

Pocketop Keyboard for the Sharp Zaurus

Folded Keys

The Sharp Zaurus has almost everything you could ask from a mobile office, but typing longer documents can be a pain using the integrated keyboard. The Pocketop keyboard is the answer.

BY FRANK WIEDUWILT

The small pull-out keyboard that comes with the Zaurus PDA is perfectly OK for typing short memos or filling out database masks. But notoriously long-winded users are bound to complain about cramped fingers sooner or later. Pocketop [1] provides a compact infrared keyboard for PDAs that comes with an Open Source driver that allows it to connect up to the Zaurus.

Construction

In its folded state, the keyboard is smaller than the PDA itself and weighs less than 120 grams. You can put the accompanying CD straight back on the shelf though, as it contains only software for Windows PCs and handhelds with PocketWindows. You can insert the AAA size battery supplied with the keyboard to start using the Pocketop immediately.

A Pocketop IRK driver for the Zaurus is available on this month's subscription CD and from [2]. Follow the standard procedure to install the driver on your Zaurus. The Qtopia desktop

will then automatically reboot, and the symbol for the Pocketop driver, a kangaroo, will appear in the menu for input methods.

To ensure optimal connectivity between the infrared transmitter in the keyboard and the Zaurus' receiver, you should use the stand supplied with the keyboard when setting up the PDA and run the *qpe-rotation* program to rotate the display. There are some broken versions of this program around, but a package that works with the original Sharp ROM is available from [3]. The keys themselves are just about the right size, although the distance between them is a bit narrow. The keys have a clearly discernible pressure point, and support touch-typing quite adequately.

In a Different Key

A US keyboard layout is fine for most tasks, but not for users who need to provide support for foreign languages.

Clicking on the Pocketop icon in the input methods menu opens up a line at the bottom of the screen where you can enable and disable IRK, and *Caps*, and toggle a block of keys on the keyboard to numeric input (*Num*). Clicking on the *Settings* button reveals a dialog box where you can remap the keyboard layout (see Figure 1).

Unfortunately, the keyboard only supports remapping keyboard combinations that use the [Shift] or [Cmd] key, but not single keys. It is a good idea to map the special keys you will most often need to a shortcut with [Cmd], which is at the bottom left corner of the keyboard.



To conjure up an inverted question mark ¿ for Spanish speaking users as the shortcut [Cmd -], click on the *Keymap* tab in the Pocketop configuration dialog box, then select *New* and press the [-] key.

Now enter the letter you want to display when this shortcut is pressed in the

Cmd field. You will need one of the ANSI codes to display a non-standard character; in the case of the inverted question mark ¿ , this will be *#191*.

Now you can really impress your Spanish contacts when you mail them with your Zaurus.

The Pocketop keyboard is a fun product; our only criticism is its price – which at 109 Euros does tend to dampen one's enthusiasm.

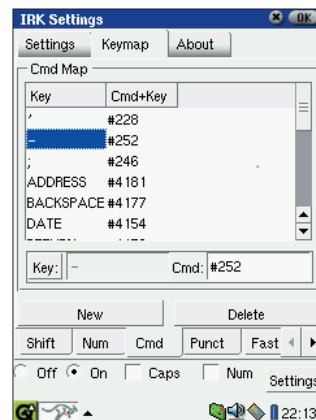


Figure 1: Remapping keys

Table 1: Keycodes for Non-Standard Characters

Character	Code	Character	Code
ı	#161	Ç	#199
ı	#191	È	#200
À	#192	É	#201
Á	#193	Ê	#202
Â	#194	Ë	#203
Ã	#195	İ	#204
Ä	#196	Í	#205
Å	#197	Î	#206
Æ	#198	Ï	#207

INFO

[1] Pocketop keyboard: <http://www.pocketop.net/>

[2] IRK driver: <http://195.184.237.106/~zaurus/>

[3] *qpe-rotation*: <http://www.wieduwilt.org/download/qpe-rotation.zip>