I’m just learning CAD. What’s the one piece of advice you’d give to make me a power user?

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Forget the toolbars & menus – learn to run your commands and set your settings from the Command: line!

I lost one of my first CAD jobs because I’d been away from CAD work for about 6 months and I was given a CAD test during an interview. While my interviewer watched, I tried to draw a roadway intersection on a computer that had a 2-button mouse and a newly installed copy of AutoCAD R10. I quickly realized that in all my prior work and training I’d become too dependent on macros, LISP routines and the dreaded digitizer tablet (remember those?!). In those days we only had a Command: line and a right sidebar menu – not a toolbar to be found!

Commands like ERASE, COPY and MOVE were easy to remember but FILLET? Forget about it. I tanked.

I found a computer with CAD to practice and refresh a bit and made it through my next interview and test but I never forgot the experience. Although they were available if I wanted them, I swore off the digitizer tablet and even stopped using command aliases for a long time and typed in the whole long command in most cases. As new versions came out and new menus and toolbars came and went, I realized that the commands entered at the Command: line changed very little from version to version. Unlike co-workers, I didn't panic with each new version install and had no problems working on someone else's computer if necessary because it didn't matter if I couldn't find my magic toolbar.

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