

What's the difference between F5 and F8 at the boot screen?

devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20121001-00

October 1, 2012



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Ian B wondered what the difference is between pressing F5 and F8 while Windows is booting. I have no idea either. My strategy was to just mash on the function keys, space bar, DEL key, anything else I can think of. Keep pressing them all through the boot process, and maybe a boot menu will show up. The F5 hotkey was introduced in Windows 95, where the boot sequence hotkeys were as follows:

- ESC – Boot in text mode.
- F5 – Boot in Safe Mode.
- Shift + F5 – Boot to Safe Mode MS-DOS.
- Ctrl + F5 – Boot to Safe Mode MS-DOS with drive compression disabled.
- Alt + F5 – Boot with LOADTOP=0 for Japanese systems.
- F6 – Boot in Safe Mode with networking.
- F4 – Boot to previous version of MS-DOS.
- Ctrl + F4 – Boot to previous version of MS-DOS with drive compression disabled.
- F8 – Boot to menu.
- Shift + F8 – Boot with step-by-step confirmation.
- Ctrl + F8 – Boot with step-by-step confirmation with drive compression disabled.

Man, that's an insane number of boot options all buried behind obscure function keys. Boy am I glad we got rid of them. This frees up room in my brain for things like Beanie Baby trivia.

Bonus chatter: The next generation of computers boots so fast that there's no time to hit any of these hotkeys!

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