

Learn *vi*

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Getting Started

Goal

- To learn the basics of the vi editor
- To be capable of editing a text file without using a mouse or similar tracking device

Covered Topics

- Opening and saving files
- Movement within a file
- Inserting and removing text within a file
- Copying and moving text within a file

Topics Not Covered

- Command-line arguments
- Creating a configuration file
- Editing multiple files at once
- Macros, scripts and plug-ins
- Other more advanced features

Necessary Items and Skills

- An installed version of vi or vim
- A basic understanding of any simple text editor
- A basic understanding of your operating system

Glossary of Terms

- **buffer**— (syn: clipboard) The place where the last piece of yanked or deleted piece of text is placed
- **command mode**— The mode in vi where you may enter commands. This is the default mode. To get to command mode from any other mode hit the escape key
- **delete**— (syn: cut) When text is deleted using the delete command it is placed in the buffer
- **edit mode**— The mode where you insert, replace, change text in a file
- **terminal**— (syn: console, shell) The textual interface of Unix/BSD/Linux operating systems
- **vim**— The more feature packed version of vi, also known as vi improved. vim is completely backwards compatible with vi as it has all of the same features as vi
- **yank**— (syn: copy) To copy a portion of text into the buffer

Opening and Saving Files

Starting vi

- If on a Unix/BSD/Linux based computer open a terminal and type **vi** or **vim** and hit enter, otherwise locate your installation of vi and start it up
- Once open you should see the cursor in the upper left corner of the terminal
- The '~' marks down the left side of the terminal indicate the those lines are not part of the current file
- The last line of the terminal is where commands starting in ':' are displayed as you type them

Opening a File

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- In command mode type **:e** followed by the filename and hit enter
- Once open the contents of the file should be displayed and any unused lines in the terminal will show a '~' mark in the left most column

Saving a File

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- In command mode type **:w** followed by the filename and hit enter
- If the file has already been saved at least once you may just type **:w** to save again
- If the file is read-only you can try to override the permissions by typing **:w!** and hitting enter
- Once the file is saved vi will display the number of bytes written and the name of the file that they were written to, on the last line of the terminal

Exiting vi

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

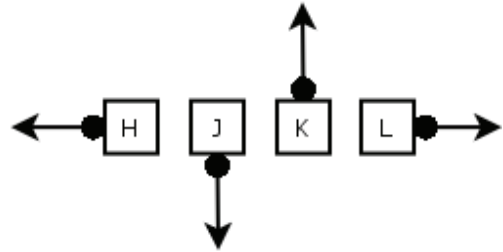
- In command mode type **:q** and hit enter
- If the file has been edited since the last save, vi will warn you and return to command mode
- You may type **:q!** to override any changes to the file since it was last saved and exit
- You may type **:wq** to save the file and exit all in one step
- If you have exited successfully you will be returned to the command prompt or shell in your terminal

Movement Within a File

Directional Movement Keys

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- The directional keys are **h**, **j**, **k**, and **l**
- To move the cursor left one character hit **h**
- To move the cursor down one line hit **j**
- To move the cursor up one line hit **k**
- To move the cursor right one character hit **l**



Movement, One Word at a Time

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To move the cursor forward one word hit **w**
- To move the cursor back one word hit **b**
- To move the cursor to the end of the current word hit **e**

Movement, Changing the Current View

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To change the currently viewable portion of the text so the line the cursor is on is in the center of the terminal hit **z**.
- To change the currently viewable portion of the text so the line the cursor is on is at the top of the terminal hit **z↵** where ↵ is the enter key
- To change the currently viewable portion of the text so the line the cursor is on is at the bottom of the terminal hit **z-**

Movement, Within the Current Line

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To move the cursor to the beginning of the current line hit **o**
- To move the cursor to the end of the current line hit **\$**

Movement, Other

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To move the cursor to the bottom of the terminal hit **L**

Editing Text

Inserting Text at the Current Position

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To enter edit mode and begin inserting text at the current cursor position hit **i**
- To enter edit mode and begin inserting text one character after the current cursor position hit **a**

Inserting Text at the Left or Right Margin

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To enter edit mode and begin inserting text at the beginning of the line hit **␣**
- To enter edit mode and begin inserting text at the end of the line hit **A**

Starting a New Line

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To enter edit mode and begin inserting text on a new line below the current line hit **o**
- To enter edit mode and begin inserting text on a new line above the current line hit **O**

Replacing Text

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To enter edit mode and replace a single character before returning to command mode hit **r**
- To enter edit mode and replace text with the text you type, starting at the cursor, hit **R**

Changing Text

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To enter edit mode and begin replacing a line hit **cc**
- To enter edit mode and begin replacing something hit **c** followed by any of the cursor movement keys

Copying Text

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To yank a line hit **yy**
- To yank a piece of text hit **y** followed by any of the cursor movement keys

Deleting Text

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To delete a line hit **dd**
- To delete a piece of text hit **d** followed by any of the cursor movement keys

Pasting Text

Note: To use these keys you must be in command mode

- To paste the text currently in the buffer at the current position of the cursor hit **p**