

Using *emacs* outline mode



John W. Shipman

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Abstract

Describes the use of the *emacs* text editor as an outliner.

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. What is *emacs* outline mode?

You can use *emacs* to maintain documents with an outline structure. You can use outline mode to work out the structure of a document or web. Especially useful is the ability to hide whole sections of an outline temporarily, so you can work on the upper levels of the structure while not worrying about the lower levels.

1.1. Assumptions

We assume you understand certain *emacs* basics. For example, **C-x** means hold down the *control* key and press **x**, while **M-x** means to hold down *alt* while pressing **x**.

For general information about *emacs*, see the companion publication, *The emacs text editor*³.

1.2. Definitions

Each part of an outline consists of a *heading line* optionally followed by *body lines*.

- A heading line is the title of one section of your outline. Heading lines must start with one or more asterisk (*) characters.

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

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

³ <http://www.nmt.edu/tcc/help/pubs/emacs/>

- Any lines that don't start with asterisks are considered to be body lines attached to the preceding heading line.

2. Creating your outline

1. Start *emacs* in the usual way:

```
emacs yourfile
```

2. Turn on the *emacs* outline features by typing “**M-x outline-mode**”.
3. Type one asterisk followed by the first-level heading. Then type the body lines for that heading, if any. For example:

```
* Birds: Class Aves  
  
Birds are distinguished by the presence of feathers. All  
reproduce by egg-laying, although other animals lay eggs.
```

4. Type two asterisks followed by the second-level heading and optional body lines. For example:

```
** Loons: Order Gaviidae  
  
The loons are all aquatic, fish-eating diving birds.
```

5. Continue adding headings and body lines. Use one asterisk to start each first-level heading, two asterisks to start a second-level heading, three for a third-level heading, and so on.

Here's an example of a completed outline without any body lines:

```
* Fuel system  
** Fuel tank  
** Fuel pump  
*** Electrical fuel pumps  
*** Mechanical fuel pumps  
** Carburetor  
** Intake manifold  
* Exhaust system  
** Exhaust manifold  
** Muffler  
** Tailpipe
```

3. Moving around inside an outline

The commands shown below all require that you be in outline mode. If the word “Outline” does not appear in the status bar at the bottom of your window, type **M-x outline-mode** to set up outline mode.

If you are using *emacs* under the X Window system, setting outline mode will add three new pull-down menus to your menu bar: Headings, Show, and Hide. You can use these pull-down menus instead of the key sequences described below; for example, *Headings*→*Next* means to use the left mouse button to pull down the Headings menu and select Next, which is the same as the key sequence **C-c C-n**.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| C-c C-n | <i>Headings→Next</i> : Move the cursor to the next heading. |
| C-c C-p | <i>Headings→Previous</i> : Move the cursor to the previous heading. If the cursor is on a body line, it moves to the corresponding heading. If on a heading, it moves to the previous heading. |
| C-c C-u | <i>Headings→Up</i> : Move the cursor to the heading at the level above the current level. For example, if you are in a third-level body line, the cursor would move to the preceding second-level heading. |
| C-c C-f | <i>Headings→Next same level</i> : Move the cursor to the next heading at the same level. For example, if you are in a second-level entry, the cursor jumps to the next second-level (or higher) entry. |
| C-c C-b | <i>Headings→Previous same level</i> : Move the cursor to the previous heading at the same level. |

4. Hiding and revealing sections of an outline

When you are working on the overall structure of your outline, sometimes it is nice to be able to ignore the details and see, for example, just the first-level headings. The *emacs* outline mode allows you to temporarily hide parts of your outline. Later, if you like, you can show (reveal) the hidden parts.

Lines containing hidden material will end with three periods (. . .) to remind you that there is something hidden.

These features are reached through the *Show* and *Hide* pull-down menus. By *current entry*, we mean the entry that contains the cursor.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| C-c C-c | <i>Hide→Entry</i> : Hide the body of the entry that contains the cursor. |
| C-c C-t | <i>Hide→Body</i> : Hide the body of all entries in the file. |
| C-c C-a | <i>Hide→Leaves</i> : Hide the bodies of this entry, and the bodies of all subsidiary entries, but leave all the headings visible. |
| C-c C-o | <i>Hide→Other</i> : Hide everything in this file except for the current entry and its parent headings. |
| C-c C-d | <i>Hide→Subtree</i> : Hide the body of this entry and all subsidiary entries. |
| C-c C-q | <i>Hide→Sublevels</i> : Hide everything in this file except for the top-level headings. |
| C-c C-a | <i>Show→All</i> : Show everything in this file; reveals all hidden material. |
| C-c C-s | <i>Show→Subtree</i> : Show everything subsidiary to the current entry. |
| C-c C-e | <i>Show→Entry</i> : Show the body of the current entry. |
| C-c C-k | <i>Show→Branches</i> : Show all the headings subsidiary to the current entry, but not their bodies. |
| C-c tab | <i>Show→Children</i> : Show the headings that are only one level below the current entry. |

