How to copy text

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Cutting and pasting text is one of the most commonly used features of apps in general and desktop applications in particular. How do I copy text on the web? There's an old way and a new way. And it depends on which browser is used.

The modern way

Using the Async Clipboard API

The `Clipboard.writeText()` method takes a string and returns a Promise that resolves when text is successfully written to the clipboard. `Clipboard.writeText()` can only be used from the `window` object that has focus.

The classic way

Using `document.execCommand()`

Calling `document.execCommand('copy')` returns a boolean value that indicates whether the copy was successful. Call this command inside of a user gesture such as a click handler. This approach has limitations when compared to the Async Clipboard API. The `execCommand()` method only works with

DOM elements. Because it's synchronous, copying large amounts of data, especially data that must be transformed or sanitized in some way, can block the page.

Progressive enhancement

```
const copyButton = document.querySelector('#copyButton');
const out = document.querySelector('#out');

if ('clipboard' in navigator) {
  copyButton.addEventListener('click', () => {
    navigator.clipboard.writeText(out.value)
    .then(() => {
      console.log('Text copied');
    })
    .catch((err) => console.error(err.name, err.message));
  });
} else {
  copyButton.addEventListener('click', () => {
    const textArea = document.createElement('textarea');
    textArea.value = out.value;
    textArea.style.opacity = 0;
    document.body.appendChild(textArea);
    textArea.focus();
    textArea.select();
    try {
      const success = document.execCommand('copy');
      console.log(`Text copy was ${success ? 'successful' : 'unsuccessful'}.`);
    } catch (err) {
      console.error(err.name, err.message);
    }
    document.body.removeChild(textArea);
  });
}
```

Further reading

- Unblocking clipboard access (the modern way)
- Cut and copy commands (the classic way)

Demo

□□□ #3
□ □□□ □□□ 2026-10-31 23:01:05 UTC
□ cocobook-sync □□□ 2026-11-04 17:39:40 UTC