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Best C++ IDE or Editor for Windows

What is the best C++ IDE or editor for using on Windows? I use Notepad++, but am missing IntelliSense from Visual Studio.

c++   windows   ide   editor

edited Jun 15 '09 at 18:10

community wiki
2 revs, 2 users 100%
GavinR

> **locked** by Bill the Lizard Mar 31 '12 at 23:41
>
> This question exists because it has historical significance, but **it is not considered a good, on-topic question for this site**, so please do not use it as evidence that you can ask similar questions here. This question and its answers are frozen and cannot be changed. More info: help center.

40   Why don't you just use VS? – Ed S. Dec 8 '09 at 18:50

2   i don't get this, VS intellisense for c++ is rubbish (at least was upto 2008, 2010 seems to be getting an overhaul) emacs dabbrev-expand is far more useful imho for hard to parse languages like c++ (and also works well with TDD) – jk. Jan 14 '10 at 16:19

9   visual c++ is all about the build integration and debugger... intellisense is just a nice bonus when it decides to work – Matt Joiner Feb 9 '10 at 23:36

6   Intellisense doesn't really work. It also slows down the IDE and is anything but reliable when it does decide to provide code completion hints. If you're missing Intellisense, do yourself a massive favour and get the VisualAssist X plugin. You will never need Intellisense again. – Carl Jun 7 '10 at 2:18 ✐

2   Those people trying to delete-vote this question: It has a ton of upvotes and so do the answers. That means people are interested in it and deleting it would not serve anyone. Besides that, enjoy getting the 120(?) deletion votes necessary to actually delete the question... – ThiefMaster ♦ Jan 10 '12 at 13:28

44 Answers

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I've found the latest release of NetBeans, which includes C/C++ support, to be excellent.

http://www.netbeans.org/features/cpp/index.html

answered Sep 18 '08 at 1:48

community wiki
Ben Hoffstein

Um, that's because Visual Studio is the best IDE. Come back to the darkside.

answered Sep 18 '08 at 1:47

community wiki
Will

21   as much as i dislike microsoft, i still cannot do without VS. god, i am so on the dark side. – Mostlyharmless Sep 18 '08 at 1:51

62   Indeed. It is popular to dislike Microsoft and their products, however it is commonly agreed among the same programmers and tech-savvy folks who bash MS that Visual Studio and its counterparts are great software and wonderful to work with. – junkforce Sep 18 '08 at 6:31
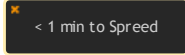
31   VS is a relatively significant reason to write C# instead of Java. – Dean J Apr 15 '10 at 13:01

13   This is why community wiki's shouldn't be allowed answers - this is obviously the overwhelmingly prevailing opinion, yet it's not at top... – BlueRaja - Danny Pflughoeft May 24 '10 at 17:23 ✐

5   @Kaleb I'd be interested to hear one or two... – Will Oct 3 '10 at 17:39

I personally like Visual Studio combined with a third party add-in such as Visual Assist
(http://www.wholetomato.com/). I've tried a few of the others and always ended up back with
Visual Studio. Plus, Visual Studio is a widely used product in development industries, so having
experience using it can only be a plus.

answered Sep 18 '08 at 7:21   community wiki
                                        Stephen Edmonds

< 1 min to Spreed

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4   +1 for Visual Assist: it makes Intellisense usable! – TheJuice Jul 19 '10 at 12:53

The Eclipse CDT works well for me. It supports MinGW and Cygwin as targets. It also integrates
well with CVS and Subversion.

The latest build, Ganymede, is available here.

answered Sep 18 '08 at 2:03   community wiki
                                        bineteri

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10   What I still don't understand is that such an industry focussed product does not support the leading Win32
       compiler suite namely Visual C++. That's just embarrasing... – Milan Jun 5 '09 at 22:20

8   I've found Eclipse CDT is dog slow, to the point of being unusable. Your mileage may vary. – user168715
       Jun 4 '10 at 19:05

There are the free "Express" versions of Visual Studio. Given that you like Visual Studio and that
the "Express" editions are free, there is no reason to use any other editor.

answered Sep 18 '08 at 1:58   community wiki
                                        Kevin

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3   There are plenty of reasons, for example, the express edition's stubborn refusal to integrate with any kind of
       SCM. That being said, VSExpress is still solid and I'm starting to use it more. – SingleNegationElimination
       May 24 '09 at 14:16

3   And you can't use plugins with it. – graham.reeds Jun 15 '09 at 18:14

5   I'm not terribly thrilled by VS's SCM integration nor bothered by its lack from VSExpress - I mean how hard
       is it to use TortoiseHg/TortoiseSvn outside of the IDE? – Eamon Nerbonne Sep 17 '10 at 12:31

I vote for Visual Studio, but it seems that C++ is treated like second class citizen (not the
compiler and stuff but IDE support) compared to .NET languages like C#, but hopefully MS will do
something about it by the next version of Visual Studio (new standard is coming and they
promised that 10 should be new 6).

answered Sep 18 '08 at 2:00   community wiki
                                        Mladen Janković

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2   I wouldn't get my hopes up... – JesperE May 24 '09 at 13:43

VIsual studio is by far the best IDE but you can also take a look at
Code::Blocks

answered Sep 18 '08 at 7:42   community wiki
                                        daniels

I prefer to use Microsoft Visual C++ express on windows. Though the 2008 ide is fine, the 2005 express has better support for many of the open projects which you might want to participate in. It's a pain to compile Firefox or a half life 2 mod on 2008. Also as a general tip when looking for software, I like to search wikipedia for "comparison of " In this case you would search comparison of Integrated Development Environments.

Hope that was helpful.

answered Sep 18 '08 at 2:07   community wiki
                                     cs_student

If you are interested in doing Qt development, then Qt Creator works fine and is free.

answered May 24 '09 at 14:48   community wiki
                                     lhahne

3   This is even a very good option when doing non-Qt development. I use QtCreator all the time. It has
     everything: project management (qmake/cmake), version control (svn, cvs, git), "intellisense", debugger
     integration (although I've never used it, people say it is not as good as VS, which I have to believe ;)). –
     rubenvb Jul 19 '10 at 12:50

I think the debugger in Visual Studio (Express) is the killer thing that prevents me from using another IDE.

answered Sep 18 '08 at 5:30   community wiki
                                     Chris Mayer

Visual Studio + Visual Assist X
(http://www.wholetomato.com/)

answered May 24 '09 at 14:46   community wiki
                                MicTech

There are some features in an IDE that are so transformative that you don't know how you lived without them. Integrated help was one. IntelliSense-like functionality was another. VS 6.0's Debug and Continue was absolutely killer. Visual Studio kicked butt for quite a while. Not bad, given the awful NeXTstep rip-off it all started as. (Or is it that memories of NeXTstep has faded until VS seems okay?)

Sure, there are much better EDITORS that VS, but as a complete package for Win32 development nothing seems to come close.

There are free Express editions now, but they seem pretty crippled.

I am quite enjoying Eclipse under Linux (and derivatives of it on Windows used in some FPGA vendor toolchains). I -really- don't like the lack of integrated MSDN-style help, though.

I think it's basically down to those two choices.

answered Sep 18 '08 at 2:06   community wiki
                                     darron

3   Eclipse JDT has a few killer features too, which will probably never make it to C++-environments, such as
     "drop-to-frame" (reset machine state to a given frame on the stack). Not to speak about the superior
     refactoring-support. – JesperE May 24 '09 at 13:46

2   How'd this end up as the one entry with a negative total? It seems a lot more informative than most. –
     darron Jan 30 '10 at 16:42

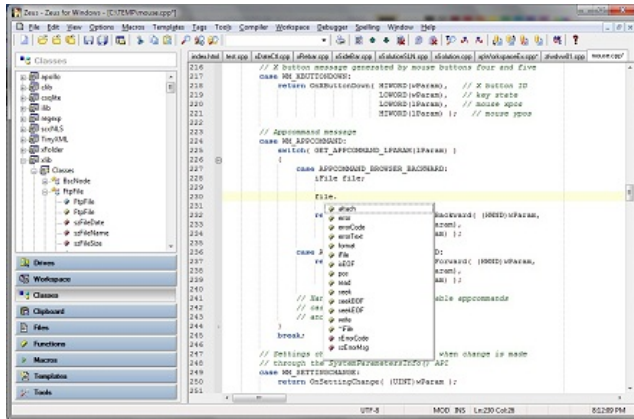Emacs. Xemacs works fine under Windows. For using it as an IDE, I recommend running it under Cygwin.

answered Sep 22 '08 at 15:09   community wiki
                                     Brian Carlton

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2   Instead of Xemacs, use the new GTK+-based emacs: mirrors.kernel.org/gnu/emacs/windows – User1 Jul 18 '09 at 18:57

The Zeus editor has support for C/C++ and it also has a form of intellisensing.

It does its intellisensing using the tags information produced by **ctags**:

edited Sep 24 '08 at 1:39   community wiki
                                   2 revs
                                   jussij

Visual studio is the most up to date and probably "best" free ide. Dev C++ is a little dated, and mingw doesn't compile most of boost, (except regex). Most of the other compilers are dated and fading, like mars and borland. But you can use whatever you like!

answered May 24 '09 at 13:56   community wiki
                                     Gordon Gustafson

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1   Dev C++ was last updated in 2005 last time I checked. If you like MinGW try Code::Blocks – user295190 Sep 3 '10 at 15:18

One that hasn't been mentioned is CodeLite, a powerful open-source, cross platform IDE. It has code completion amongst other features.

answered Jun 5 '09 at 22:11   community wiki
                                     Rob Kam

I will quote myself from this question: http://stackoverflow.com/questions/780837/what-is-a-good-linux-ide-for-code-completion/917854#917854

> Someone already said this before me, but QtCreator is really good for Qt4 development.
>
> Not only it has a really good code completion support. It also knows a little more about the code and what to complete then I thought I needed. For example it knows about slots/signals. This means that connecting slots/signals via code is much easier then before.

The code editing is really nice. I remember that when refactoring code, (a few variables starting with underscore) it remembered the cursor position between lines and this made the refactoring much easier. The code indentation is smart enough to not get in my way (KDevelop was configurable, but QtCreator learns how I code. At least it feels like it does).

Then there are the cool key combinations. Most of the functionality of the IDE can be accessed using shortcuts. The "control+k" thingie is a nice thing, which some command line users would like, but I am more GUI oriented. I don't use it.

What I really like, is the split window command. Yes, KDevelop3 does it, but not as nice as QtCreator. My favorite is control+e,3 which I use to display the header and implementations of my classes. Once again, the navigation here is the best I have seen (control+e,o).

It also has a nice SCM integration. I usually use SVN, and quite frankly it's not as good as I need: no shortcut to diff the project, no diff to commit the whole project, no option to commit several files.

I also don't like the "total integration of external tools". I still like the external QtAssistant - control+tab is easier to read large articles. But.... when you define a QString s, and 3 lines bellow you want to read the interface of QString, you put your cursor on "s" and press F1 - the assistant comes as a sidebar with QString's documentation. A huge advantage.

Want to follow a definition? F2 to the help. F4? Changes header/implementation (yes, eclipse does this better...).

The debugger is good. It's not as good as VisualStudio but ... it has support for Qt4 internals (you can see the value of QString and QList!).

I can continue... but IMHO you will need to give it a second and third try. It really is a good product. Not as flexible as Eclipse (hi ryansstack), but it's a really small, fast and young project. I stopped developing QDevelop because I really found what I was looking for.

ps: yes, I mean stopped developing QDevelop. I was in the development team.

My response is for Qt4 development only. Be warned.

answered Jun 5 '09 at 22:26   community wiki
                                      elcuco

SlickEdit is very cool, and does support something like intellisense. At my current company I now use Visual Studio, and I've mostly gotten used to it - but there are still some SlickEdit features I miss.

answered Sep 18 '08 at 2:00   community wiki
                                      Brian Stewart

As a complete all-in one package, Visual Studio 2008 is the best IDE for C++ development with Windows

answered Sep 18 '08 at 4:56   community wiki
                                      TCJ

Visual studio is great, but there are few tricks you can enhance it with. SonicFileFinder is one - helps you to search source files by partial match. You can map solution-tree to Alt+1, partial filename search to alt+2, and properties-window to alt+3. These are the three most used windows.

Another great tool that is ofter misunderstood is ctrl+shift+F shortcut for searching file contents. People dont use because it's so slow, but my advice is - deal with it. Searching the whole solution (or even all files in project folder) is only slow the first time you use it. Consequitive searches are as fast as jump-to-definition-feature.

answered May 24 '09 at 14:13   community wiki
                                      AareP

I've tried SlickEdit, Notepad++, emacs, jEdit and Visual Studio. VS wins hands-down for Best Windows IDE.

jEdit is probably the best GUI cross-platform editor/almost-IDE, and emacs is probably the best terminal cross-platform editor/almost-IDE. The advantage with using these is that when you jump to a Mac or Linux box, you know how they work.

I tried Eclipse, but it ran like a no-legged dog it was so slow, so I didn't use it much. Maybe tech is better now, but eh.

answered May 24 '09 at 14:35

community wiki
Paul Nathan

With Intellisense, code folding, edit and continue, and a whole host of other features, Visual Studio is certainly the best IDE. However, for simple code editing, I often use UltraEdit. It has some great features not found in Visual Studio. One surprisingly useful feature is being able to select a column in the editor. You can find and replace within the column (useful for tabs vs. spaces wars...) delete the column, etc...

answered Jun 5 '09 at 22:17

community wiki
gnavi

How about CodeBlocks, i find it so fine with me, especially the new 10.05 version.

answered Jan 11 '11 at 22:25

community wiki
White Tiger

I would recommend C++Builder, from Embarcadero, for C++ work and there is also a free version available. If you prefer Visual Studio, download one of free express editions.

answered Sep 18 '08 at 7:49

community wiki
stukelly

Here's another vote for Visual Studio. The debugger and Intellisense are definitely it's hallmarks. While other IDE's offer code-completion, I've often found them to be somewhat sluggish in this area for some reason (sluggish being a reference to the speed at which code-completion occurs and offers selections).

Other than VS, NetBeans is a good polished IDE and is updated on a very regular cycle.

answered Jun 5 '09 at 22:22

community wiki
Lloyd McFarlin

I think it's largely a matter of taste, but I would recommend begginers to stick to a pure editor (vi, emacs...) instead of a full fledged IDE so they can figure out the whole toolchain that modern IDEs hide.

Just for the record, my weapon of choice is Emacs.

answered Jun 15 '09 at 18:23

community wiki
pantulis

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personally i dont like microsoft......I hate to admit that visual studio is the best IDE i ever use.....Netbeans is gud but drasticaly slow....other free IDEs are useless.. so people try to stick with VS....

answered Oct 11 '09 at 6:58   community wiki
                                      kapil

1   can you please elaborate a bit on what makes the free IDE's useless? Which ones have you tried? In what
    areas do they fall short on in comparison? – greatwolf Dec 10 '10 at 0:35

M$ VS2008 is a better IDE for this.

answered Dec 8 '09 at 18:41   community wiki
                                     cayo

The question says specifically IDE so I am guessing thats what you want. In that case, the main options are Visual Studio and Eclipse CDT as stated above. Of those, I personally prefer Eclipse. However, don't necessarily limit yourself to an IDE. I prefer to use vim as my editor and WinDbg as my debugger. For compilation, your project will probably dictate this. I currently use NMAke on the command line.

answered Sep 28 '10 at 7:44   community wiki
                                      steprobe

Use Visual Studio 2010. You can get the full version free with
DreamSpark

answered Feb 25 '11 at 4:33   community wiki
                                     Dylansq

1   2   next