

10 AutoCAD Skills You'll Need to Use Civil 3D: Part 2

Selecting Things

It may sound simple, but knowing how to select objects efficiently in AutoCAD will make using Civil 3D much easier.

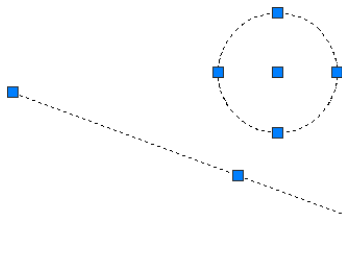
★ The first thing you need to know is that if you are not actively in a command, AutoCAD is in a selection mode.

After you are done with a command, the tool you are using is no longer active and you are back at a Command: prompt in the AutoCAD command line.

This is very different for users who may be used to software that keeps you in a command until you switch tools (such as Microstation or Photoshop).

All of the techniques discussed in this section will work outside of a command or at the Select Objects: prompt when you start working with commands.

Just a Click



When you are not in a command, and you click on an object, you will see blue squares at key points. These blue squares are called *grips*.

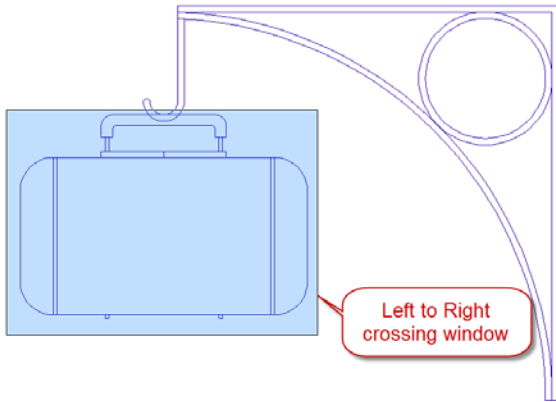
★ If you click a grip, you can move or adjust the object.

If you are in a command, such as move, you will not see grips but you will see objects become dashed.

Window Selection

To select multiple items at once, use a selection window. Click on the screen where you have no CAD objects and a selection window is started. Drag across your screen and you will see a temporary rectangle forming.

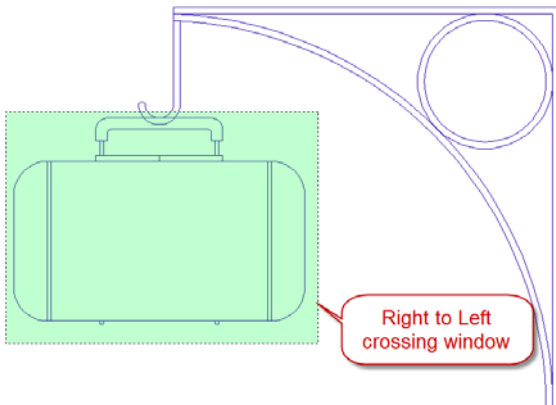
★ The direction that you drag your selection window makes a difference!



Dragging left to right across your screen will give you a blue field with a solid line around it.

Only objects that are completely inside the blue area will become selected.

Items that are partially in, but cross the solid line are not selected.



Dragging right to left across your screen will give you a green field with a dashed line around it.

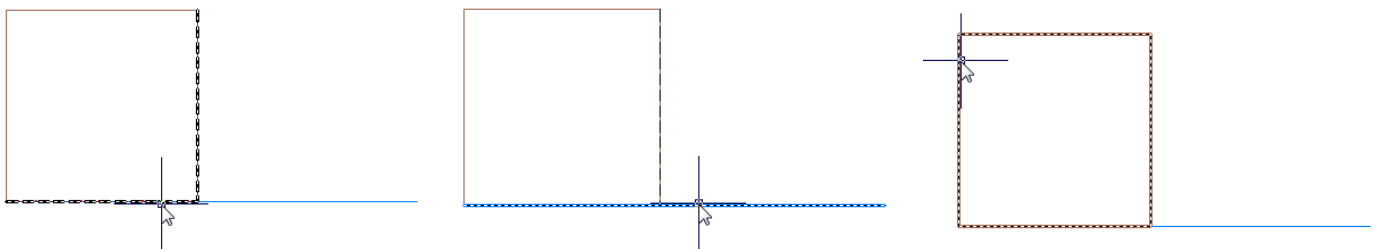
Objects inside the green area and anything touching the dashed line will become selected.

Items that are partially inside will also become selected.

Cycle for Selection

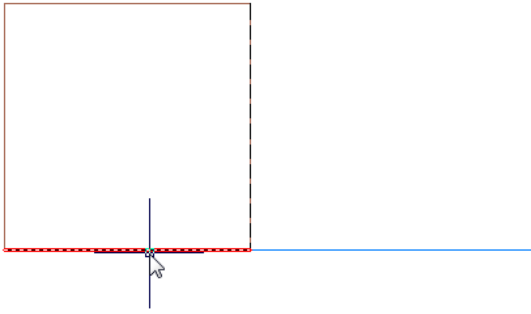
In Civil 3D you will find that you have many objects that share the same location. For example, a flange line will coincide with a line representing edge of asphalt. Knowing how to quickly select items that are “hiding” behind other objects will increase your productivity greatly.

The following illustration shows three objects that partially overlap. Notice that different objects appear to “light up” as the cursor hovers over.



Items that are drawn first tend to get covered up by items that are drawn after them. In AutoCAD this is called *Display Order*. We will discuss display order later in this section.

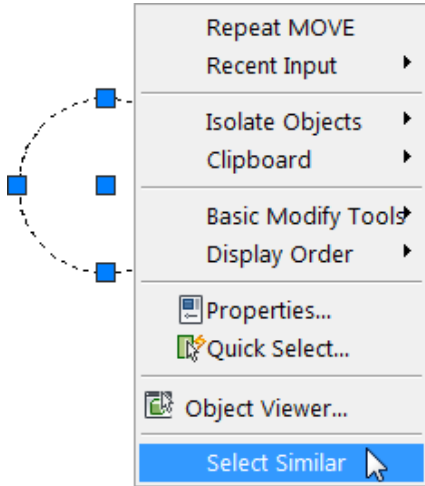
If you wish to select an object that is under another object, you can use **Shift+spacebar** to force the underlying object to rise to the top for selection. To cycle through the objects that may be under your cursor, keep holding shift key while hitting the spacebar.



You need a steady mouse hand, but when the object you are after appears to light up, click it.

You may even discover an object you didn't realize as there!

Selecting, and then Right-clicking



It is important to get comfortable with using the right-click button on your mouse; in Civil 3D, right-clicking is HUGE!

★ Outside of a command, if you have an item or group of items selected, right-clicking will give you a list of options that are specific to the item(s).

A very handy tool to know is the **Select Similar** command.

Select similar will look for objects of the same type on the same layer, and select them all in one shot.

Display Order

If you draw something in AutoCAD, and then draw another thing on top of the first thing, the second thing will obscure the first thing where they overlap.

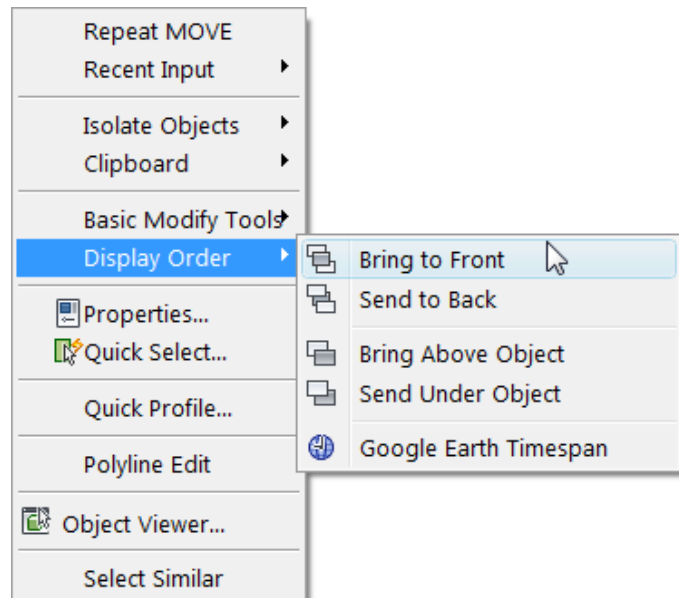
HUH?

Regardless of actual elevation, objects drawn on top of each other (i.e. they share the same XY space) will take precedence over the items drawn before them. For instance, if cycle for selection isn't working, use the Display order commands to get to the objects you want.

Select the object you wish to work with. Right-click and select display order.

- Bring to Front – takes the selected object and puts it in front of other objects that intersect it.
- Send to Back – pushes the selected object behind all the others that it intersects.
- Bring Above Object – moves the selected entity on top an object you select.
- Send under Object – moves the selected entity behind the object you select.

★ Display order has no effect on actual elevation. It's just a graphics thing.



Stay tuned for our next installment where we will play with Properties!