

Editing text files is an important aspect of working in the UNIX environment. Text files are files such as email messages and source code for programming languages. The most useful editor in general situations is probably the Visual Integrator (`vi`) editor. There are many editors out there, but this is the one that is used most often and it is probably the only one that is guaranteed to be available on all UNIX machines. Unfortunately, it takes some getting used to because it does not have a graphical interface.

Knowing how to use a text editor is important. This is because you frequently need to edit files on a computer that you are physically not sitting in front of. This will happen if you are working on `nadja` or some other machine from home.

To start editing a text file with `vi`, enter

```
> vi filename
```

at the command prompt. If the file already exists, it will be opened, otherwise a new file will be created.

When you first start `vi` you are placed in **command** mode. In command mode, you can do things like save the file, exit the editor, jump to a specific location in the file and search for a string of characters. In order to actually enter information, you need to enter **input** mode. To do this, enter one of the commands below:

- `i` - begin inserting text before the cursor location.
- `a` - begin inserting text after the cursor.
- `o` - open a new line below the current one and begin inserting.
- `O` - open a new line above the current one and begin inserting.

To stop entering text, press the `ESC` key. Some useful commands while in command mode are:

- `<CTRL>f` - move one page forward in the file.
- `<CTRL>b` - move one page backward in the file.
- `/string` - search forwards through the file for `string`.
- `?string` - search backwards through the file for `string`.
- `nG` - jump to line number `<n>`.
- `G` - jump to end of the file.
- `yy` - place (yank) the current line into a temporary buffer.
- `nyy` - yank `n` lines starting from the current one into a temporary buffer.
- `p` - place the contents of the temporary buffer at the current cursor location. Note: if you enter anything other than cursor movement commands after the `yy` command, the contents of this buffer are lost.
- `x` - delete the current character.
- `dd` - delete the current line.
- `ndd` - delete `n` lines starting from the current one.
- `:w` - saves the file.

`:wq` or `:x` - save the file and exit the editor.

`:q` - quit the editor.

`:r file` - insert the contents of `file` at the current cursor location.

`:g/string1/s//string2` - replace every occurrence of `string1` with `string2`. Note: this can be dangerous to use, particularly when writing programs.