

# HOW TO LEARN EMACS

A beginner's guide to Emacs 24 or later  
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2013(2)

If you're a developer or sysad...

STEP 0  
Start here!

**Learn Vim** → the other text editor  
It's okay. Learn the basics so that you can easily work on other people's computers. If you know your way around Vim, people won't give you as much grief over Emacs.

Emacs? never installing you're never going to get that on my box

You will probably never meet editor zealots. Be more ambitious!

Okay, Once you know the basics of Vim, you can get on with learning Emacs.

**Why Emacs?**  
• Amazingly customizable  
• Endless room for growth

## Learn how to learn

Most people start here!  
STEP 1

There are some old books on Emacs, but the version differences can be rather confusing.

Start with the built-in tutorial instead.  
**Help → Emacs Tutorial** ← repeat as many times as you need to

Can't use the menu?  
Press **Control-h** to start.

NOTE: The Emacs tutorial has lots of weird terms: "Meta key", "frame", "buffer". This is because Emacs started a long time ago. Don't worry, you'll get the hang of it with practice.

Some things that might help.

**C-x C-s**: This is how keyboard shortcuts are written.  
@ then let go of x and press Control s  
Tip: Since you're using Control for both keys you can hold Control down, instead of letting go between x and s.

**M-x** lets you call commands by name, which is great if you can't remember the keyboard shortcut. Ex: M-x help-with-tutorial RET  
This means press Enter/Return

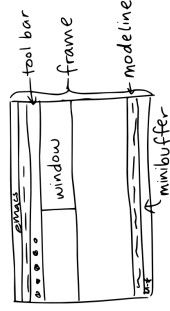
STEP 2

**Bonus mini-cheat sheet!**  
Here's what you need to know in Vi:  
• insert mode ↔ **ESC** command mode  
• **vimtutor**  
Long-time Vi user? Try out:  
• **:w** write/save file  
• **:q** quit  
• **:q!** really quit  
Evil mode Emacs

You can actually edit remote files in Emacs, but that's an intermediate topic. (Curious? See TRAMP)

Emacs  
ssh/ftp

STEP 3



Other good help commands:  
**C-h i** manual  
**C-h k** keyboard shortcuts  
C-h f gives you help  
C-h f describes commands  
C-h a searches for commands  
C-h c shows help

Windows show buffers, which could be:  
• files  
• processes  
• other info

STEP 4

## Learn Emacs basics

**C-x C-f** open (find-file)  
**C-x C-s** save  
**C-x C-c** quit

NOTE:  
You don't need to quit Emacs after each file. Just leave it running and use **C-x C-f** to open the next.

How to select text

Go to the start of your selection and press **C-SPC** (Control + space)  
Go to the end of your selection and run your command  
\* Learn how to use keyboard macros. They're awesome.  
**C-w** cut (kill)  
**C-y** paste (yank)  
→ M-y paste older things  
**C-/** undo  
C-x ( start macro  
C-x ) end macro  
C-x e execute macro  
e... ..again

## Learn other handy tips

**Buffer & window management**  
**C-x b** switch buffer → even better with **M-x ido-mode**  
**C-x 2** split  
**C-x 3** split  
**C-x o** other window  
**C-x o** get rid of current window  
**C-x 1** get rid of other windows

## Navigation & Search

**M-g M-g** go to line (hold Alt/⌘ and then press g twice)  
**C-s** Interactive search  
**C-r** Interactive search backward  
**M->** End of buffer  
**M-<** Beginning of buffer  
**M-x** occur RET Find lines

## Explore!

**Org-mode.org** organize your life in plain text  
**TRAMP** remote access  
**Calc** powerful calculator and converter  
**Eshell/Term** command-line in Emacs  
**Narrowing/Widening**

**Writing & debugging**  
**Emacs Lisp** (it's scary, but it's powerful!)

There's so much more!  
Oh yeah, it's not as hard as you think it is. **Install!**  
Ask away and discover more by exploring!

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