

# ScrLk key—Hoodlum or helpful??

By [Crabby](#)

on March 18

At the beginning of the year, I wrote a blog post called [What's up with those wacky keyboard keys?](#) In it, I answered a question from a lady named Barbara in Cape Cod ("The Cod" some friends of mine who used to live there call it) about some of the keys on her keyboard that mystified (read: annoyed) her: SysRq, PrtScn, and ScrLk.

Apparently SOME of you, whom I'm reticent to name (Keith and Rayney), wrote in to ask basically this question: When they were in Excel, why were the arrow keys not jumping from one cell to the other? Why were they just moving the entire spreadsheet up, down, to the left or right? They asked this question in the form of a comment on a post I wrote last September called [Change where the cursor moves after entering data in Excel](#). In this post I explained how to change the cursor direction when pressing Enter. But as Keith said in his comment: "The tip you mention above seems close, but no cigar."

Well, Keith and Rayney, although I answered your question right there on the post, I'm never really sure if anyone checks back. I mean, I know we're all really busy and we've got a lot of thing to do, but if you ask a question and want an answer... Well, anyway, here is the very complex answer:

Turn *off* the ScrLk (Scroll Lock) key, meaning press it so the little green light on the keyboard is not lit. (On my keyboard—that you can see [here](#)—when the ScrLk key is ON the little green light that is lit up is above an arrow icon; it may be different on your computer; just press the ScrLk key a few times and see where it indicates if it's off or on.)



I'm almost 100% positive that will work.

And so, you may ask, if this button wreaks so much havoc, why does it even exist? What's it for? I actually don't know. And do I researched it on the Great Oracle of Information and Misinformation: The Internet.

Well, we already know that it keeps you from moving from one cell to the other. And on that note, as it turns out, many of computer keyboards have done away with it because it's just a remnant of the old IBM PC keyboard meant to lock all scrolling techniques. But why? WHY lock scrolling altogether? When would you ever want to do that? Keith and Rayney don't want to do it and I imagine most of you don't either. (I know I don't; I enjoy the freedom—*no, the right*—to scroll as I please.)

This is what I found out:

- The ScrLk features is now used only for a very few programs, and Excel is one of them.

- So...Keith, Rayney: what if you *don't* want to go from cell to cell? What if you **DO** want to move across, down, or up a large spreadsheet? Then the ScrLk is useful.
- But what if you don't ever use Excel? (Don't use Excel? Who are you anyway? My grandma? Just kidding! Simmer down—stop composing that email to me!)
- In the Opera web browser, the ScrLk key gets you into "listening mode" for the built-in voice recognition feature. That seems handy.
- It's also used for a specific behavior in Linux computers.
- Macs didn't used to have the ScrLk key but I read that they do now. So apparently people in THAT camp think this little feature may be useful as well.

And so, as it turns out, the ScrLk key is both a hooligan and a helpful friend. Just depends on what you want to do today.



***Crabby's Find of the Week:*** I love photography. While not a *\*real\** photographer myself, I have do a *\*real\** appreciation for people who are. Todd Selby is one of my favorites and I just wanted to [share with you some of his extraordinary work](#).

— Crabby

Not finding the help you need from the various channels you've tried? [Microsoft Answers](#) is where you're most likely to solve your nagging problem.