How do I type a special symbol like copyright (©) or registered (®)?

To insert a special symbol into a document, the easiest way is through a tool called the Character Map. This is a component of Windows which shows all of the characters available in a given font. It offers the ability to simply copy and paste it from the character map, or use one of the key combinations to create the symbol if you can’t get to Character Map. It may be in a slightly different location, but should at least be similar to the location on my computer: Start -> Accessories -> System Tools -> Character Map

Once you open Character Map, choose the font you need from the drop down list at the top (Arial is selected in the example), then scroll down and find the symbol you need. When you click on the symbol (note that not all symbols appear natively in all fonts), it will zoom in on the symbol and offer the ability to copy and paste it into your document, or you can create it (the key combinations at the bottom right and left--more about these later). To copy and paste it, click on the character, click the Select button (it will appear in the "Characters to copy" field as in the screenshot), then the Copy button, then just go back to the document in which you need the symbol, and paste it (CTRL V is a nice shortcut for this).
What about the key combinations at the bottom?

If you can't get to the Character Map from within a program where you need to add a symbol: The Character Map also offers you some key combinations to create the symbol in virtually any program. The one on the left is Unicode, and you most likely will not be directly coding anything in Unicode, so ignore this one for now. The one on the lower right shows how you can create the symbol in pretty much any circumstance using the “Unicode equivalent”. (Not all characters have an equivalent.) Note that the number combination has to be done on a "number pad", like the one on the right of full size computer keyboards. (In a case where you have an add-on full-size keyboard for your laptop, make sure the number lock is on, then simply hold down the ALT key, and type the number sequence on the number pad, then release the ALT key.)

To use the ALT+four numbers shortcut on your Thinkpad keyboard, you'll need to temporarily turn some of the letter keys into "number pad mode". This is done by holding down the Fn key and tapping the key labeled NumLk in blue. This will change the three columns starting with 7, 8, 9, and 0 and ending with M, comma, period, and slash to numbers and symbols like a number pad. You'll notice the arrow shaped icon with a 1 in it near the hinge lights up. Now, just hold down ALT, type the four numbers, using the temporary "number pad" and release ALT. DON'T FORGET TO TURN OFF THE NUMBER PAD. (Fn+NumLk)