

Meet the Editors

First of all, let me tell you something that may surprise you. Linux implements what is called "Everything is a file" philosophy. This means that on your Linux system, everything is represented by a file. For example, your hard disk is represented by a file. A running program (process) is represented by a file. Even your peripheral devices, such as your keyboard, mouse, and printer, are all represented by files.

With that being said, an immediate consequence of "Everything is a file" philosophy is that Linux administrators spend a substantial amount of their time editing and viewing files. And so you will often see Linux administrators very proficient at using text editors. And this chapter is dedicated to just that. I want you to be very comfortable using various text editors in Linux.

There are a lot, and I mean a whole lot, of text editors out there that you can use. However, in this chapter, I will cover the most popular Linux editors that will get the job done.

Graphical editors -- gedit and kate

We start with the most basic and simple editors out there. These are the graphical editors! If you are using a **GNOME** version of any Linux distribution, then you will have the text editor [gedit] installed by default. On the other hand, if you are using a **KDE** version of Linux, then you will have the text editor [kate] installed by default.





DESKTOP ENVIRONMENT

GNOME and KDE are two examples of desktop environments. Each desktop environment implements a different graphical user interface, which is a very fancy way of saying that your desktop will look different!

Anyways, there is really not a lot to discuss on graphical editors. They are pretty intuitive and easy to use. For example, if you want to view a text file with [gedit], then you run the [gedit] command followed by any filename:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ gedit /proc/cpuinfo
```

This will open the [gedit] graphical editor, and it displays your CPU information.

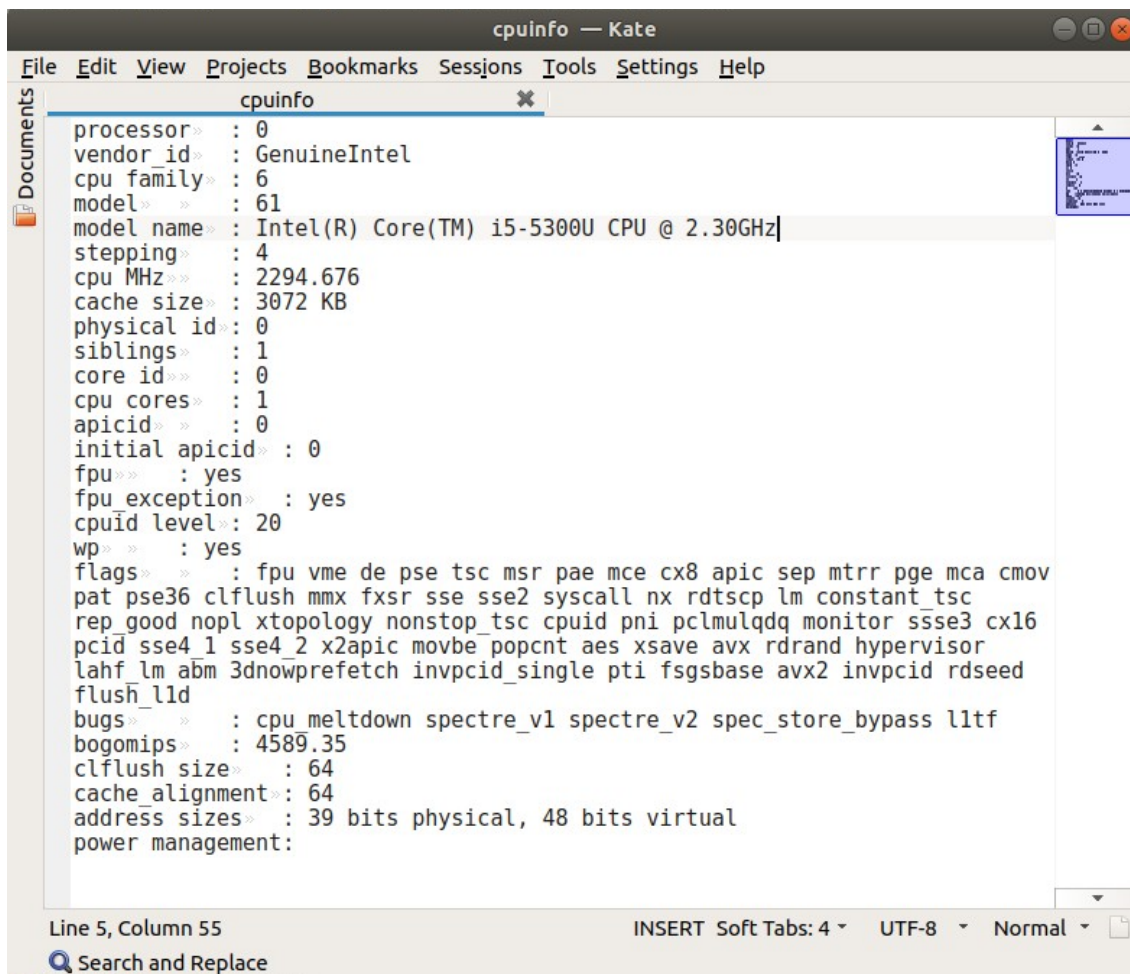
```
Open ▾  cpuinfo [Read-Only] Save   
/proc

processor      : 0
vendor_id     : GenuineIntel
cpu family    : 6
model         : 61
model name    : Intel(R) Core(TM) i5-5300U CPU @ 2.30GHz
stepping      : 4
cpu MHz       : 2294.676
cache size    : 3072 KB
physical id   : 0
siblings      : 1
core id       : 0
cpu cores     : 1
apicid        : 0
initial apicid : 0
fpu           : yes
fpu_exception : yes
cpuid level   : 20
wp            : yes
flags         : fpu vme de pse tsc msr pae mce cx8 apic sep mtrr pge mca cmov pat pse36 clflush
mmx fxsr sse sse2 syscall nx rdtscp lm constant_tsc rep_good nopl xtopology nonstop_tsc cpuid pni
pclmulqdq monitor ssse3 cx16 pcid sse4_1 sse4_2 x2apic movbe popcnt aes xsave avx rdrand
hypervisor lahf_lm abm 3dnowprefetch invpcid_single pti fsgsbase avx2 invpcid rdseed flush_l1d
bugs          : cpu_meltdown spectre_v1 spectre_v2 spec_store_bypass l1tf
bogomips      : 4589.35
clflush size  : 64
cache_alignment : 64
address sizes  : 39 bits physical, 48 bits virtual
power management:

Plain Text ▾ Tab Width: 8 ▾ Ln 17, Col 21 ▾ INS
```

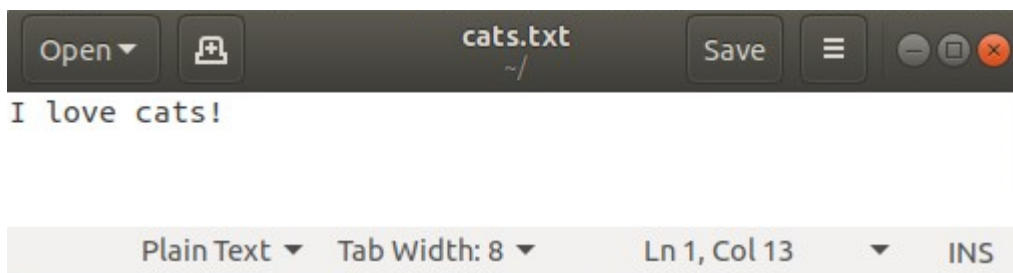
If you don't have [gedit] and have [kate] instead, then you can run:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ kate /proc/cpuinfo
```



You can also use the graphical editors to create new files on your system. For example, if you want to create a file named [cats.txt] in [/home/elliott], then you can run the [gedit /home/elliott/cats.txt] command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ gedit /home/elliott/cats.txt
```



Now insert the line "I love cats!" then save and close the file. The file [cats.txt] now exists in my home directory, and I can view it with the [cat] command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ pwd
/home/elliott
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ ls -l cats.txt
-rw-r--r-- 1 elliott elliott 13 Feb 2 14:54 cats.txt
```

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ cat cats.txt
I love cats!
```

Similarly, you can use any other graphical text editor to create files on your system.

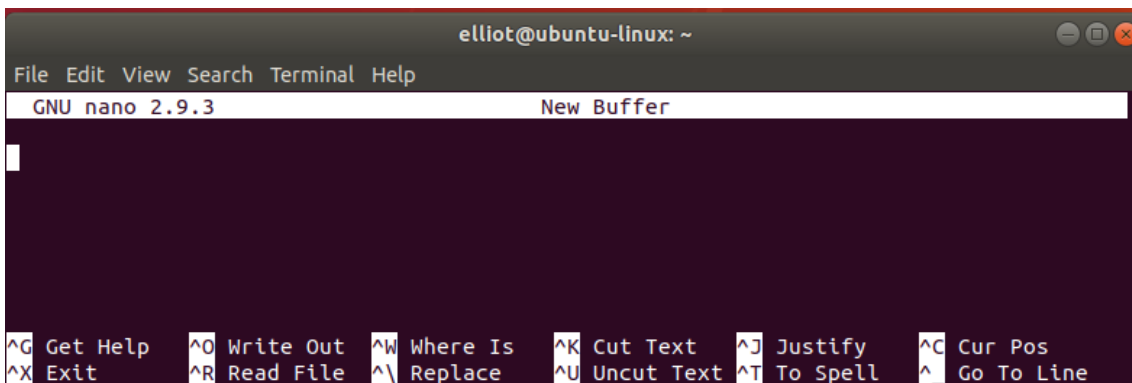
OK! That's enough talk about graphical text editors. Let's move on to explore the serious world of non-graphical text editors.

The nano editor

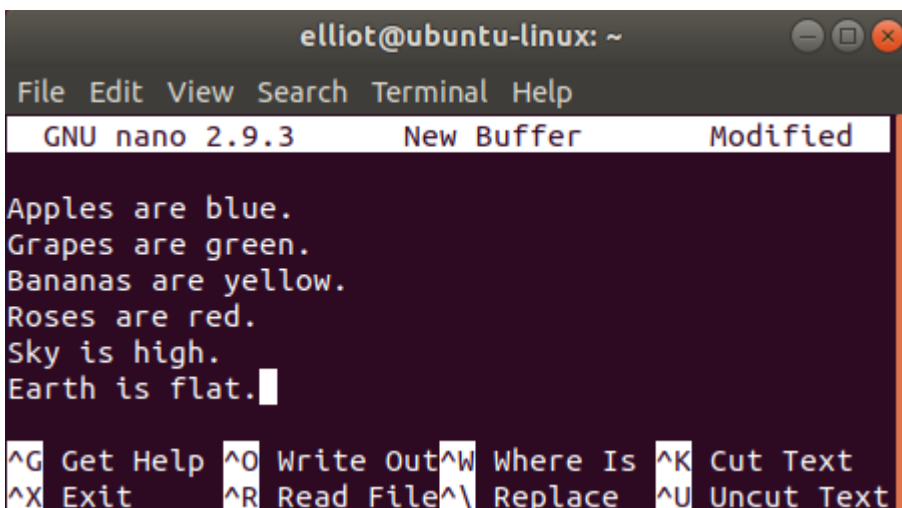
The [nano] editor is a very popular and easy-to-use command-line editor. You can open the [nano] editor by running the [nano] command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ nano
```

This will open up your [nano] editor, and you should see a screen like that in the following screenshot:



Now add the six lines that are shown in the following screenshot:



Look at the bottom of the [nano] editor screen; you will see a lot of shortcuts:

^G Get Help	^O Write Out	^W Where Is	^K Cut Text	^J Justify	^C Cur Pos
^X Exit	^R Read File	^_ Replace	^U Uncut Text	^T To Spell	^_ Go To Line

I have included all the useful nano shortcuts in the following table:

nano shortcut	What it does
<i>Ctrl+O</i>	Saves the current file (write out).
<i>Ctrl+K</i>	Cuts the current line and stores it in the buffer.
<i>Ctrl+U</i>	Pastes the line stored in the buffer.
<i>Ctrl+W</i>	Searches for a string (word) in the file.
<i>Ctrl+_</i>	Replaces a string (word) in the file with another string.
<i>Ctrl+R</i>	Reads another file.
<i>Ctrl+G</i>	Views help information on how to use nano.
<i>Ctrl+V</i>	Moves to the next page.
<i>Ctrl+Y</i>	Moves to the previous page.
<i>Ctrl+X</i>	Exits the nano editor.

Notice that the *Ctrl+O* shortcut is triggered by pressing *Ctrl* and then the letter *O*. You don't have to press the + key or the upper case letter *O*.

Now let's use the shortcut *Ctrl+O* to save the file; it will ask you for a filename, you can insert [facts.txt]:

File Name to Write: facts.txt					
^G Get Help	M-D DOS Format	M-A Append	M-B Backup File		
^C Cancel	M-M Mac Format	M-P Prepend	^T To Files		

Then press *Enter* to confirm. Now let's exit the [nano] editor (use the *Ctrl+X* shortcut) to verify that the file [facts.txt] is created:

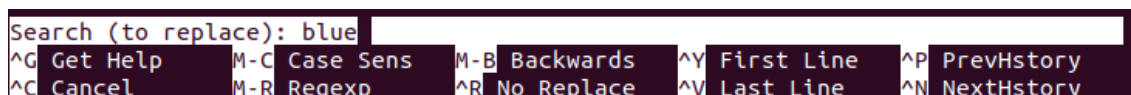
```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ ls -l facts.txt
-rw-r--r-- 1 elliott elliott 98 Apr 30 15:17 facts.txt
```

Now let's open [facts.txt] again to fix the false facts we have added there! To open the file [facts.txt] with the [nano] editor, you can run the [nano facts.txt] command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ nano facts.txt
```

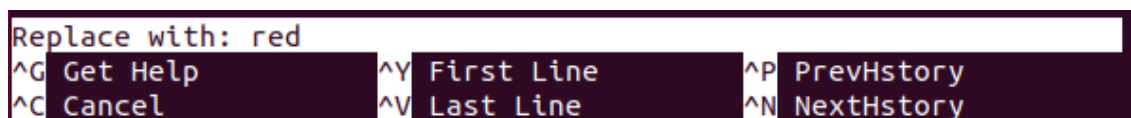
The first line in the file [facts.txt] states that "Apples are blue." We certainly need to correct this false fact, so let's use the shortcut `Ctrl+*` to replace the word [blue] with [red].

When you press `Ctrl+*`, it will ask you to enter the word that you want to replace; you can enter [blue], as shown in the following screenshot:

A screenshot of the nano text editor's search prompt. The text "Search (to replace): blue" is in the input field. Below it is a menu with options: ^G Get Help, ^M-C Case Sens, ^M-B Backwards, ^Y First Line, ^P PrevHistory, ^C Cancel, ^M-R Regexp, ^R No Replace, ^V Last Line, and ^N NextHistory.

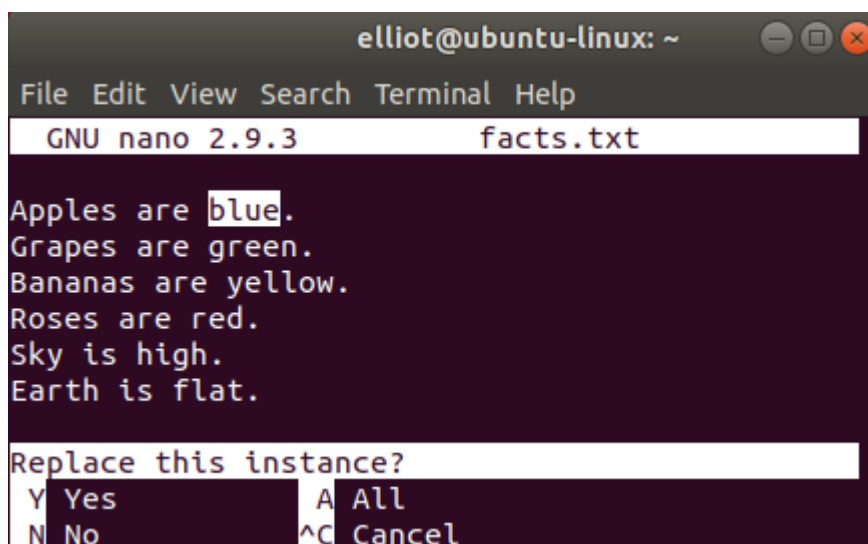
```
Search (to replace): blue
^G Get Help      ^M-C Case Sens  ^M-B Backwards  ^Y First Line   ^P PrevHistory
^C Cancel        ^M-R Regexp     ^R No Replace    ^V Last Line    ^N NextHistory
```

Hit `Enter`, and then it will ask you to enter the substitute word. You can enter [red], as shown in the following screenshot:

A screenshot of the nano text editor's replace prompt. The text "Replace with: red" is in the input field. Below it is a menu with options: ^G Get Help, ^Y First Line, ^P PrevHistory, ^C Cancel, ^V Last Line, and ^N NextHistory.

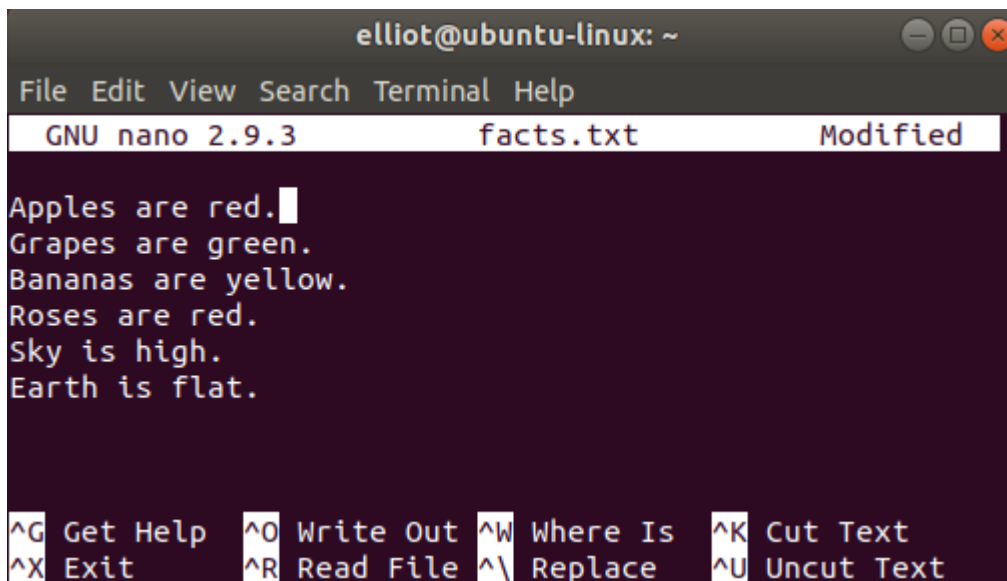
```
Replace with: red
^G Get Help      ^Y First Line   ^P PrevHistory
^C Cancel        ^V Last Line    ^N NextHistory
```

You can then hit `Enter`, and it will go through each instance of the word [blue] and ask you if you want to replace it. Luckily, we only have one occurrence of [blue].

A screenshot of the nano text editor window titled "elliott@ubuntu-linux: ~". The menu bar shows File, Edit, View, Search, Terminal, and Help. The status bar shows "GNU nano 2.9.3" and "facts.txt". The file content is: "Apples are blue.", "Grapes are green.", "Bananas are yellow.", "Roses are red.", "Sky is high.", and "Earth is flat.". The word "blue" in the first line is highlighted. At the bottom, a prompt "Replace this instance?" is shown with options: Y Yes, A All, N No, and ^C Cancel.

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux: ~
File Edit View Search Terminal Help
GNU nano 2.9.3 facts.txt
Apples are blue.
Grapes are green.
Bananas are yellow.
Roses are red.
Sky is high.
Earth is flat.
Replace this instance?
Y Yes      A All
N No      ^C Cancel
```

Press `Y` and BOOM! The word [red] replaced [blue].

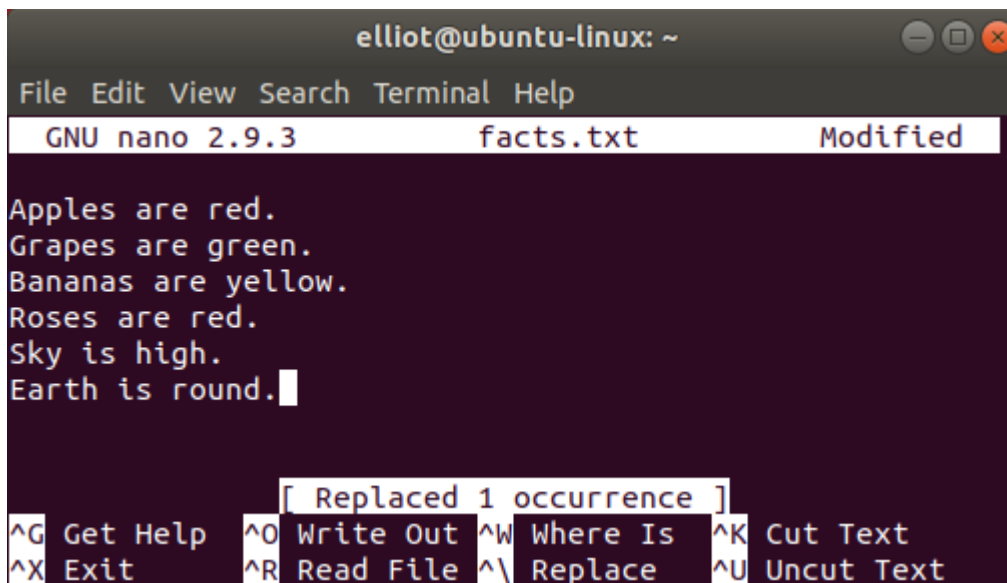


```
elliott@ubuntu-linux: ~
File Edit View Search Terminal Help
GNU nano 2.9.3 facts.txt Modified

Apples are red.
Grapes are green.
Bananas are yellow.
Roses are red.
Sky is high.
Earth is flat.

^G Get Help  ^O Write Out ^W Where Is  ^K Cut Text
^X Exit      ^R Read File ^\ Replace   ^U Uncut Text
```

There is one more word we need to change here. We can all agree that the Earth is not flat, right? I hope we all do! Now let's replace the word [flat] with [round] precisely as we did before, and the result should be like the one shown in the following screenshot:



```
elliott@ubuntu-linux: ~
File Edit View Search Terminal Help
GNU nano 2.9.3 facts.txt Modified

Apples are red.
Grapes are green.
Bananas are yellow.
Roses are red.
Sky is high.
Earth is round.

[ Replaced 1 occurrence ]

^G Get Help  ^O Write Out ^W Where Is  ^K Cut Text
^X Exit      ^R Read File ^\ Replace   ^U Uncut Text
```

Now let's save and exit the file. So we use the `Ctrl+O` shortcut to save and then `Ctrl+X` to exit.

The [nano] editor is pretty simple to use. And practice makes perfect, so the more you use it, the easier it will become for you.

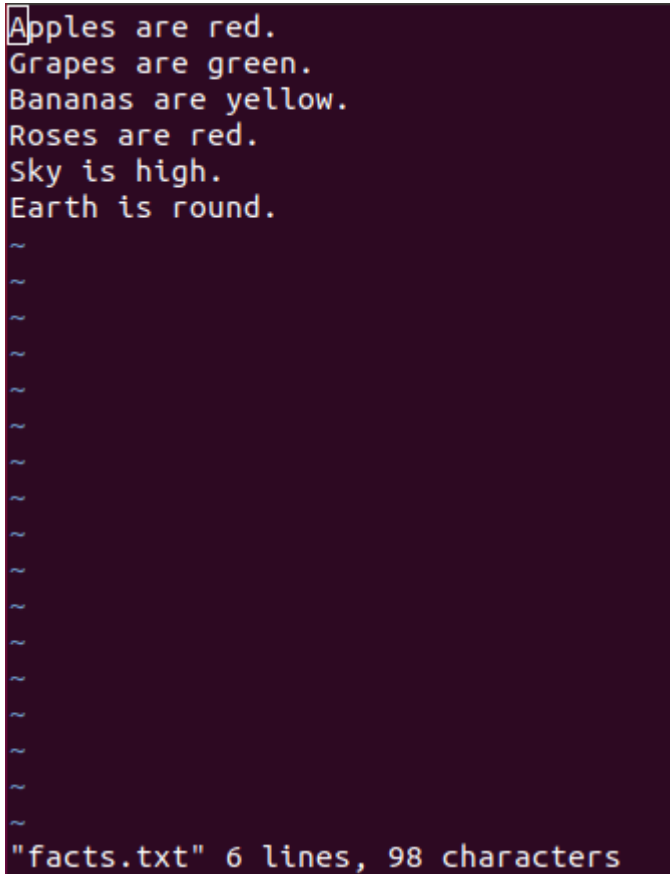
The vi editor

The [nano] editor is usually the editor of choice for beginners. It is a great editor, but let's just say that it's not the most efficient editor out there. The [vi] editor is a more advanced Linux editor with tons of features and is by far the most popular editor among advanced Linux users.

Let's open the [facts.txt] file with the [vi] editor; to do that, you run the [vi facts.txt] command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ vi facts.txt
```

This will open the [vi] editor, as shown in the following screenshot:

A screenshot of the vi editor interface. The background is dark purple. The text is displayed in a light blue/cyan monospaced font. The first six lines of the file are: "Apples are red.", "Grapes are green.", "Bananas are yellow.", "Roses are red.", "Sky is high.", and "Earth is round.". Below these lines are several lines of tilde (~) characters, indicating empty space in the file. At the bottom of the screen, a status line reads: "facts.txt" 6 lines, 98 characters. The cursor is positioned at the start of the first line.

Unlike the [nano] editor, the [vi] editor works in two different modes:

1. [insert] mode
2. [command] mode

The [insert] mode enables you to insert text into a file. On the other hand, the [command] mode allows you to do things like copying, pasting, and deleting text. The [command] mode also allows you to search and replace text along with many other things.

Insert mode

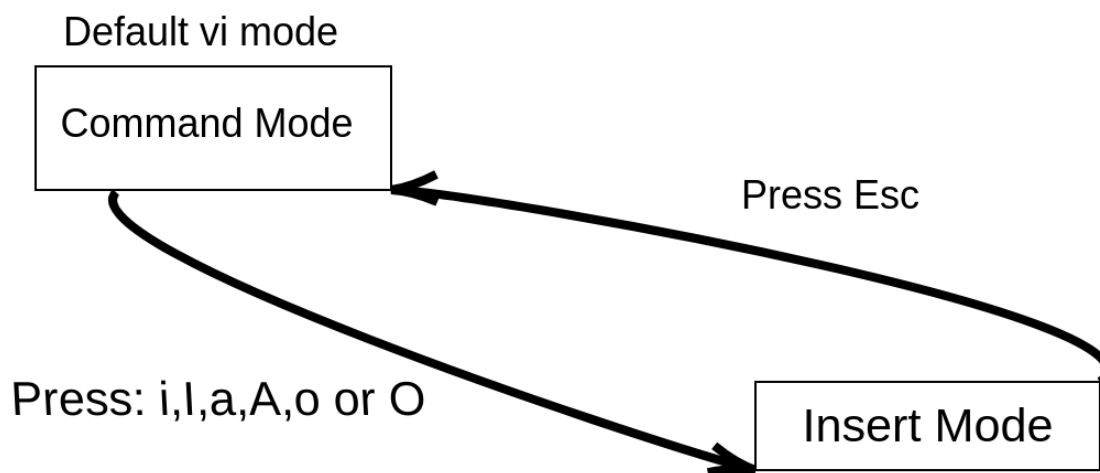
By default, you enter [command] mode when you first open the [vi] editor, and you can't insert text while you are in [command] mode. To insert text, you need to switch to [insert] mode. There are several ways you can use to change to [insert] mode;

Key	What it does
i	Inserts text before the current cursor position.
I	Inserts text at the beginning of the current line.
a	Appends text after the current cursor position.
A	Appends text after the end of the current line.
o	Creates a new line below the current line.
O	Creates a new line above the current line.

You can navigate in the [vi] editor with your arrow keys, just like you would do in the [nano] editor. Now navigate to the last line in the file [facts.txt] and then press the letter [o] to switch into [insert] mode. You can now add the line "Linux is cool!"

```
Apples are red.  
Grapes are green.  
Bananas are yellow.  
Roses are red.  
Sky is high.  
Earth is round.  
Linux is cool!
```

With [insert] mode, you can add as much text as you want. To switch back to [command] mode, you need to press the *Esc* key.



The preceding screenshot illustrates how to switch back and forth between [command] mode and [insert] mode.

Command mode

Anything you want to do aside from adding text can be achieved from [command] mode. There are a whole lot of commands you can use with the [vi] editor. You may think I am joking, but there are books and courses out there that only discuss the [vi] editor. However, below table will get you up and running with the [vi] editor as it lists the most popular commands you can use with [vi].

vi command	What it does
<code>yy</code>	Copy (yank) the current line.
<code>3yy</code>	Copy (yank) three lines (starting with the current line).
<code>yw</code>	Copy (yank) one word starting at the cursor position.
<code>2yw</code>	Copy (yank) two words starting at the cursor position.
<code>p</code>	Paste after the current cursor position.
<code>P</code>	Paste before the current cursor position.
<code>dd</code>	Cut (delete) the current line.
<code>4dd</code>	Cut (delete) four lines (starting with the current line).
<code>dw</code>	Cut (delete) one word starting at the cursor position.
<code>x</code>	Delete the character at the cursor position.
<code>u</code>	Undo the last change.
<code>U</code>	Undo all changes to the line.
<code>/red</code>	Search for the word <code>red</code> in the file.
<code>:s/bad/good</code>	Replace the word <code>bad</code> with <code>good</code> .
<code>:set number</code>	Show line numbers.
<code>:set nonumber</code>	Hide line numbers.
<code>:7</code>	Go to line number 7.
<code>G</code>	Jump to the end of the file.
<code>gg</code>	Jump to the beginning of the file.

As you can see, above table has a lot of commands, so I will not go through all of them; that's left for you as an exercise. However, I will discuss some of the commands to help you get going with the [vi] editor.

Let's start by showing line numbers as it will make our life much easier! To do that, you run the [:set] number command, as shown in the following screenshot:


```
1 Apples are red.
2 Grapes are green.
3 Bananas are yellow.
4 Cherries are red.
5 Sky is high.
6 Earth is round.
7 Linux is awesome!
8 Cherries are red.
9 Cherries are red.
10 Cherries are red.
~
~
~
~
~
~
~
~
~
~
~
~
4 substitutions on 4 lines
```

It will even tell you how many substitutions took place.

COOL TIP

You should know that `[:%s/old/new]` will only replace the first occurrence of the word `[old]` with `[new]` on all the lines. To replace all the occurrences of the word `[old]` with `[new]` on all the lines, you should use the global option `[:%s/old/new/g]`

To understand and make sense of the tip above, add the line "blue blue blue blue" to your `[facts.txt]` file and try to use the `[:%s/blue/purple]` command to replace the word `[blue]` with `[purple]`. You will see that it will only replace the first occurrence of `[blue]`. To make it replace all occurrences of `[blue]`, you have to use the global option `[:%s/blue/purple/g]`.

Saving and exiting vi

Eventually, when you are done viewing or editing a file in `[vi]`, you would want to exit the `[vi]` editor. There are multiple ways you can use to exit the `[vi]` editor, Below table lists all of them.

vi command	What it does
<code>:w</code>	Save the file but do not quit <code>vi</code> .
<code>:wq</code>	Save the file and quit <code>vi</code> .
<code>ZZ</code>	Save the file and quit <code>vi</code> (same as <code>:wq</code> , just faster!).
<code>:x</code>	Save the file and quit <code>vi</code> (same as <code>:wq</code> or <code>ZZ</code>).
<code>:q</code>	Quit <code>vi</code> without saving.
<code>:q!</code>	Forcefully quit <code>vi</code> without saving.

So let's save our file and quit the [vi] editor. Of course, you can use any of the following commands:

1. `[:wq]`
2. `[:x]`
3. `[ZZ]`

They all achieve the same result, that is, saving and exiting [vi].

```

1 Apples are red.
2 Grapes are green.
3 Bananas are yellow.
4 Cherries are red.
5 Sky is high.
6 Earth is round.
7 Linux is awesome!
8 Cherries are red.
9 Cherries are red.
10 Cherries are red.

~
~
:wq

```

If you have successfully exited the [vi] editor, I want to congratulate you because you are one of the elite. There are hundreds of memes and comics on the internet about how some people opened the [vi] editor, and were never able to exit!

File viewing commands

In some cases, you may just want to view a file without editing it. While you can still use text editors like [nano] or [vi] to view files, there are much faster ways to view a file in Linux.

The cat command

The `[cat]` command is one of the most popular and frequently used commands in Linux. The `[cat]` (short for **concatenate**) command concatenates and prints files to the standard output (terminal).

To view the `[facts.txt]` file that we created, you can run the `[cat facts.txt]` command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ cat facts.txt
Apples are red.
Grapes are green.
Bananas are yellow.
Cherries are red.
Sky is high.
Earth is round.
Linux is awesome!
Cherries are red.
Cherries are red.
Cherries are red.
```

You can now view the contents of the file `[facts.txt]` from the comfort of your terminal without having to open any text editor.

The `[cat]` command can do more than just viewing a file. It can also concatenate (put together) files. To demonstrate, create the following three files with your favorite text editor:

1. `[file1.txt]` (Insert the line "First File")
2. `[file2.txt]` (Insert the line "Second File")
3. `[file3.txt]` (Insert the line "Third File")

Now let's view each of the three files using the `[cat]` command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ cat file1.txt
First File
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ cat file2.txt
Second File
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ cat file3.txt
Third File
```

Now let's concatenate both `[file1.txt]` and `[file2.txt]` together by running the `[cat file1.txt file2.txt]` command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ cat file1.txt file2.txt
First File
Second File
```

We can also concatenate all three files:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ cat file1.txt file2.txt file3.txt
First File
Second File
Third File
```

Keep in mind that order matters; for example, running the `[cat file2.txt file1.txt]` command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ cat file2.txt file1.txt
Second File
First File
```

This will output the text in [file2.txt] first before [file1.txt].

The tac command

The [tac] command is the twin brother of the [cat] command. It is basically [cat] written in reverse, and it does the same thing as the [cat] command but in a reversed fashion!

For example, if you want to view the [facts.txt] file in reverse order, you can run the [tac facts.txt] command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ tac facts.txt
Cherries are red.
Cherries are red.
Cherries are red.
Linux is awesome!
Earth is round.
Sky is high.
Cherries are red.
Bananas are yellow.
Grapes are green.
Apples are red.
```

The [tac] command also concatenates files, just like the [cat] command.

The more command

Viewing files with the [cat] command is a good choice when the file is small, and there aren't many lines of text to display. If you want to view a big file, it's better to use the [more] command. The [more] command displays the content of a file one page at a time; it is basically a paging program.

Let's view the contents of the file [/etc/services] with the [more] command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ more /etc/services
# Network services, Internet style
# Note that it is presently the policy of IANA to assign a single well-known
# port number for both TCP and UDP; hence, officially ports have two entries
# even if the protocol doesn't support UDP operations.

tcpmux 1/tcp # TCP port service multiplexer
systat 11/tcp users
netstat 15/tcp ftp 21/tcp
fsp 21/udp fspd
ssh 22/tcp # SSH Remote Login Protocol
telnet 23/tcp
smtp 25/tcp mail
whois 43/tcp nickname
tacacs 49/tcp # Login Host Protocol (TACACS)
tacacs 49/udp
--More-- (7%)
```

It will show you the first page of the [/etc/services] files, and there is a percentage value at the bottom line that shows how far you have progressed through the file. You can use the following keys to navigate in [more]:

- *Enter* > to scroll down one line.
- Space Bar > to go to the next page.

```
<!-- -->
```

- *b* > to go back one page.
- *q* > to quit.

The [/etc/services] file stores information on numerous services (applications) that can run on Linux.

The less command

The [less] command is an improved version of the [more] command. Yes, you read this correctly; less is better than more! In fact, the famous idiom *less is more* originated from the idea that [less] offers more than [more].

The [less] command is another pager program, just like [more]; it allows you to view text files one page at a time. The advantage of [less] is that you can use the UP/DOWN arrow keys to navigate through the file. Also, [less] is faster than [more].

You can view the [/etc/services] file with [less] by running the command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ less /etc/services
```

You can also use [more] navigation keys with less.

Heads or tails?

As its name suggests, the [head] command displays the first few lines of a file. By default, it shows the first ten lines of a file. For example, we know that [facts.txt] has ten lines in it, and so running the [head facts.txt] command will display all the file contents:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ head facts.txt
Apples are red.
Grapes are green.
Bananas are yellow.
Cherries are red.
Sky is high.
Earth is round.
Linux is awesome!
Cherries are red.
Cherries are red.
Cherries are red.
```

You can also pass the [-n] option to specify the number of lines you wish to view. For example, to display the first three lines of [facts.txt], you can run the [head -n 3 facts.txt] command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ head -n 3 facts.txt
Apples are red.
Grapes are green.
Bananas are yellow.
```

On the other hand, the [tail] command displays the last few lines of a file. By default, it shows the last ten lines. You can also use the [-n] option to specify the number of lines you wish to view. For example, to display the last two lines in [facts.txt], you can run the [tail -n 2 facts.txt] command:

```
elliott@ubuntu-linux:~$ tail -n 2 facts.txt
Cherries are red.
Cherries are red.
```

Do you know what time it is? It's time for some knowledge check questions.

Knowledge check

For the following exercises, open up your Terminal and try to solve the following tasks:

1. Only view the first two lines of the file [facts.txt].
2. Only view the last line of the file [facts.txt].
3. Display the contents of the file [facts.txt] in a reversed order.
4. Open the file [facts.txt] using the [vi] editor.
5. Exit the [vi] editor and consider yourself one of the elites.