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Vi and Vim Macro Tutorial: How To Record and Play

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Using Vim Macro feature you can record and play a sequence of actions inside the editor.

This article explains how to perform record and play inside Vi and Vim editor using two detailed examples.

Vim Macros

Record & Play

High Level Steps to Record and Play inside Vim

1. Start recording by pressing q, followed by a lower case character to name the macro
2. Perform any typical editing, actions inside Vim editor, which will be recorded
3. Stop recording by pressing q
4. Play the recorded macro by pressing @ followed by the macro name
5. To repeat macros multiple times, press : NN @ macro name. NN is a number

Example 1: Sequence number generation inside a file using Vim Macro

2. Go to insert mode and type "1 ." as shown below

Type: Esc i followed by 1.

```
$ vim sequence-test.txt

1.
```

3. Start the Recording and store it in register a.

Type: Esc q followed by a

- q indicates to start the recording
- a indicates to store the recordings in register a
- When you do q a, it will display "recording" at the bottom of the vi.

4. Copy the 1st line to 2nd line to have two lines with 1 . as shown below

Type: Esc yy followed by p

- yy will copy the current line
- p will paste the line that was just copied

```
$ vim sequence-test.txt

1.

1.
```

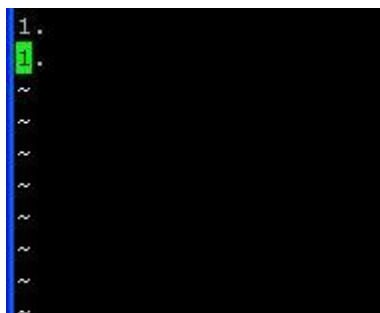**Note:** Vim will still show recording at the bottom as shown below.

5. Increment the number.

Type: Control a

By placing the cursor at the 2nd line, press Ctrl+a which increment the number to 2. as shown below.

```
$ vim sequence-test.txt
1.
2.
```

Note: vim will still show recording at the bottom.
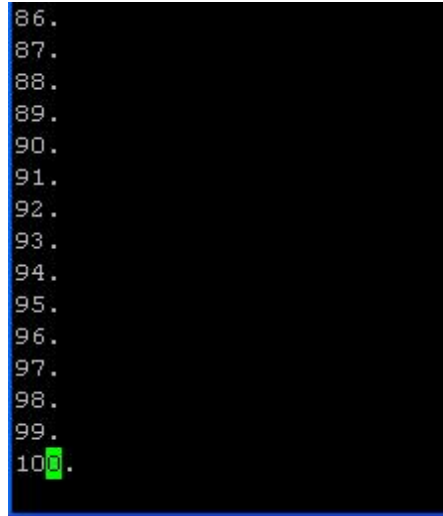
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6. Stop the recording

Type: q

Press q to stop the recording. You'll notice that recording message at the bottom of the vim is now gone.

7. Repeat the recording 98 times.

- 98@a repeats the macros "a" 98 times generating the sequence number 1 – 100 as shown below using macros.

Fig: Generate Sequence Number in Vim using Macro

Example 2: Repeat Vim Macro with different arguments

This example explains how you can executing the same command, with different input for it. i.e Framing the same command, with different arguments.

Before Executing the Macro: change-password.sql

```
$ vim change-password.sql
Annette
Warren
Anthony
Preston
Kelly
Taylor
Stiller
Dennis
Schwartz
```

```
ALTER USER Warren IDENTIFIED BY 'Warren';
ALTER USER Anthony IDENTIFIED BY 'Anthony ';
ALTER USER Preston IDENTIFIED BY 'Preston';
ALTER USER Kelly IDENTIFIED BY 'Kelly ';
ALTER USER Taylor IDENTIFIED BY 'Taylor';
ALTER USER Stiller IDENTIFIED BY 'Stiller';
ALTER USER Dennis IDENTIFIED BY 'Dennis';
ALTER USER Schwart IDENTIFIED BY 'Schwart';
```

1. Open the change-password.sql that has only the names.

```
$ vim change-password.sql
Annette
Warren
Anthony
Preston
Kelly
Taylor
Stiller
Dennis
Schwartz
```

2. Start the Recording and store it in register a

Type: q a

- q indicates to start the recording
- a indicates to store the recordings in register a
- When you do q a, it will display the message recording at the bottom of the vi.

3. Go to Insert Mode and Type ALTER USER

Type: I (Upper case i) followed by "ALTER USER "

Place the cursor anywhere in the first line, and then press I. Which will take you to the

Type: Esc w yw

- Press Esc, and then press w to go to the next word (name).
- yw, copies the current word (name).

5.Go to the end and type IDENTIFIED BY '

Type: Esc A followed by " IDENTIFIED BY '"

- Press Esc, and A to move the cursor to the end of the line, and then type space.
- Type IDENTIFIED BY '

6. Paste the copied Name

Type: Esc p

Press Esc, and then type p to paste the name that was copied in the step #4.

7. Complete the quote at the end.

Type: Esc A followed by ';

Press Esc, and A to go to the end of the line, and ';

8. Jump to the next line and stop the record.

Type: Esc j followed by q

- j to move to the next line.
- q to stop the recording

Note: The recording message shown in the bottom of the vi will now disappear. At this stage, the change-password.sql will look like the following.
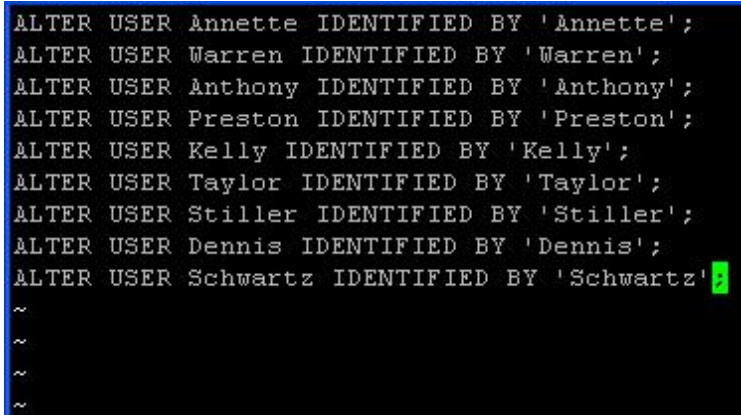
```
ALTER USER Annette IDENTIFIED BY 'Annette';
Warren
Anthony
Preston
Kelly
Taylor
Stiller
Dennis
Schwartz
~
~
~
```

Fig: Vim Macro completed the recording

9. Repete the Macro with the arguments in the corresponding line

Type: 8 @ a

- Now repeat this job 8 times by typing 8@a
- @a repeats the macro "a" one time.
- 8@a repeats the macros "a" 8 times completing the rest of the line automatically as shown below

```
ALTER USER Annette IDENTIFIED BY 'Annette';
ALTER USER Warren IDENTIFIED BY 'Warren';
ALTER USER Anthony IDENTIFIED BY 'Anthony';
ALTER USER Preston IDENTIFIED BY 'Preston';
ALTER USER Kelly IDENTIFIED BY 'Kelly';
ALTER USER Taylor IDENTIFIED BY 'Taylor';
ALTER USER Stiller IDENTIFIED BY 'Stiller';
ALTER USER Dennis IDENTIFIED BY 'Dennis';
ALTER USER Schwartz IDENTIFIED BY 'Schwartz';
~
~
~
~
```

Fig: Vim Macro Play completed

Recommended Reading

Vim 101 Hacks, **by Ramesh Natarajan**. I'm a command-line junkie. So, naturally I'm a huge fan of Vi and Vim editors. Several years back, when I wrote lot of C code on Linux, I