Text Editors (Core) — Nano & Vi

Linux Commands Course · Section 21

IDSchool

Nano — The Beginner-Friendly Editor

Nano is simple and intuitive, ideal for quick file edits.

Open or create a file:

```
nano filename.txt
```

You'll see the file contents and a list of commands at the bottom.

Commands use the **Ctrl (^)** and **Meta (M or Alt)** keys.

_____

Common Nano Shortcuts

Command	Action
Ctrl + O	Write (save) file
Ctrl + X	Exit (prompts to save if needed)
Ctrl + G	Help
Ctrl + K	Cut selected text or line
Ctrl + U	Paste (after cut)
Ctrl + W	Search text
Alt + W	Repeat search
Ctrl + \	Replace text
Ctrl + A	Move to start of line
Ctrl + E	Move to end of line
Ctrl + Y	Page up
Ctrl + V	Page down
Alt + A	Start selecting text
Ctrl + C	Show cursor position

Nano Configuration Tips

Enable line numbers and syntax highlighting by default:

Edit or create your ~/.nanorc file:

```
set linenumbers
set tabsize 4
set autoindent
set mouse
```

Exit and restart Nano to apply changes.

_____

Vi / Vim — The Power User's Editor

vi (or its enhanced version vim) is a **modal editor** — it operates in different modes.

Modes:

- **Normal mode** — navigation and commands
- **Insert mode** — text editing
- **Command-line mode** — executing editor commands

Open or create a file:

```
vi filename.txt
```

_____

Basic Vi Workflow

When Vi starts, it opens in **Normal mode**.

1. Press i → enter **Insert mode** to type text
2. Write or edit your content
3. Press Esc → return to **Normal mode**
4. Save and quit (see below)

_____

Essential Vi Commands

Mode	Command	Description
Normal	i	Insert mode before cursor
Normal	a	Insert mode after cursor
Normal	o	New line below and insert
Normal	O	New line above and insert
Normal	x	Delete character under cursor
Normal	dd	Delete entire line
Normal	yy	Copy (yank) current line
Normal	p	Paste below
Normal	P	Paste above
Normal	u	Undo
Normal	Ctrl + r	Redo
Normal	/text	Search for text
Normal	n	Next search result
Normal	N	Previous search result
Normal	:%s/old/new/g	Replace all occurrences

Saving and Quitting in Vi

Enter **Command mode** (press `:` while in Normal mode).

Command	Action
:w	Save (write) file
:q	Quit (fails if unsaved changes)
:wq or :x	Save and quit
:q!	Quit without saving
:w newfile.txt	Save as a new file

Navigation in Vi

Key	Action
h	Move left
l	Move right
j	Move down
k	Move up
0	Beginning of line
$	End of line
gg	Beginning of file
G	End of file
Ctrl + f	Page down
Ctrl + b	Page up
:set number	Show line numbers
:set nonumber	Hide line numbers

Visual Selection (Highlighting Text)

Enter **Visual mode** from Normal mode:

- v — character-wise selection
- V — line-wise selection
- Ctrl + v — block (column) selection

After selecting, you can:

- y — yank (copy)
- d — delete
- p — paste

_____

Vi Configuration File

Customize Vim behavior via ~/.vimrc (create if missing).

Example settings:

```
set number
set autoindent
set tabstop=4
set shiftwidth=4
set expandtab
set hlsearch
set incsearch
syntax on
```

Reload Vim to apply these settings.

Quick Comparison — Nano vs Vi

Feature	Nano	Vi / Vim
Ease of use	Very easy	Steeper learning curve
Modes	None	Modal (Normal, Insert, Command)
Highlighting	Yes (with config)	Yes (default in Vim)
Mouse support	Yes	Optional
Best for	Quick edits	Power editing, scripting
Exit confusion	Rare	Frequent :)

Recap

- **Nano** — simple editor with intuitive shortcuts.
- **Vi/Vim** — modal editor with powerful commands.
- Both are preinstalled on nearly all Linux systems.
- Knowing both ensures you can edit files on any Linux machine.

_____