AccentCompose Manual

Hardware setup

To use this solution, a US-layout keyboard is required. We do not sell keyboards. Acquiring a suitable keyboard is up to you. Any standard keyboard with a set of full-sized Ctrl, Alt and Windows keys should work. Keyboards from Logitech, Microsoft, Cherry or Keychron and many others fit the bill very well. Full-sized or tenkeyless keyboards function equally well with this solution. A UK-layout English-language keyboard is not recommended as certain keys are not in optimal positions for this solution (e.g. the z key should be next to the left shift key and the \ (backslash) key at the far right). What is required is an ANSI layout (full-size 104-key or tenkeyless 87-key layout). US keyboards with or without a Euro symbol exist (e.g. Cherry Euro or US) and work equally well with this solution.

This is how an ANSI layout keyboard looks like (focus on the checkmarked key positions). Full-sized Ctrl, Alt and Windows keys are equally important (shown in the red boxes).

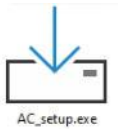
Install your US layout keyboard with the default keyboard driver. Windows installs this normally for you.

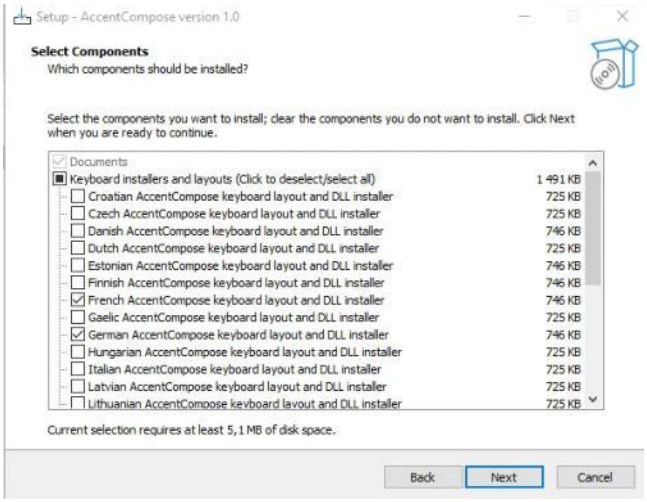
Additionally, you may want to put keyboard stickers on the localized keys of the keyboard. Actually, this is not really necessary as there are very few keys to remember that differ from the US layout. Alternatively, you could use the keyboard layout charts for reference when learning the system.

A Swedish/Finnish keyboard with 5 stickers (Å, Ä, Ö, ˆ, ¨).

Software setup

The AccentCompose software setup requires a few steps. First, download and install the AccentCompose software package which has the custom keyboard drivers, layouts and documentation. Run **AC_setup.exe** and select the keyboard languages and layouts you plan to use.

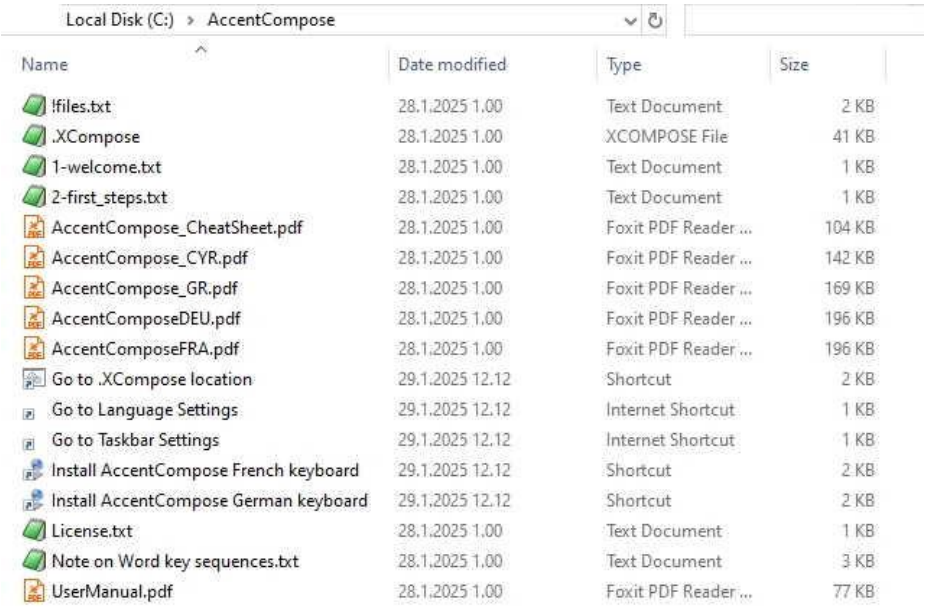




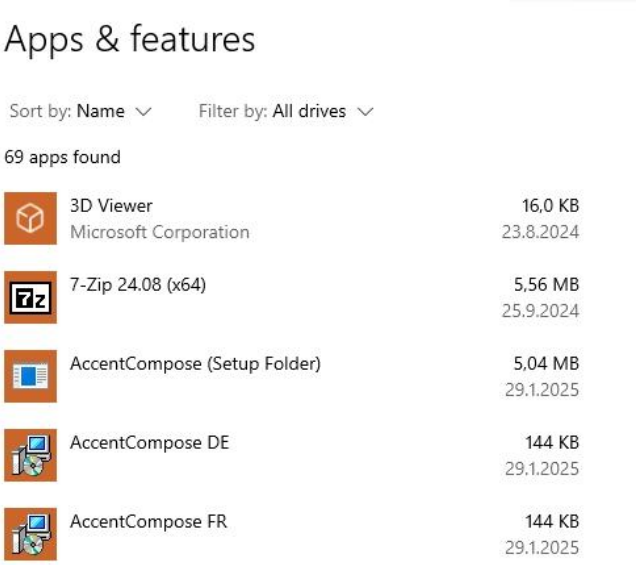
There is no need to install all of them as you can always add new keyboards by rerunning AC_setup.exe. The setup program prepares your computer for the next step which is the installation of individual keyboard drivers.

After the setup, there is a link on your Desktop which opens the AccentCompose Setup Folder.

The AccentCompose Setup Folder has a **!files.txt** file which explains the use and meaning of the different files in this folder. There are layout PDF files, this User manual and a comprehensive Cheat Sheet. Run the Install keyboard shortcuts to install respective keyboard drivers. The **.XCompose** file in this folder is for reference only, the editable and active .XCompose file resides in your user profile folder (use the Go to .XCompose location link to find it).



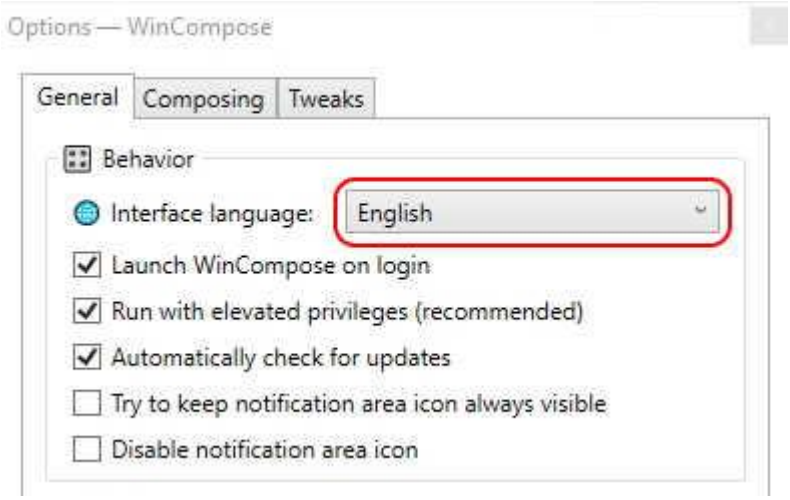
There are also links to Windows *Language Settings* and *Taskbar Settings* for your convenience as well as a **Note on MS Word key sequences** that may interfere with the use of AccentCompose.



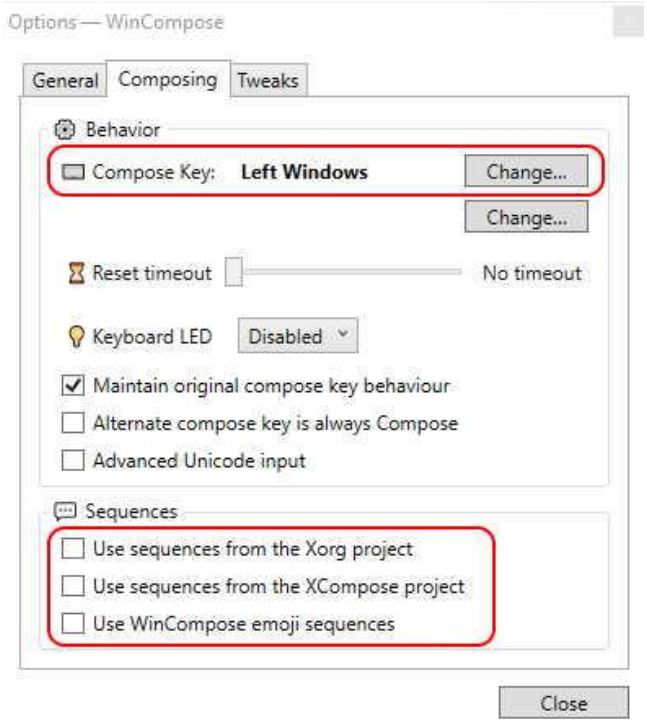
After these steps, when you go to Windows *Apps & features,* there are the following AccentCompose features: the AccentCompose installation package (named **AccentCompose (Setup Folder)**) and the installed **AccentCompose keyboard drivers.** Use these items to uninstall AccentCompose features if the need arises. Uninstalling *AccentCompose (Setup Folder)* does not uninstall the individual keyboard drivers.

The AccentCompose setup installs a **custom .XCompose file** which has the key sequences used with the AccentCompose keyboards. The system needs a Windows Compose key engine to work. Fortunately, there is Sam Hocevar's open-source free **WinCompose** engine for interpreting custom Compose key sequences. Of course, WinCompose has a full set of Compose key sequences. However, WinCompose users have the possibility of using their own custom .XCompose file. AccentCompose does not make use of the default WinCompose key sequences. Instead, **only custom AccentCompose key sequences are used.** We are very grateful for Sam Hocevar for making his excellent Compose key software available without restrictions of use. See: http://wincompose.info and/or https://github.com/samhocevar/wincompose.

Please download **WinCompose** from: https://github.com/samhocevar/wincompose/releases You can use the portable zip or the setup exe version. The WinCompose installation does not overwrite your custom AccentCompose .XCompose file. On the other hand, if you are already a WinCompose user, AccentCompose setup makes a backup of your previous .XCompose file (in case you have customized it).



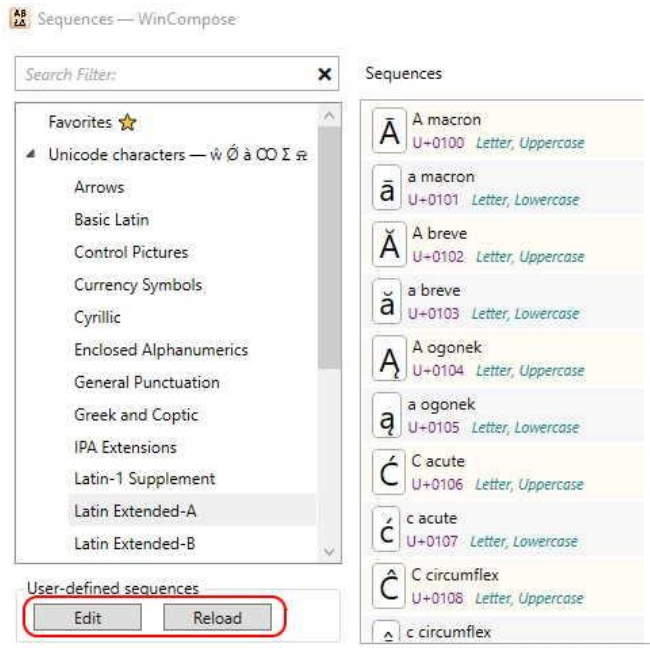
Start *WinCompose.* From the taskbar icon, go to *Options, General,* Change Autodetect to English. Otherwise the *Show sequences, Unicode characters* items do not show the comment text which follows key sequence definitions in the .XCompose file.



Then go to the *Composing* tab. You can choose your **Compose key** here. As the AccentCompose layouts use the **AltGr key (RightAlt)** for character input, it is not advisable to use LeftAlt or LeftCtrl for a Compose key (in order to be able to enter Alt+Ctrl with the left hand when AltGr would be difficult to use). **CapsLock** is also excluded as it is reserved for *number row NumLock* and the original *CapsL* function. This leaves these key options to choose from: **LeftWin, RightWin, Menu,** and **RightCtrl.** Because most of the accents are on the right side in the AccentCompose layouts, **LeftWin** is recommended for the Compose key.

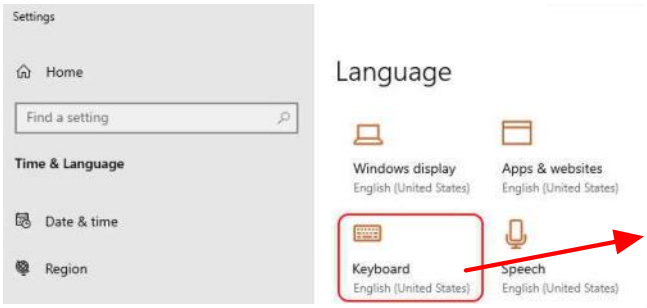
To use WinCompose with AccentCompose, you need to **deselect all WinCompose default key sequences** *(Xorg project, XCompose project, WinCompose emoji).* This way there are no contradictory key sequences, **only the custom .XCompose key sequences are active.** The supplied .XCompose has probably all you ever need but it can be freely edited if you choose to do so. You can add new key sequences for unsupported special characters or change any key sequences to your liking.

To edit the .XCompose file, use a text editor that supports Unicode and loading a font, e.g. EditPad Pro or Lite. **Associate the .XCompose file with your chosen editor.** Set the editor in the proper mode for editing this file. E.g. in EditPad, go to *Convert, Text Encoding, select Unicode, UTF-8,* and press *Change Font,* and select a mono-spaced font that shows the whole Latin-based Unicode range of characters, e.g. **Everson Mono** (https://www.evertype.com/emono/). If you created the file association with the .XCompose file and a suitable editor, you can open it for editing by pressing the **Edit** button (WinCompose *Show sequences...).* When done editing, close your editor and press **Reload.** Test the result on WinCompose *Options, General* tab using the *Test typing* dialog box.

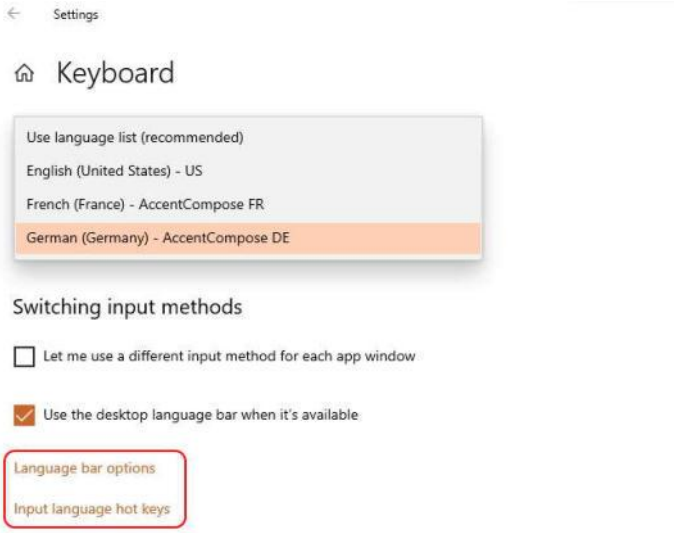


Using AccentCompose

When all chosen keyboard layouts are installed and WinCompose is configured for use with AccentCompose, **log out and in** (or restart Windows) to get a fully functioning keyboard system.



To select your new default keyboard layout, click on *Language settings* in the AccentCompose folder, then click on *Keyboard* and select a keyboard layout



from the menu (*Override for default input method).*

You can set **language bar settings** and **input language shortcut keys** on this settings page, too.

However, it is preferable to use the *Input Indicator* (a new feature of Windows 10-11). It shows as a 3-letter language abbreviation in the *Notification area* of Windows taskbar (e.g. ENG, DEU, FRA, ESP, FIN, etc.). If the Input Indicator is not showing in the taskbar, **right-click on empty space on Windows taskbar** and select *Taskbar settings.* Go to *Notification area* and under it *Turn system icons on or off.* Input Indicator should be **ON.**

Tapping on the 3-letter Language indicator opens a menu of keyboard choices and a link to *Language settings.* Alternatively, you can use **Winkey+Spacebar** to open this menu and switch keyboards (acts as a toggle when there are two keyboards, or switches to the next one when there are several). **If one of the Winkeys is used for the Compose key, use the other Winkey.**

Similarly, if the **WinCompose icon** does not show on the taskbar, go to *Taskbar settings.* Select which icons appear on the taskbar, set WinCompose to **ON.**

At this stage, you should have a fully configured AccentCompose system. Familiarize yourself with the layouts you plan to use and the AccentCompose CheatSheet. If you have a laminating machine at your disposal, print and laminate these documents for nicer look and durability.

The layouts are colour-coded: **Yellow keys** are custom keys for national languages. Only 3 (in general most used) accented or special keys are in this category for each language. **Green keys** have the original US keyboard values. However, on the number row, the keys are in reversed positions, i.e. **numbers are in uppercase positions** and **special characters and parentheses are in lowercase positions. The CapsLock key acts as a NumLock key for the number row.** When CapsLock is active, you can use the number row for entering numbers (especially important when there is no separate number pad). The number row special keys have an important role as **triggering keys for key sequence groups** (! = standalone accents, @ = Cyrillic, $ = currencies, & = IPA phonetics, * = Greek and '(' = enclosed alphanumerics). On the top row, the **square brackets** ('[' and ']') are replaced by **circumflex** (^) and **diaeresis/ umlaut/trema** ('') **accents** respectively. **The yellow keys and the square bracket keys have their original US keyboard values on the AltGr plane** (activated by pressing either AltGr (RightAlt) or LeftCtrl+LeftAlt). The AccentCompose accent keys are indicated by a Compose key symbol (⎄) with an example of the resulting accented character in the circle. The AltGr plane has also some major currency symbols (£, €, ¥).

Greek and **Cyrillic** alphabets have printable layout charts. They are triggered by ⎄+* and ⎄+@ followed by a letter respectively, e.g. ⎄+*+S yields a Sigma (Σ) and ⎄+@+S yields a Russian C. To be able to enter a more complete set of Cyrillic characters, there is even a further plane triggered by ⎄+@+/ followed by a letter, e.g. ⎄+@+/+g gives a Ukrainian ghe with upturn (ґ). These layouts are not intended for continuous writing of these languages. Use Greek and Cyrillic layouts for that. CyrillicPhonetic is an open-source free layout by the author of AccentCompose that provides a similar installable layout for continuous writing of Slavic languages.

The AccentCompose Cheat Sheet has numerous key sequences for **standalone accents, ligatures, punctuation, currencies, general, logic and math symbols, arrows, super- and subscripts, fractions, and enclosed alphanumerics.**

There is also a comprehensive set of **IPA phonetic characters** that covers most major languages of the world. They are triggered by ⎄+& followed by one or two characters. Refer to the Cheat Sheet and/or the .XCompose file for details. WinCompose *Show sequences, Unicode characters, IPA Extensions* lets you view the .XCompose file notes.