

Emacs Basics

Buffers

Buffers are the basic editing unit in Emacs, similar to windows in a Microsoft program. A new buffer is created when you create a new file or open an existing file in Emacs.

- Use the 'File > Open File...' menu option to create a new file or read an existing file into a buffer. To create a new file, simply enter a name for the new file in the 'find file' dialogue window and select 'Open.' A blank buffer for the new file will be created.
- Use the 'Buffers' menu option to view or switch between existing buffers. Note that a buffer name with an '*' next to it means that the buffer has been altered, and that these alterations have not yet been saved.
- Use the 'File > Split Window' menu option to display multiple buffers at the same time.

Minibuffer

The minibuffer is a special buffer located at the bottom of the Emacs window, which is used to enter certain arguments and commands. For example, if you select the 'Edit > Search > Search...' menu option, then you must enter the character string you wish to search for in the minibuffer. When the minibuffer is active, you can use the up arrow key to cycle through arguments and commands that you have entered previously during that same Emacs session.

Navigation and Editing

Arrow keys	move the cursor.
Insert	toggles overwrite mode on/off
Delete	deletes the highlighted characters
Home	moves cursor to beginning of current line
End	moves cursor to end of current line
Page Up	moves cursor up one page
Page Down	moves cursor down one page

When you click the left mouse button and drag the cursor to highlight a section of text, Emacs automatically copies the highlighted section to its clipboard. The highlighted section then can be pasted from the clipboard into any existing buffer.

Note that highlighting a section of text and pressing the 'Delete' key will delete the entire highlighted section. On the other hand, highlighting a section of text and pressing the 'Backspace' key will only delete the character to the left of the cursor. As an alternative, you can delete an entire section of text by first highlighting the desired section and then by cutting the section using the 'Edit > Cut' menu option.

Emacs Sessions

If you try to compile and run a new tpl file (i.e., one with a different name) in an Emacs session in which you've already compiled a different tpl file, then Emacs will give you an error message. Therefore, every time you wish to compile and run a new tpl file, you must start a new Emacs session. Note, that you also can have multiple Emacs sessions open at the same time.

Additional Information

You can access tutorials and manuals for Emacs using the 'Help' menu option within Emacs. We also have included a list of Emacs hotkey commands on the following page.

A list of Emacs hotkey commands

Notational Convention

C-x	Press Control and x simultaneously
C-x C-f	As above, then release and press Control and f simultaneously
C-x s	Do C-x as above, then release and press a single s.
C-x t l	Do C-x as above, then release and press t and then l.
M-x	Press Meta key (Alt or Esc) and x simultaneously

File Handling

C-x C-c	exit Emacs
C-x C-f	open a file
C-x C-s	save the current buffer
C-x s	save all buffers
C-x C-w	save buffer as
C-x C-b	bring up a list of buffers
C-x b	switch to a different buffer
C-x k	delete current buffer

Navigation

C-f	forward a character
C-b	backward a character
M-f	forward a word
M-b	backward a word
C-n	next line
C-p	previous line
C-a	beginning of line
C-e	end of line
M-a	beginning of sentence
M-e	end of sentence
M-v	page up
C-v	page down
M-(beginning of buffer
M-)	end of buffer

Text Editing

C-k	cut from cursor to end of line (called kill in Emacs)
C-w	cut selection (called kill in Emacs)
C-y	paste (called yank in Emacs)
C-SPACE	start selection (now move cursor to select more text)
C-g	abort (e.g., cancel selection)
C-d	delete character
BACKSPACE	backspace
C-_	undo
M-d	delete word in front
M-BACKSPACE	delete word behind
C-s	search forward for string
C-r	search backwards for string
M-%	search and replace