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## Advisor Answers

Visual FoxPro and FoxPro 2.x

Q: On a form with many fields, it's a good idea to group fields and allow the user to go to the first field in a group of fields by designating the group or that field with a hot key. How can this be done using VFP?

–Mario DeMello (via the Internet)

A: You can provide the user with a hot key for a field using a little-known trick. Although label objects can't get focus in Visual FoxPro, you can put hot keys in their captions. When the user presses the hot key for a label, focus moves to the first object following the label that can accept focus.

You assign hot keys to labels just as you do for other objects in FoxPro - by preceding the hot key with the characters "\<". For example, "\<First Name" has a hot key of "F".

The key to making this technique work is having the label appear in the appropriate position in tab order. There are two ways to reset the tab order of forms in Visual FoxPro - the method you've chosen is activated by the Set Tab Order button on the Form Designer toolbar or by choosing **View | Tab Order** from the menu.

By default, you can click on the first object, then shift-click on the others in the appropriate order. (This is similar to the technique used in FoxPro 2.x for DOS.)

The alternate technique uses a mover listbox similar to the one used in FoxPro 2.x for Windows. To choose this technique, change bring up the **Tools | Options** dialog and change the Tab Ordering dropdown on the Forms page.

Whichever technique you use for ordering the objects, make sure the tab order for the label with the hot key is just before the object you want it connected to. Figure 1 shows a form with four hot keyed labels. (You'll find the form on this month's Companion Resource Disk as HotKey.scx.)
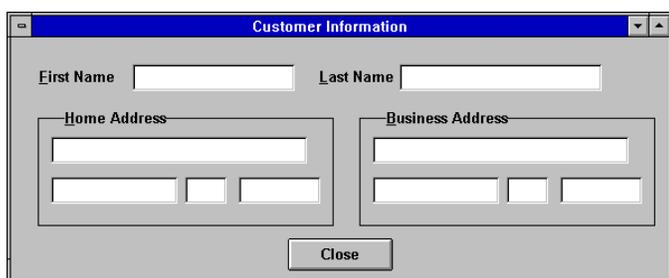


Figure 1 Label hot keys - You can move focus to a particular field by putting a hot key on the label that precedes it.

You can get the same effect in FoxPro 2.x, but it's a little more difficult. One approach is to use ON KEY LABELs which set _CUROBJ to the desired object. But it's not generally a good idea to use ON KEY LABELs in screens.

An alternative is to put buttons rather than labels on the screen, then set the buttons up to position the focus appropriately. Position the focus by setting the When for each button to .F. (make sure to choose Expression) and making sure the tab order is correct.

In FoxPro for Windows, we're done. You can choose the hot keys with ALT + the specified letter and you land on the next field just as in Visual FoxPro.

In FoxPro for DOS, it's not that easy. ALT + hot key doesn't do anything there, and hot keys are only valid when focus is not on a text field. Since we've prevented focus from landing on the buttons, our hot keys are never available.

Again, we could resort to ON KEY LABELs, but there's a better choice. Use menu shortcuts. We can create a menu with an item for each hot key we want and give the menu items appropriate shortcuts (I used CTRL + the hot key). It's sufficient to define the menu - we never have to actually show it to bring the shortcuts to life.
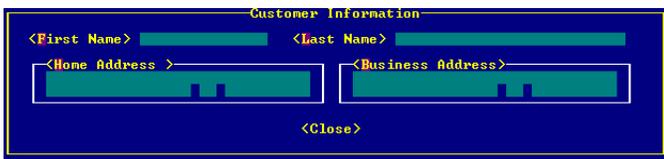


Figure 2 Providing label hot keys - Use buttons rather than labels. In FoxPro/DOS, a special menu is needed, too.

Figure 2 shows the screen with the hot keyed buttons in FoxPro for DOS. (It's on the disk as Hotkey2x.SCX.) It has this code in its Setup snippet:

```
DEFINE POPUP hotkeys
DEFINE BAR 1 OF hotkeys PROMPT "First Name" KEY "CTRL-F"
DEFINE BAR 2 OF hotkeys PROMPT "Last Name" KEY "CTRL-L"
DEFINE BAR 3 OF hotkeys PROMPT "Home Address" KEY "CTRL-H"
DEFINE BAR 4 OF hotkeys PROMPT "Business Address" ;
                        KEY "CTRL-B"

ON SELECTION BAR 1 OF hotkeys _CUROBJ=OBJNUM(m.first)
ON SELECTION BAR 2 OF hotkeys _CUROBJ=OBJNUM(m.last)
ON SELECTION BAR 3 OF hotkeys _CUROBJ=OBJNUM(m.hstreet)
ON SELECTION BAR 4 OF hotkeys _CUROBJ=OBJNUM(m.bstreet)
```

The Cleanup snippet contains:

```
RELEASE POPUP hotkeys
```

You can make the short cuts available in the Windows version, or, if you prefer, bracket the code so the short cuts are available only in the DOS version.

–Tamar