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## Vim Editing Multiple Files and Windowing Support Under Linux / UNIX

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This entry is part 10 of 10 in the series [VI / VIM Text Editor](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

[VI / VIM Text Editor](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

- [How To Show Line Numbers In vi / vim Text Editor](#) <sup>[2]</sup>
- [Turn on or off color syntax highlighting in vi or vim](#) <sup>[3]</sup>
- [Ubuntu Linux Vim Sorry, the command is not available in this version: syntax on](#) <sup>[4]</sup>
- [UNIX / Linux: vi / vim perform search and replace operation](#) <sup>[5]</sup>
- [FreeBSD install VIM text editor](#) <sup>[6]</sup>
- [vi / vim Print Line Numbers on Hardcopies / Printer](#) <sup>[7]</sup>
- [vi / vim Auto complete File Name While Editing Files](#) <sup>[8]</sup>
- [Moving Around With vim \(keyboard short cuts\)](#) <sup>[9]</sup>
- [How do I Be More Productive In Vim?](#) <sup>[10]</sup>
- Vim Editing Multiple Files and Windowing Support Under Linux / UNIX

**Q.** How do I open and edit multiple files under VIM text editor running under Ubuntu Linux / UNIX operating systems to improve my productivity?

**A.** Vim offers multiple file editing with the help of windows. You can easily open multiple files and edit them using the concept of buffers.



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## Understanding vim buffer

A buffer is nothing but a file loaded into memory for editing. The original file remains unchanged until you write the buffer to the file using w (other file saving related) command.

## Understanding window

A window is nothing but a viewport onto a buffer. You can use multiple windows on one buffer, or several windows on different buffers. By default, Vim starts with one window, for example open /etc/passwd file, enter:

```
$ vim /etc/passwd
```

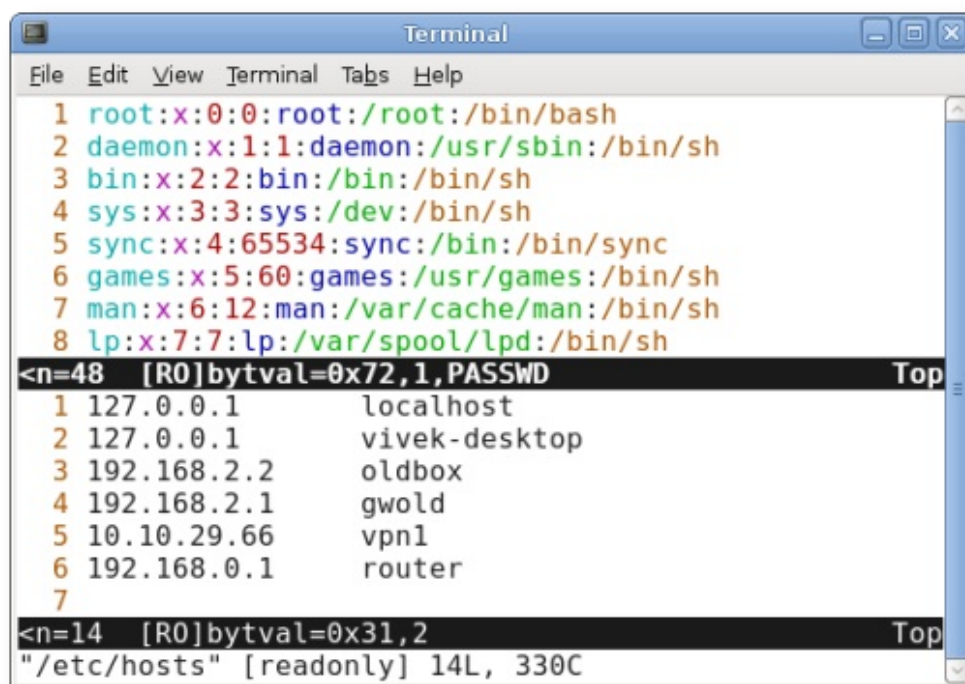
### Open two windows

Start vim as follows to open two windows, **split horizontally**:

```
$ vim -o /etc/passwd /etc/hosts
```

OR

```
$ vim -o file1.txt resume.txt
```



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(Fig.01: split horizontal windows under VIM)

The -O option allows you to open two windows, [split vertically](#), enter:

```
$ vim -O /etc/passwd /etc/hosts
```

## How do I switch or jump between windows?

This operation is also known as moving cursor to other windows:

1. Press CTRL + W + <Left arrow key> to activate [left](#) windows
2. Press CTRL + W + <Right arrow key> to activate [right](#) windows
3. Press CTRL + W + <Up arrow key> to activate to windows [above](#) current one
4. Press CTRL + W + <Down arrow key> to activate to windows [down](#) current one
5. Press CTRL-W + CTRL-W (hit CTRL+W twice) to [move quickly between](#) all open windows

## How do I edit current buffer?

Use all your regular vim command such as i, w and so on for editing text.

## How do I close windows?

Press CTRL+W CTRL-Q to close the current windows. You can also press [ESC]+:q to quit current window.

## How do I open new empty window?

Press CTRL+W + n - Create a new window and start editing an empty file in it.

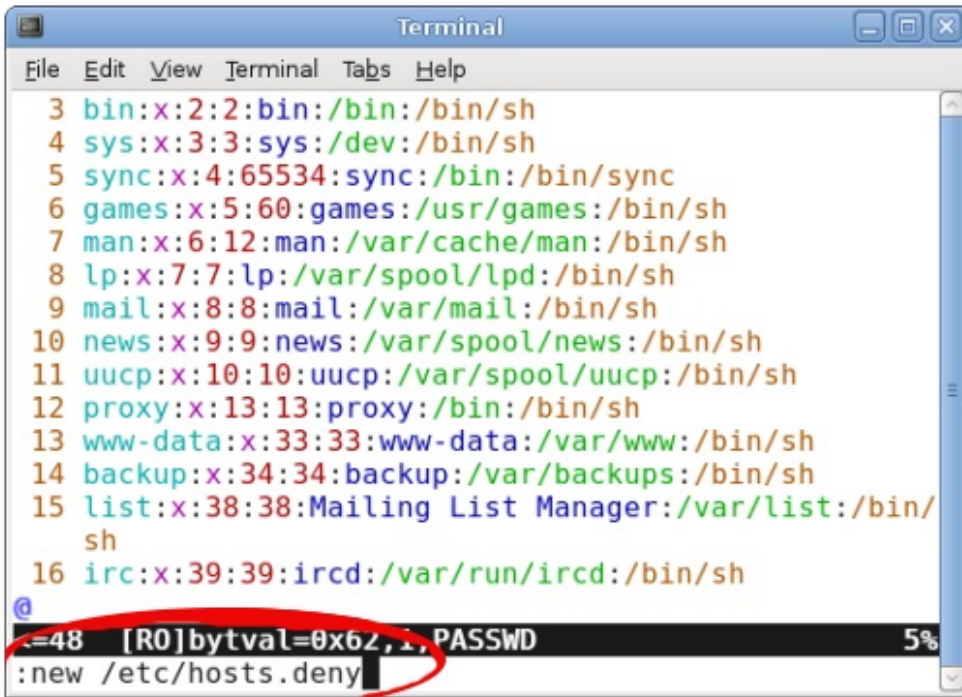
## How do I split current window in two?

Press CTRL+W+ s - to split current window in two.

## How do I open exiting file in a new windows?

Press [ESC]+:new /path/to/file. This will create a new window and start editing file /path/to/file in it. For example, open file called /etc/hosts.deny, enter:

```
:new /etc/hosts.deny
```

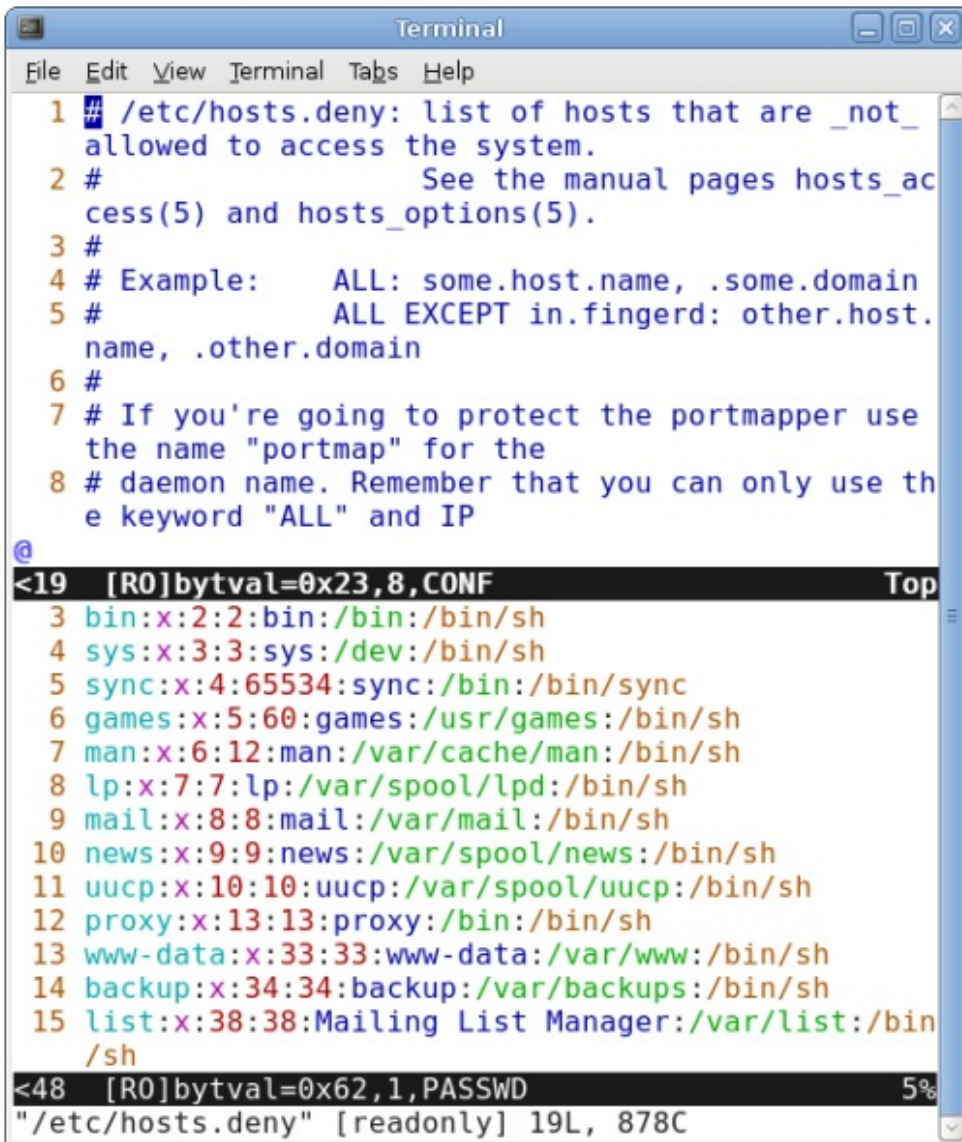


```

3 bin:x:2:2:bin:/bin:/bin/sh
4 sys:x:3:3:sys:/dev:/bin/sh
5 sync:x:4:65534:sync:/bin:/bin/sync
6 games:x:5:60:games:/usr/games:/bin/sh
7 man:x:6:12:man:/var/cache/man:/bin/sh
8 lp:x:7:7:lp:/var/spool/lpd:/bin/sh
9 mail:x:8:8:mail:/var/mail:/bin/sh
10 news:x:9:9:news:/var/spool/news:/bin/sh
11 uucp:x:10:10:uucp:/var/spool/uucp:/bin/sh
12 proxy:x:13:13:proxy:/bin:/bin/sh
13 www-data:x:33:33:www-data:/var/www:/bin/sh
14 backup:x:34:34:backup:/var/backups:/bin/sh
15 list:x:38:38:Mailing List Manager:/var/list:/bin/
  sh
16 irc:x:39:39:ircd:/var/run/ircd:/bin/sh
@
<48 [R0]bytval=0x62,1,PASSWD 5%
: new /etc/hosts.deny
  
```

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(Fig.02: Create a new window and start editing file /etc/hosts.deny in it.)



```

1 # /etc/hosts.deny: list of hosts that are _not_
2 #   allowed to access the system.
3 #   See the manual pages hosts_ac
4 #   cess(5) and hosts_options(5).
5 #
6 # Example:  ALL: some.host.name, .some.domain
7 #           ALL EXCEPT in.fingerd: other.host.
8 #           name, .other.domain
9 #
10 # If you're going to protect the portmapper use
11 # the name "portmap" for the
12 # daemon name. Remember that you can only use th
13 # e keyword "ALL" and IP
@
<19 [R0]bytval=0x23,8,CONF Top
3 bin:x:2:2:bin:/bin:/bin/sh
4 sys:x:3:3:sys:/dev:/bin/sh
5 sync:x:4:65534:sync:/bin:/bin/sync
6 games:x:5:60:games:/usr/games:/bin/sh
7 man:x:6:12:man:/var/cache/man:/bin/sh
8 lp:x:7:7:lp:/var/spool/lpd:/bin/sh
9 mail:x:8:8:mail:/var/mail:/bin/sh
10 news:x:9:9:news:/var/spool/news:/bin/sh
11 uucp:x:10:10:uucp:/var/spool/uucp:/bin/sh
12 proxy:x:13:13:proxy:/bin:/bin/sh
13 www-data:x:33:33:www-data:/var/www:/bin/sh
14 backup:x:34:34:backup:/var/backups:/bin/sh
15 list:x:38:38:Mailing List Manager:/var/list:/bin
  /sh
<48 [R0]bytval=0x62,1,PASSWD 5%
"/etc/hosts.deny" [readonly] 19L, 878C
  
```

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(Fig.03: Two files opened in a two windows)

## How do I resize Window?

You can increase or decrease windows size by N number. For example, increase windows size by 5, press [ESC] + 5 + CTRL + W + +.

To decrease windows size by 5, press [ESC]+ 5 + CTRL+ W + -.

## Moving windows cheat sheet

| Key combination | Action                          |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| CTRL-W h        | move to the window on the left  |
| CTRL-W j        | move to the window below        |
| CTRL-W k        | move to the window above        |
| CTRL-W l        | move to the window on the right |
| CTRL-W t        | move to the TOP window          |
| CTRL-W b        | move to the BOTTOM window       |

## How do I quit all windows?

Type the following command (also known as quit all command):

```
:qall
```

Note: If any of the windows contain changes, Vim will not exit. The cursor will automatically be positioned in a window with changes.

You can then either use ":write" to save the changes:

```
:write
```

or ":quit!" to throw them away:

```
:quite!
```

## How do save and quit all windows?

To save all changes in all windows and quite , use this command:

```
:wqall
```

This writes all modified files and quits Vim. Finally, there is a command that quits Vim and throws away all changes:

```
:qall!
```

## Further readings:

- Refer "Splitting windows" help by typing :help under vim itself.

Series Navigation

[«How do I Be More Productive In Vim?»](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

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