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The 15 function-key strokes everyone should know to zip around Microsoft Office

Michael Ansaldo   Jan 15, 2015 3:00 AM

Despite Microsoft Office's evolution toward menu-driven shortcuts, it's worth remembering those funky Fn keys still serve a purpose. As part of key combos in Word, Excel, and Outlook, they make it easier and faster to perform commonly used commands.

Here are 15 of the most essential function-key strokes. Once you get the hang of two-fisted input using the mouse and keyboard shortcuts, you'll find yourself shaving hours off your projects.

Universal keystrokes

1. Help

F1 is the Help key in almost every software program available, including all the Microsoft products. Ctrl+F1 displays or hides the ribbon menu bar in Word and Excel.

2. GoTo

F5 is the GoTo key in both Word and Excel. Excel displays a dialog box prompting for a cell reference such as B55 or G12. Word's dialog box prompts for 13 different locations, including the page, section, line, table and graphic.

3. Toggle between documents

Ctrl+F6 toggles between multiple Word documents when you have more than one open, or between worksheets when you have more than one Excel file open.

4. Spell Check

F7 opens the Spell Check dialog box in Excel, Word, and Outlook.
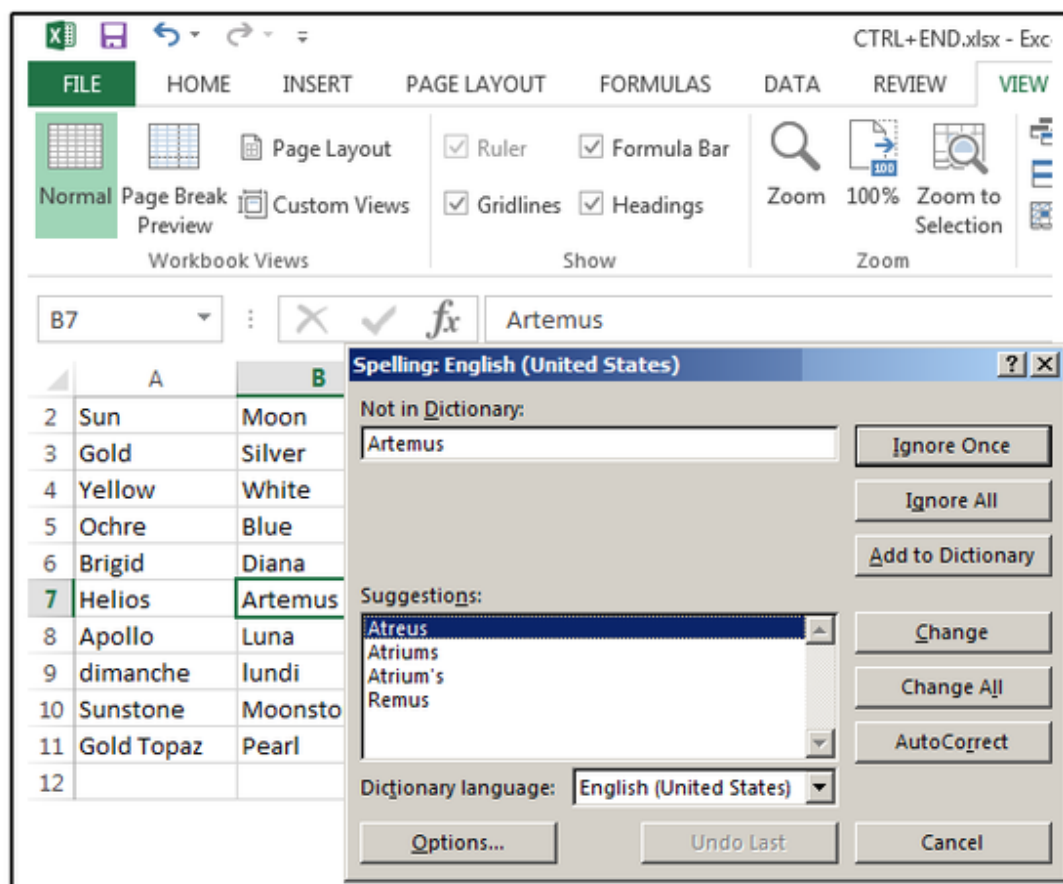
F7 opens the spell checker in Excel, Word, Outlook, and many other Microsoft programs.

5. Save

Shift-F12 saves the current document, spreadsheet, or whatever task is currently open in Outlook (email, contact, task, etc.). F12 opens the Save As dialog box in Excel, Word, and Outlook, then prompts for a new filename.

Word

6. Change Case

Shift-F3 toggles the case of the selected text (in Outlook as well), rotating from sentence case to uppercase to lowercase and so on. Just highlight the text you want to format and continue to press Shift-F3 until the case you want appears. No more deleting text when you accidentally press the Shift key in the middle of a word or forget the Caps Lock key is turned on.

7. Repeat last action

F4 repeats the last action you performed. For example, create a text box, insert a graphic, or draw a line, then press F4 and the action is duplicated.

8. Thesaurus

Shift-F7 opens the Thesaurus dialog and suggests synonyms for the selected word.
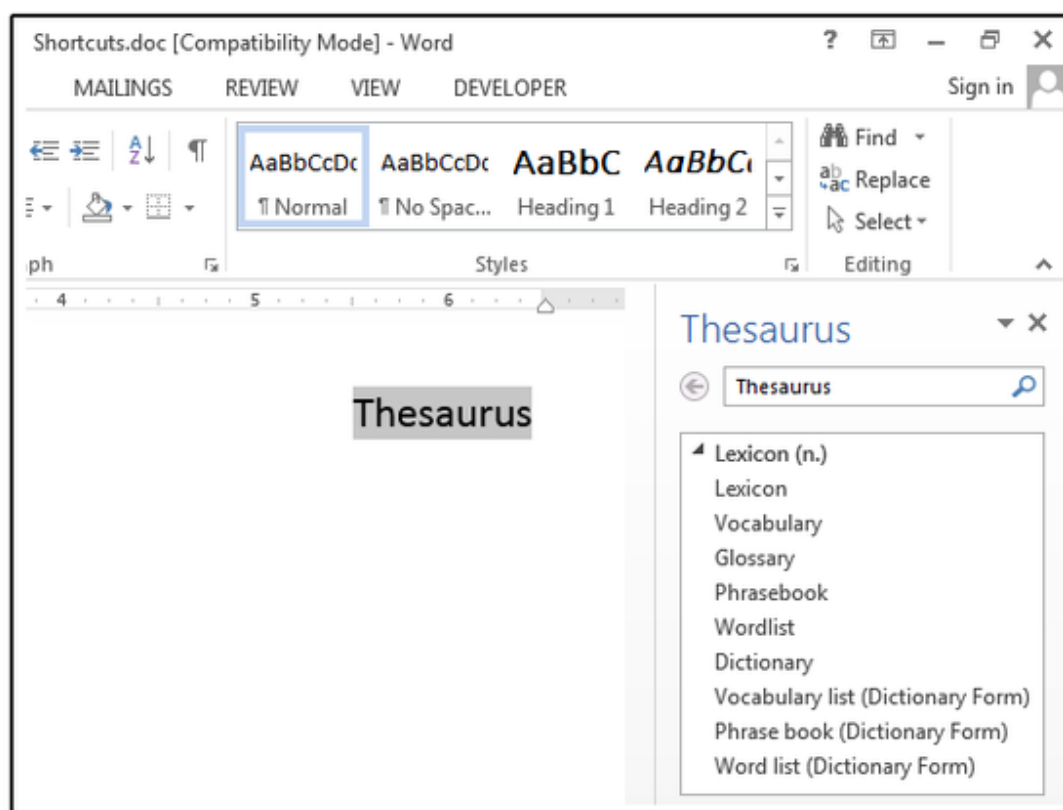
Shift+F7 is a life saver when you need a synonym.

9. Disable hyperlinks

Hyperlinks can be deactivated one at a time through the right-click menu. But removing dozens of hyperlinks from a document using this method takes time. Ctrl+Shift-F9 also disables one active hyperlink when it's selected. But to disable *all* active hyperlinks in a document, first press Ctrl+A to select the entire document or email, then press Ctrl+Shift-F9.
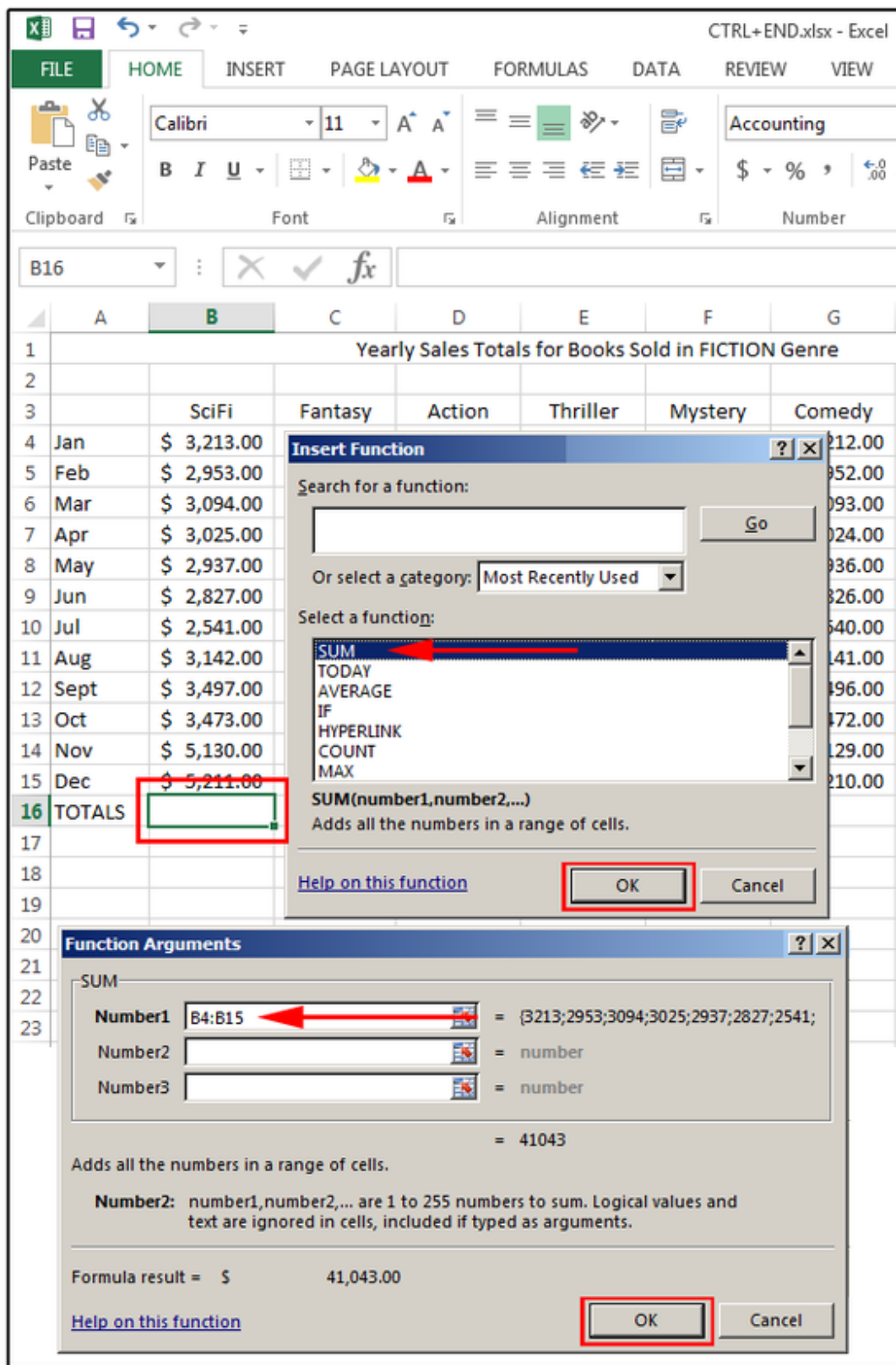
Excel

10. Edit a cell

F2 edits the active cell (text and formulas)—a quick and easy way to manage formulas.

11. Insert Function

Place your cursor in the target cell, then press Shift-F3 to open the Insert Function dialog. Choose a function from the list (SUM, AVERAGE, IF, COUNT, etc.) and click *OK*. Next, the Function Argument dialog opens, prompting for the range you want to calculate using the function you just selected. If the target cell is below a column of numbers, Excel automatically enters the range above the target cell. Once the range is determined, click *OK*. Excel enters the function/formula plus range and calculates the answer.

Shift+F3 opens the functions/formulas dialog box in Excel.

12. Create cell reference

F4 toggles thru formulas to create absolute or relative cell references. In this case, the graphic below is worth a thousand words for explaining this feature.
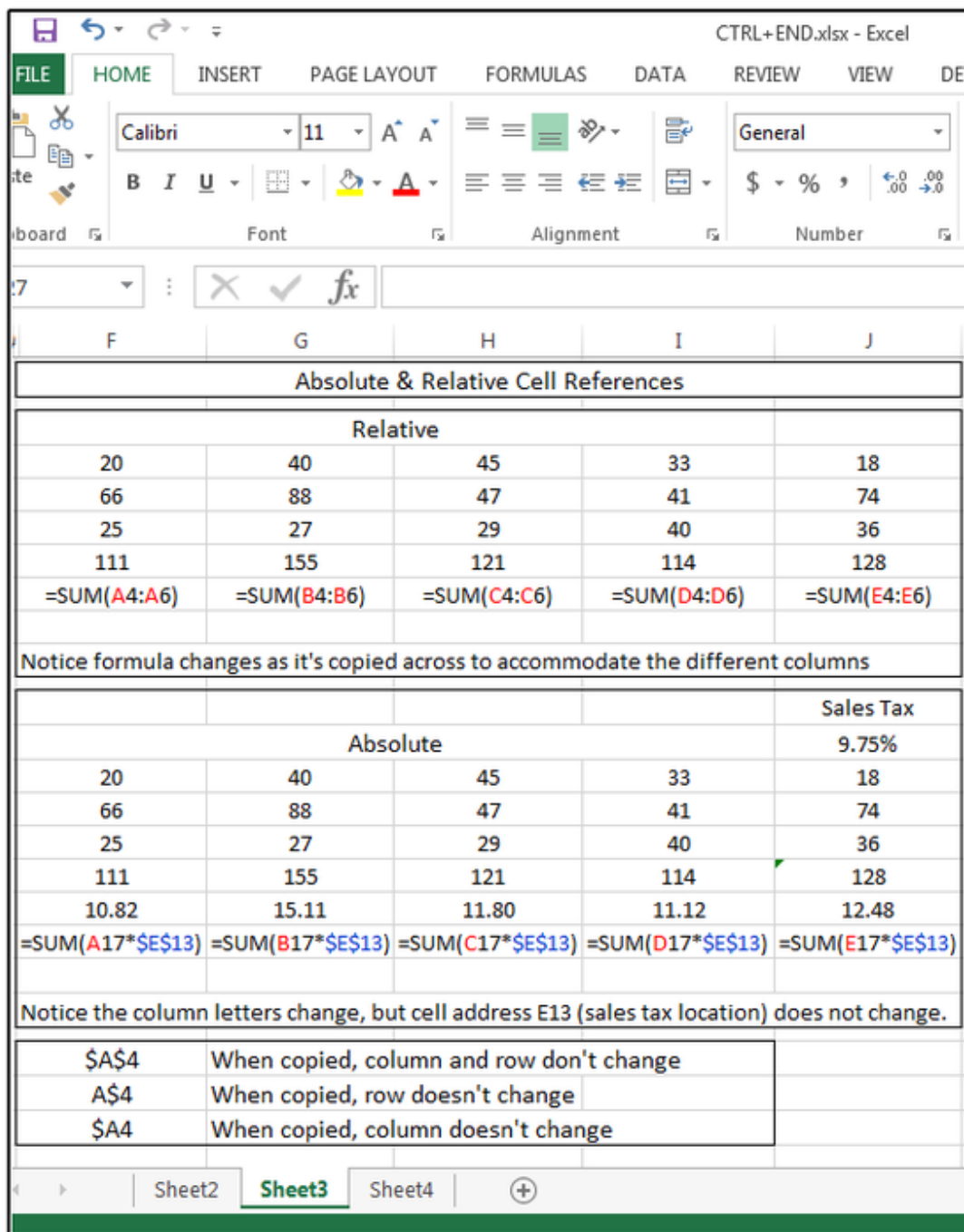
After typing a cell reference, F4 can make the reference absolute.

13. Display Macro dialog box

Alt+F8 displays the Macro dialog box, which provides the options to Run, Step Through, Edit, Delete, or customize any macro.

14. Calculate the active worksheet

It takes time to recalculate a really huge worksheet, especially if it's loaded with formulas. So, many power users turn off the "auto-calculate" feature (*File>Options>Formulas*, then click *Manual* under Calculation Options-Workbook Calculation). Once disabled, you'll be able to work more quickly, When you're finished entering and editing text and formulas, press Shift-F9 to recalculate everything.

15. Create a chart with data in current range

F11 creates a chart of the data in the active range of the active worksheet. However, highlighting the range first could save time when editing the chart.
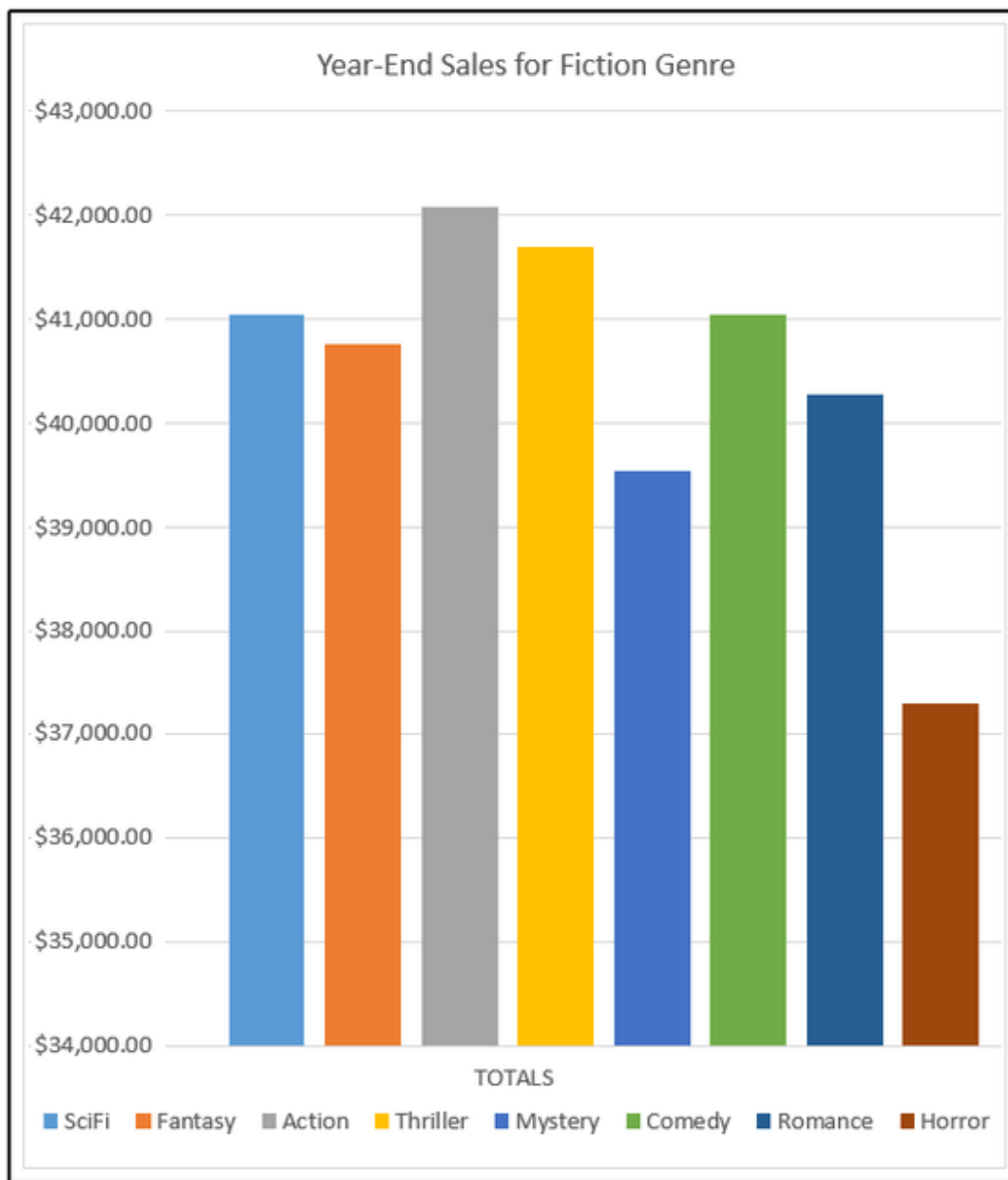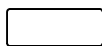

F11 creates a chart from the active range of data in the current Excel worksheet.

Let us know your favorite function-key strokes for Office in the comments. And stay tuned for more tips.

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carlosgo22   17 hours ago

Thanks for sharing. I will definitely use a few of these shortcuts that I wasn't familiar with.

Here are my 2 cents though:
For "3. Toggle between documents": in Excel, I think it's easier to use CTRL+TAB (to go forward) or CTRL+SHIFT+TAB (to go backward). I can do this combination with one hand, whereas CTRL+F6 seems like you have to do it with two hands.

Here's another tip for Excel: To move between sheets (in the same workbook) you can use CTRL+PAGE UP or CTRL+PAGE DOWN.

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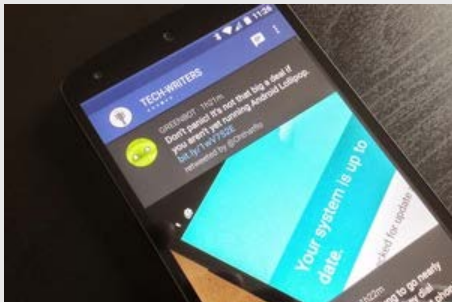With QNAP's NAS, you can set up your home with the best tech for the ultimate smart home experience.

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