

The *emacs* text editor



John W. Shipman

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Abstract

A quick reference guide for the *emacs* text editor.

This publication is available in Web form¹ and also as a PDF document². Please forward any comments to tcc-doc@nmt.edu.

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1. Starting up

To edit a file named *f*, type this command at the Unix prompt:

```
emacs f
```

To edit file *klarn*, for example, and position the cursor initially on the 34th line:

```
emacs +34 klarn
```

1.1. Definitions

- The current cursor position is called *point*
- You can also set the *mark* at any position.
- The *region* is the part of the file between point and mark.

¹ <http://www.nmt.edu/tcc/help/pubs/emacs/>

² <http://www.nmt.edu/tcc/help/pubs/emacs/emacs.pdf>

1.2. Conventions used in this document

C-	Control character: hold down the <i>control</i> key while striking another character. For example, C-x is read as "control-x."
M-	Prefix meta: that is, hold down <i>alt</i> while pressing the other key. You can, instead, press the escape key (<i>esc</i>), then release it and press the other key. For example, there are two ways to go to the previous page (M-v): hold down <i>alt</i> while pressing v , or press <i>esc</i> and then press v .
<i>f1</i>	Function key F1

2. Get me out of here!

C-g	Stop whatever you're doing.
C-x C-c	Exit <i>emacs</i> .
C-x C-z	Suspend <i>emacs</i> for later resumption.
C-h	Enter online help.
<i>f1</i> ?	Enter online help.
<i>f1</i> t	Enter the online tutorial, an excellent way to learn <i>emacs</i> .

3. File commands

C-x C-s	Save the current file.
C-x C-f	Find (and edit) a new file.
C-x i	Insert another file at point.
C-x C-q	Set (or clear) "read-only," which prevents you from modifying a file.
C-x C-r	Find a new file, read-only.
M-~	Clear (or set) the modified flag. When set, this flag tells <i>emacs</i> that the file has changed relative to the disk file.

4. Cursor movements

C-b or ←	Cursor back one character.
M-b	Cursor back one word.
C-f or →	Cursor forward one character.
M-f	Cursor forward one word.
C-p or ↑	Go to the previous line.
C-n or ↓	Go to the next line.
C-a	To the start of the line.
C-e	To the end of the line.
C-l	Rewrite the screen with the cursor in the middle.

C-v	Go to the next page.
M-v	Go to the previous page.
M-<	Go to the top of the file.
M->	Go to the bottom of the file.

5. Deleting text (kill) and putting it back (yank)

C-d	Delete the character at point.
del	Delete the character before point.
M-d	Delete the word at point.
C-k	Delete from point to the end of the line.
C-@	Set the mark at point (control-shift-2).
C-w	Kill the region (between point and mark).
M-w	Copy the region.
C-y	Yank (reinststate) the last-killed block at point.
C-x C-x	Exchange point and mark; this is useful for checking to see what's in the region.
M-\	Delete all the white space around point.
M-space	Delete all the white space around point, leaving one space.

6. Other useful stuff

C-u	Repeat the next command 4 times
C-u n	Repeat the next command n times, where n is an integer. For example, the command C-u 80= would insert eighty equal signs ("=").
C-o	Open the line, that is, split it in two at point.
C-q	Quote: insert the next character even if it's one of the special <i>emacs</i> characters.
C-t	Transpose two characters (before and at point).
M-t	Transpose two words (around point).
C-x 2	Split the screen into two independent screens.
C-x o	In split-screen mode, go to the other screen.
C-x 1	Unsplit the screen, keeping the half that contains point.
M-C-v	In split-screen mode, page down the other screen.
M-q	Reformat the current paragraph.
C-u n C-x f	Set the line length to n .
M-u	Uppercase the word at point.
M-l	Lowercase the word at point.
M-c	Capitalize the word at point.

7. Search and destroy

7.1. Incremental search

C-s	Start forward incremental search.
C-r	Start reverse incremental search.

When you are searching incrementally, each regular character you type becomes part of the string you're searching for. For example, **C-s r** moves the cursor to the next **r**; typing **a** moves the cursor to the next occurrence of the string **ra**; and so forth.

These characters have special meaning in incremental search mode:

enter	Stop searching and leave the cursor where it is.
C-g	Stop searching and move back to where the cursor was when you started searching.

If you want to type the entire search string before asking *emacs* to find it, type **C-s enter**. You will be prompted for the search string, and when you press **enter** the second time, the search will be executed. Non-incremental reverse search works the same way, by typing **C-r enter**.

7.2. Query replace

To replace all occurrences of some old string with a different string, type **M-%**. You will be prompted for the old string with the prompt **Query replace:**; type the old string and then press **enter**. You'll then be prompted for the new string; type it and again press **enter**.

At that time, if there are any occurrences of the old string in your file, the cursor will jump to the first occurrence. At that point you can type any of these characters:

space	Replace this one, then continue replacing.
del	Don't replace this one, but continue.
esc	Stop, don't replace any more, any leave the cursor where it is.
,	Replace this one, but let me see the new text in place before going on. Type <i>space</i> when you are ready to go on.
.	Replace this one, then stop.
!	Replace all the rest of the old strings without asking.

8. Extended commands

M-x auto-fill	Automatically break long lines. If you are already in auto-fill mode, this command turns it off.
C-u n M-x goto-line	Go to line number <i>n</i> .
M-x spell-buffer	Check my spelling in this file.
M-x kill-rectangle	Kill a rectangle between point and mark, which should be at two opposite corners of the rectangle.

M-x yank-rectangle	Insert the last-killed rectangle.
M-x tabify-region	Convert spaces to tabs in the region.
M-x untabify-region	Convert tabs to spaces in the region.
M-x undo or C-_	Undo the last command.
M-x overwrite-mode	Change to overwrite mode, so new characters replace existing ones. If you are already in overwrite mode, this command changes back to the normal insert mode, so that new characters are inserted before the character at point.

