TeXShop's Key Bindings vs Macros vs Command Completion

Herbert Schulz
herbs2@mac.com

2015/04/27

1 Introduction

There are three features of TeXShop which often get mixed up: Key Bindings (at one time called Auto-Completion), Macros and Command Completion. Although they share similar features it is possible to tell the difference between them and decide when each is most useful.

2 The Basics

Key Bindings assign a set of keystrokes to the press of a single key; e.g., typing _ produces _{...|} (where ...| is any selected text followed by the insertion point — the place where text is inserted) or typing ≤ (Opt-, with the English keyboard layout) produces \leq.
Macros can also insert simple text and be given a keyboard shortcut (that always uses the Cmd plus other keys) but are most useful when attached to Applescript programs so they can do special processing of Source text, etc.
Command Completion (*NOT* to be confused with Auto-Completion) allows you to type a partial command or short abbreviation and, when a trigger key is pressed (Esc by default but it can be set to Tab), have that expanded into a full command or even a full environment structure.

Details follow.

3 Key Bindings

Key Bindings are turned on by checking TeXShop → Preferences → Source → Key Bindings. Of course they can be turned off by un-checking that preference setting. They can be turned On/Off for a given editing session by using the Source → Key Bindings → Toggle On/Off menu item (a Check Mark means it's on).

You can see the list of Key Bindings, edit and add/delete them by starting up the Key Bindings Editor using the Source → Key Bindings → Edit Key Bindings File... menu item.

3.1 Special Notes

Note: inserting a \ before typing the key negates the expansion; e.g., pressing \ and then _ produces _, as it should.
Note: Key Bindings cannot be created for characters produced by multi-key sequences; e.g., Opt-e *followed by* e produces é on the English keyboard layout which *cannot* be set to produce \'e as a Key Binding. The initial Opt-e is usually called a dead key since it doesn't produce an on-screen character by itself and *must* be followed by another character.

4 Macros

The Macros Menu contains a fairly large number of pre-defined macros. It is possible to create more macros by enabling the Macro Editor with Macros → Open Macro Editor.... Macros can be added either by copying text into a newly created macro or by adding a macro file (which has

the extension plist) using Macros → Add macros from file... (only visible and available when the Macro Editor is active). The order of appearance of the macros in the Macros Menu can also be changed by simply moving them around on the left panel of the Macro Editor.

4.1 Special Notes

Note: text to which you wish to assign a Cmd based keyboard shortcut is best created using a Macro rather than a Key Binding; e.g., there is already a Macro that takes selected text and sets it in boldface (using `\textbf`) and you can assign the Cmd-B keyboard shortcut to that Macro in the Macro Editor.

5 Command Completion

For Command Completion you enter a partial command name or a short abbreviation, press a trigger key (Esc or, as mentioned above, Tab if set in TeXShop → Preferences → Source → Command Completion Triggered By:) and it gets expanded. E.g., enter

```
\sec
```

on a new line and press the trigger (Esc or ...) and you get

```
\section{•}
```

(where • is a selected bullet [called a Mark in Command Completion parlance] so simply typing will replace that Mark with your text. There can be more than one match for a given input; if you press the trigger again (without entering text) you get

```
\section*{•}
```

and another press of the trigger gives

```
\section[•]{•}
```

for separate section titles in the toc and the document. In the last case there is a second Mark (•) for the second argument. After entering the toc section title you jump to and select the next Mark by using Source → Command Completion → Marks → Next Mark (Ctl-Cmd-F) so you can immediately start typing the section title for that document.

Better yet are abbreviations. E.g., type

```
\benu
```

(abbreviations for environments always start with a 'b') and press the trigger key to get

```
\begin{enumerate}
\item
•
\end{enumerate}•
```

ready to enter the first item. To get a new `\item` simply type

```
\it
```

on a new line and the trigger to get

```
\item
•
```

finally to get to the very end of the enumerate environment use (Ctl-Cmd-F) to select the Mark at the end of the environment where simply typing Return will remove that mark and move to the next line.

5.1 Special Notes

Note: Command Completion replaces any selected text by the expansion unlike Key Bindings and Macros which can be written to include the selected text in the final result of their actions.