

A HEAD START IN BIM

50 tips and tricks for Vectorworks

Learn keyboard shortcuts

1 Using both hands is essential to get the most out of Vectorworks Architect. This can be the single biggest way to improve your productivity, speed and enjoyment. Most keyboard shortcuts are easy to learn, and they are displayed right in front of you as you work. Start with the number keys, 1 to 0, to access most of the drafting tools.

Use contextual help

2 When you hover over the tool palettes, a prompt will pop up with the name of the tool and its keyboard shortcut in brackets. This also works on the Mode bar.

Make the most of contextual menus

3 Right-clicking in the document window will give access to a Document context menu. Right-clicking over any object will activate the Object context menu, with some useful commands such as Add Surface and Clip Surface. A two- or three-button mouse is recommended to get the most from using Vectorworks; look over your mouse or trackpad settings and activate the secondary click options.

Type directly in any units you want

4 Vectorworks understands various unit indicators, such as metres (m) and Feet ("). So instead of typing 3000, you can type 3m for 3 metres. Default units should normally be mm, but the units can be temporarily modified while performing area calculations and so on.

Use calculations in any numerical dialog box

5 All numerical dialog boxes in Vectorworks can perform mathematical calculations. For example, if you want to divide the length of an object into a number of divisions (say 5), type into the object information box, at the back of the length value, /5. Bracketed equations can also be entered for more complex calculations.

Use direct calculations to work out exact sizes for areas

6 If you know the length of a room, and know the area you want to achieve, using direct calculations can help work out the other dimension without using a calculator. For example, you have a rectangular room of 4m in width, but need to get an area of 13 sq m. Draw a rectangle 4m wide, and then in the Height box type $13m/4$. Vectorworks will automatically calculate the answer for the height in millimetres as 3250.

Faster object duplication and creating arrays

7 Hold down the Alt key (Mac, sometimes labelled Option) or Ctrl key (Windows) while over an object and a small '+' sign will appear. Clicking and dragging will now duplicate the object at the desired offset. If Offset duplications is checked in Vectorworks Preferences, the object gets duplicated at the same spacing every time the Duplicate command is activated. Try using Command+D (Mac) or Ctrl+D (Windows).

Object duplication in place

8 Holding down the Alt key (Mac) or Ctrl key (Windows) while clicking on an object will duplicate the object on top of itself. To enable this, make sure Allow option-click in-place duplication is checked in Preferences. The duplicated object can then quickly be moved an exact distance using the Move command.

Use active tool selection

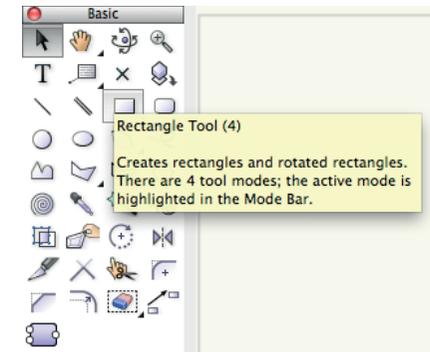
9 Holding down the Command key (Mac, sometimes labelled ⌘) or Cmd key (Windows) while using many tools temporarily activates the Selection tool, allowing you to switch to another object. This works with Offset, Mirror, Rotate, Clip and many other tools, and is a huge time-saver.

Change the active layer

10 Holding down the Command key (Mac) or Ctrl key (Windows) while pressing the up and down arrow keys on the keyboard will move through the layers in sequence, changing the active layer.

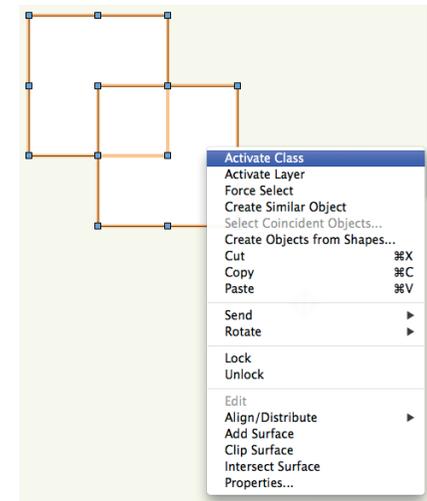
Change the active class

11 Holding down Command (Mac) or Ctrl (Windows) while using the left and right arrow keys will move through the classes in sequence, changing the active class.



Tip 2
Hover over tools for contextual help and key shortcuts

Tip 3
Right-click over objects for contextual menus



Tips 5-6
Use calculations in numerical boxes

