What's the difference between the hotkeys F6 and Alt+F6?

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Some time ago, I listed some of the historical system hotkeys, and I noted that of the ones on the list, only `Alt`+`F4` and `Alt`+`F6` are still around.

You're probably familiar with `Alt`+`F4`. It's the hotkey for closing the current window. The `Alt`+`F6` hotkey is not as well known. It's the hotkey for switching among windows within an application.

But what kind of "switching among windows within an application" are we talking about? Many programs use `F6` or even `Ctrl`+`F6` for switching windows.

More specifically, the `Alt`+`F6` hotkey is for switching among *top-level* windows in an application. For example, start Notepad, type some text, and then press `Ctrl`+`F` to call up the search dialog. At this point, you can use `Alt`+`F6` to switch between the search dialog and the main Notepad window.

At least, that's what it used to do. You can try it yourself on Windows 95. But it doesn't seem to work in Windows 10. Not sure if that's a bug or a feature.

Anyway, that's what `Alt`+`F6` was for.

One related hotkey `F6` is not a system hotkey, but it is a common application convention for switching among sections of a window, or more generally, between sections of an application. For example, in most Web browsers, the `F6` hotkey moves between the address bar and the Web page.

Another related hotkey `Ctrl`+`F6` is also not a system hotkey. It is a common application convention for switching among documents within a single window. In the old days, these were Multiple Document Interface windows, but nowadays they are more likely to be tabbed windows.

That's the rundown of `F6` -related hotkeys. Only `Alt` + `F6` is a system hotkey. The others are application-defined hotkeys, but most applications use them for navigating within the main application window.

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