* file in the same location as the script file. You can rename it and move it, along with the *Cursor Highlighter_Settings.ini* file, to any convenient location. You can then uninstall *AutoHotkey* and delete the *.ahk* script file.

If you create a stand-alone *.exe* file, it is completely portable. You can move the pair of files (*Cursor Highlighter 2.2.exe* and *Cursor Highlighter_Settings.ini*) to any computer and run them without needing *AutoHotkey* to be installed on that computer.

Cursor Highlighter is very light on system resources. It uses under 12 MB of memory and tiny amounts of CPU when the mouse cursor is moving.

For those of us who demo and share things over Zoom, it works there too. The only caveat is that when sharing your screen, you have to share the entire screen, rather than a single program window.