

Essential Helix Commands

Yingqi Jing

July 20, 2025

Contents

0.1	Navigation	2
0.2	Deletion & Change	2
0.3	File & Command Access	2
0.4	Window Management	2
0.5	Selection	3
0.6	Multiple Cursors	3
0.7	Copy & Paste	3
0.8	Commands	3
0.9	Definitions & Diagnostics	3

List of Figures

List of Tables

Note: In Helix, **Alt** (or **A**) functions similarly to **Cmd** in Vim. Importantly, Helix uses a *selection-first* model—you must select text before performing most actions.

0.1 Navigation

- **h / j / k / l**: Move left, down, up, right
- **w / W / e / E / b / B**: Word-based motion
- **i / a / I / A**: Insert modes at various positions
- **f / F / t / T**: Jump to characters in the current line
- **gg**: Go to beginning of file
- **ge**: Go to end of file
- **gh**: Go to beginning of line
- **gl**: Go to end of line
- **u / U**: Undo / redo
- **gr**: Go to reference
- **gd**: Go to definition

0.2 Deletion & Change

- **c**: Change character or selection
- **xd** or **dd**: Delete line (remapped)
- **:%d**: Delete entire file

0.3 File & Command Access

- **<Space> f**: File picker
- **<Space> b**: Buffer picker (all files in buffer)
- **<Space> ?**: Command palette
- **ZZ**: Save and close
- **ZQ**: Quit without saving
- **:q**: Quit

0.4 Window Management

- **Ctrl-w v**: Split window vertically
- **zz**: Center the current line on screen

0.5 Selection

- `v 2w`: Select the next two words
- `x`: Expand selection downward
- `X`: Expand selection upward
- `5x`: Select current + 4 lines below
- `2xv`: Combine with `jk` to resize selection
- `mi"`: Select inside quotes
- `miw`: Select inside word
- `mip`: Select inside paragraph
- `%`: Select entire file
- `%s<pattern>`: Select file and match pattern (regex supported); press `Esc` then `,` to exit multiple cursors
- `<Space> /`: Grep for word in current directory, then `Ctrl+v` to open matches in vertical split

0.6 Multiple Cursors

- `C`: Duplicate cursor to the next match/line
- `,`: Remove the most recent cursor
- `vj C C C`: Select 2 lines and press `C` repeatedly to create multiple cursors every 2 lines
- `Ctrl+A` / `Ctrl+E`: Move all cursors to start/end of line
- `I` / `A`: Enter insert mode across all cursors

0.7 Copy & Paste

- `x`: Select line
- `p`: Paste from register
- `<Space> y`: Copy selection to global register

0.8 Commands

- `|` or `Cmd+!`: Pipe selection through shell command (e.g., `| sort` to sort lines)

0.9 Definitions & Diagnostics

- `gd`: Go to definition
- `Ctrl+o`: Go back to previous location
- `Ctrl+i`: Go forward
- `<Space> k`: Show function help