

Short Tutorial

Last Updated Friday, 02 April 2010

Basic Principle

The basic principle of Mouseless Browsing is to append small boxes with unique ids for all links, form elements and frames on a webpage. By default you can trigger an action (e.g. following the link) by simply entering the id. After a short delay the action is triggered automatically. You can also configure MLB to trigger the action only after confirming the id by pressing enter (see Execute automatically without pressing enter).

If the keyboard focus is within an editable field you can trigger an action by holding down the Ctrl-key while entering an id. In this case you don't have to press Enter at the end. Read more about this in the section "What happens if the focus is within an editable field?"

Entering an id for a link results in navigate the browser to that link, entering an id for a form element results in clicking resp. selecting that form element. Entering an id for a frame results in focusing the frame so you can scroll the content. The ids for frames are always place in the top left corner of the frame and they have a different background color Configurability

Mouseless Browsing is highly configurable to suit your personal needs and preferences. Information about every feature is directly provided in the configuration dialog.

In particular all shortcuts of MLB are configurable (see Key Configuration).Types of ids

You can choose whether the ids should be numeric or generated out of a self defined character set (see Use self-defined character set for generating ids). In the latter case some options are not available. I will come back to this in the following points. What happens if the focus is within an editable field? When the focus is within an editable field like a textfield or selectbox MLB has to know whether the keyboard input should be interpreted as an id or not. By default user input in an editable field is not interpreted as an id. If you are using numeric ids you have the following two options:

- By default you can press the modifier "Ctrl" while entering the id. You will argue that this is Firefox default mechanism to switch to another tab. That's correct but don't worry you can disable this behavior (see Modifier for enabling ids within editable elements) and much better tabs also have ids starting with "0" (see "Special Ids ") so you don't need the default behavior any more.

- Another possibility is to use the option "Use Numpad exclusively for Mouseless Browsing". If you use this option MLB interprets all input from the numpad (except the "Add" and "Subtract" key) as ids or special commands. The "Add" and "Subtract" key must be excluded as it is technically not possible to distinguish these keys from keys on the main keyboard.

You can toggle the exclusive mode on/off by pressing the "Pause/Break" key which is of course also configureable. Independently whether you use numeric or character ids you have to further possibilities:

- You can configure a shortcut to blur the active element, i.e. the editable field loses the keyboard focus. After that you can easily enter the id as then it is unambiguous for MLB to interpret the input as an id. By default no shortcut is assigned to avoid irritating the user then accidentally pressing this shortcut. I prefer to use the Escape key for this. MLB recognizes almost all situations there the Escape key is meant for something different like closing a context menu. There is one exception to this: MLB can not detect whether the Escape is pressed with the intention to close a selectbox as it is technically not possible to detect whether a selectbox is open or not.

This shortcut is also very useful as often pages focus automatically a textfield after page load which prevents the possibility to scroll if you use the autocompletion mode of textfields.

- Another possibility is to configure a shortcut for blocking the keyboard input entirely for Mouseless Browsing. Again by default no shortcut is assigned. If you have configured one (I also use "Escape" for this) and press it the keyboard input will be temporarily blocked and exclusively interpreted by MLB. The time the input is blocked is the same as the configured delay for automatic execution. You will ask why the second shortcut is needed. The answer is that certain webpages automatically focus a search textfield on keyboard input (e.g. www.yahoo.com). Show ids only on demand

Even if the appending of the ids is optimized in a way that the impact on the page layout is minimized it's unavoidable that in some cases the page layout is heavily disarranged. Therefore MLB provides the option to show the ids only on demand , i.e. the ids are not shown before the user demands it. For this a shortcut for toggling the visibility of the ids on/off is provided, which is by default the "Decimal Point" key on the numpad. Opening links somewhere else or just select it

Sometimes you want to open a link not in the same tab but in a new one or even in a new window or maybe in CoolPreviews which is a very popular Firefox extension with which you can preview the content of a link in an

dynamically added frame. Mouseless Browsing supports all of them in two ways: The first alternative is to press modifier keys while entering the id. If you press the "Alt"-key while entering the id the link is opened in a new tab. If you press "Ctrl+Alt" while entering an id the link is opened in a new window. For CoolPreviews no modifier is defined by default. This is due to the fact that no modifier combination is left as the shift key could not be used as modifier because when the shift key is pressed the numbers on the numpad key could technically no longer be distinguished from the cursor keys. The second alternative is to press a so called "post-fix" key after you have entered an id. By default you have to press the Add-key to open a link in a new tab, the Divide-key to open a link in a new window or the Multiply-key to open a link in CoolPreviews. Also for selecting a link a postfix key could be defined which is by default the shift key. Special ids

There

are also the following non-visible ids which acts like normal ids: "0" focuses the address field of Firefox(Alt+s doesn't work on every page as it is used sometimes to focus a search field), "00" focuses the web search field in the right upper corner and "01", "02", "03" ... activates the corresponding tab.

Visibility of ids You can configure for which page elements you would like to see the ids (see Visibility of ids). There are four types: text-links, pure image-links, form elements and frames. By default all ids are visible. By default you can toggle the visibility of the ids on/off by pressing the Decimal-Key on the numpad. To toggle between displaying the ids for all elements and the configured ones there is a second configurable shortcut (Default: Ctrl+Decimal-Key). Styles of ids

If you would like to change the appearance of the ids you can do that if you are familiar with the CSS syntax. I discourage from changing the defaults beside changing color, border ect. URL specific behavior

Mouseless Browsing allows to specify URL specific behavior (see URL Rules Configuration). You can define URL patterns and per pattern the visibility mode (hide all ids, show all ids, show the configured ids), the exclusive use of numpad mode and whether the ids should only be visible on demand or not. Other shortcuts Mouseless Browsing has defined some more shortcuts mainly to enable browsing the internet only with the numpad. For a description of all shortcuts refer to the Key Configuration documentation.