UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Visual Studio Code

Microsoft’s Open-Source Code Editor

What *is* Visual Studio Code?

If you're building software, you're going to end up needing to write code. You *can* write code in Notepad, but it won't give you nice features like autocomplete, snippets, and syntax / error highlighting.

These terms may be a bit foreign to you right now but trust us—they'll make programming a lot easier!

To gain access to features like these, most programmers opt for a code editor, instead of a basic text editor.

Popular code editing software.

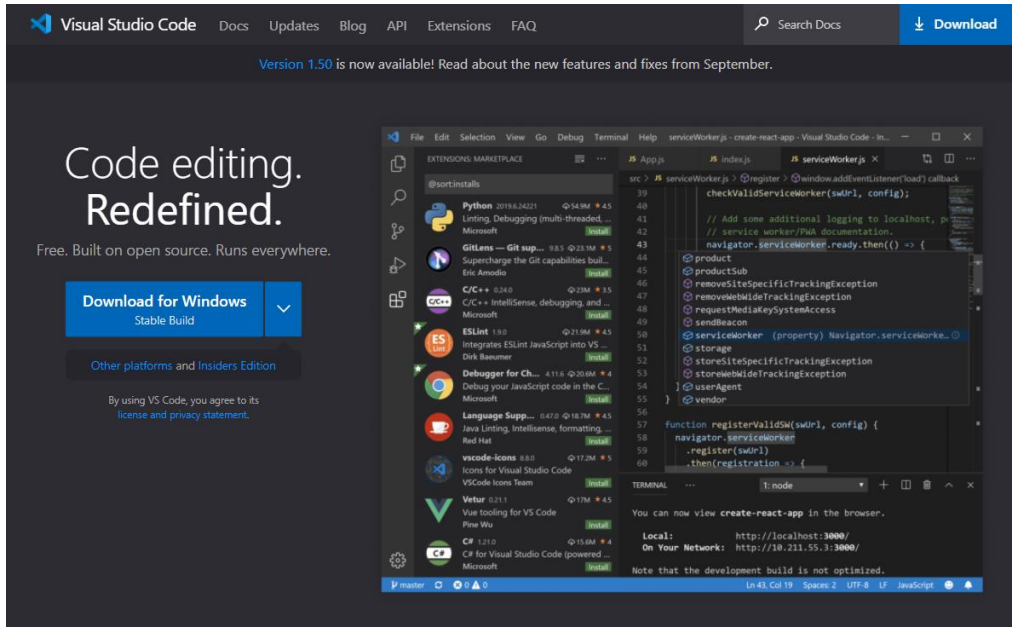
Here are some of more popular code editors available:

- Visual Studio Code
- Atom
- Sublime Text
- Notepad++
- Brackets
- Vim

Download and install Visual Studio Code.

Navigate to the official website:
https://code.visualstudio.com/

Download the installer and proceed through the steps in the wizard.



Get familiar with your tools.

Regardless of which program or tool you are using for the job, it is important to get familiar with it. Learn how to use features that will increase your productivity—make the tool work for you!

Visual Studio Code

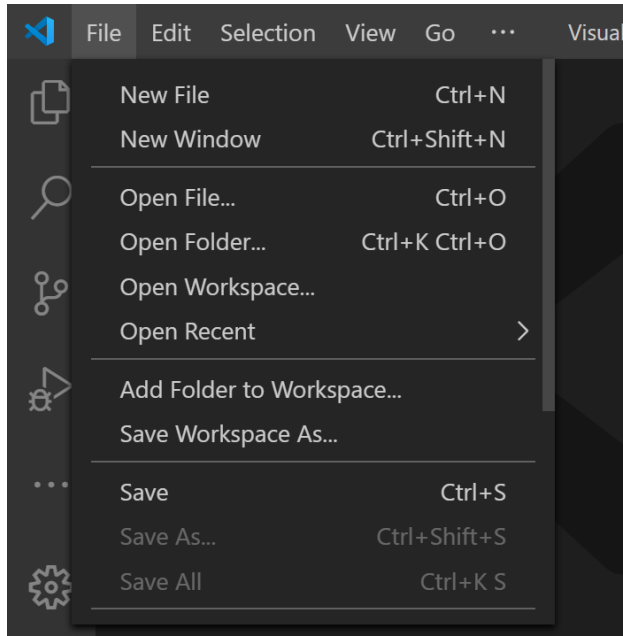
Starter videos:
https://code.visualstudio.com/docs/getstarted/introvideos

User interface breakdown:
https://code.visualstudio.com/docs/getstarted/userinterface

Getting started.

First thing's first: how do we open files or even create new ones using Visual Studio Code?

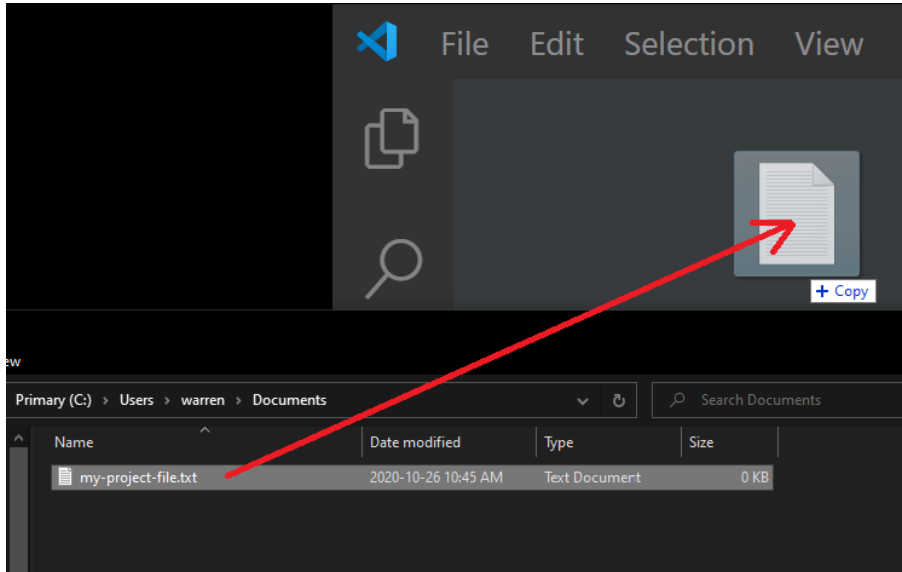
At the top of the program window, under "File" there are plenty of options that'll help you do just that!



You can drag a file into the coding window.

You don’t have to use the “File” menu, you may also drag a file into the coding window to open it.

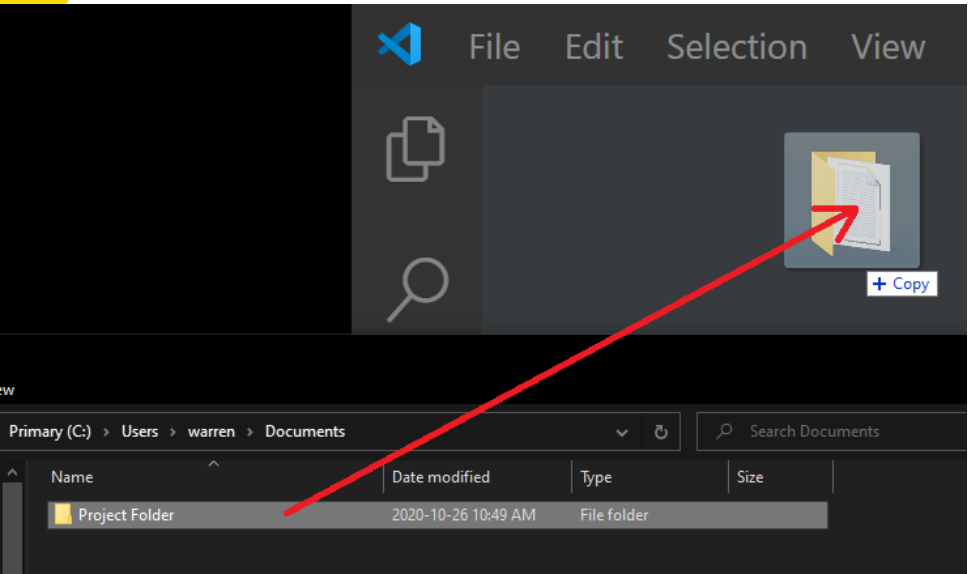
This can be more convenient if you already have a File Explorer window open with the file ready-to-go!

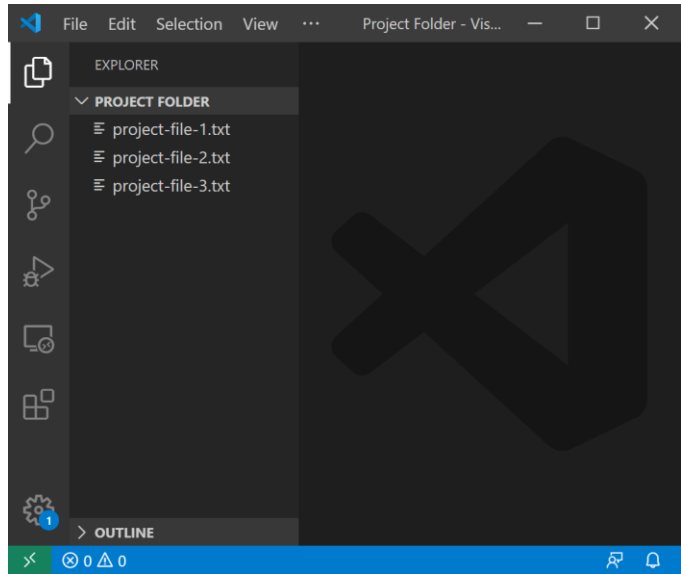


You can drag a folder into the coding window.

Dragging a folder will have a different effect. All files and folders inside the folder you drag in will appear in the “Explorer” sidebar in your Visual Studio Code window.

This makes it very easy to navigate your project quickly!

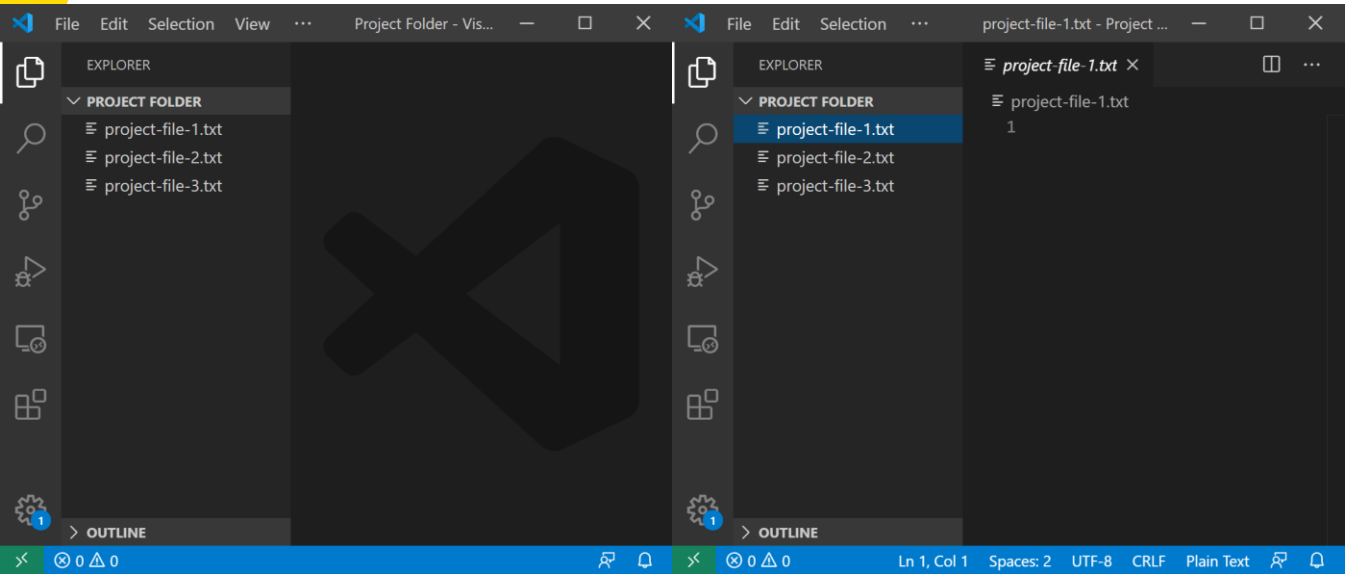




Once a file is open.

Whether you drag a file / folder in, or used the “File” menu from the top of the window, a file should be open by now.

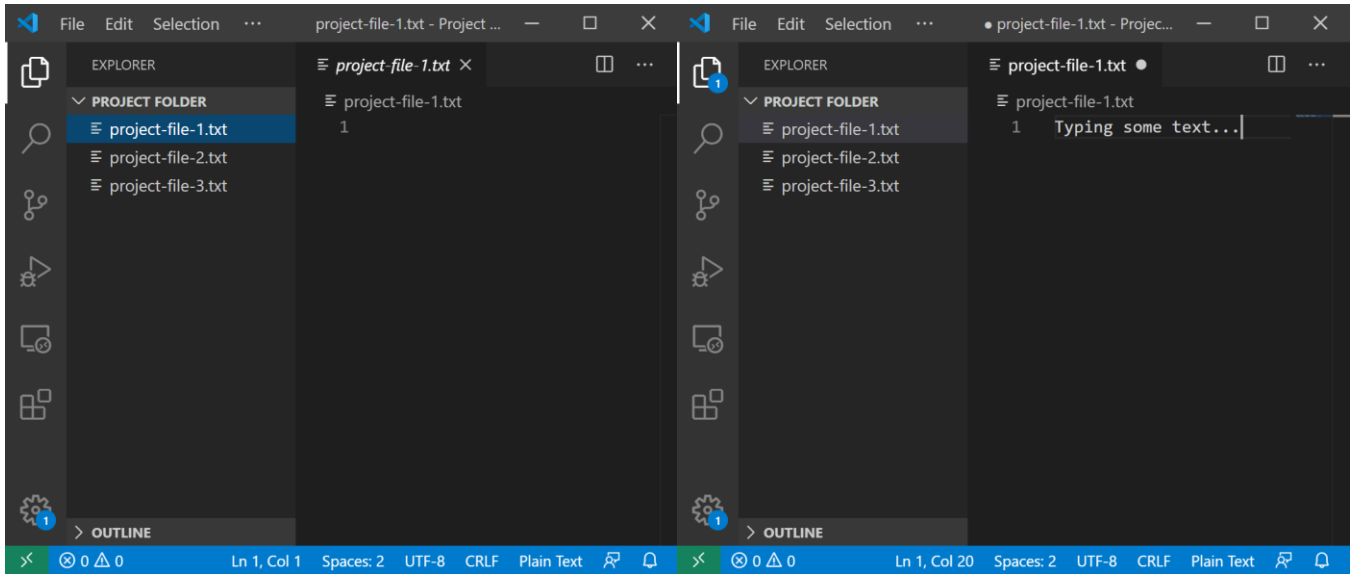
If it isn’t, make sure to select it from your “Explorer” sidebar.



Add some text.

Begin typing into the file. Notice that any files you open in the program have a “tab” with the file name.

As you type, the “X” beside the file’s name turns into a circle. This means the file now possesses **unsaved changes**.

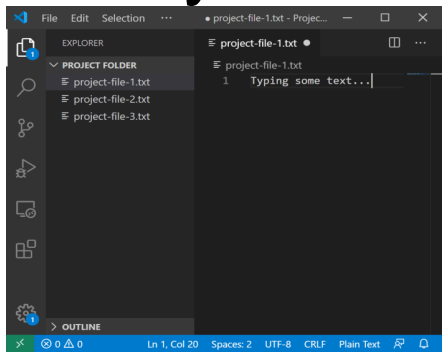


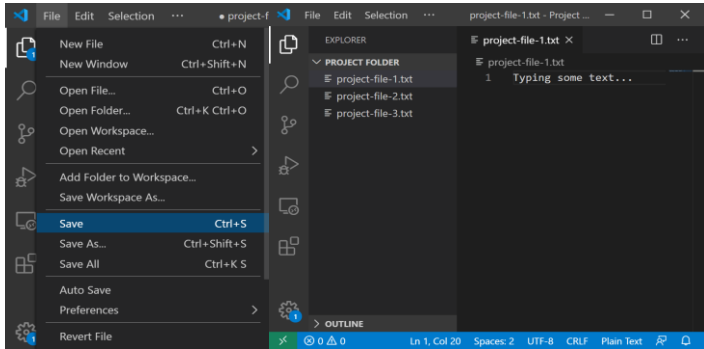
Save the file to keep your changes.

If you're happy with changes to a file, you can use the "File" menu to select the "Save" option.

Faster, would be to use the keyboard shortcut though! Get in the habit of using CTRL+S to save. You'll save time and it will encourage you to save more often.

Notice that once you've saved, the "circle" in the tab returns to an "X"!

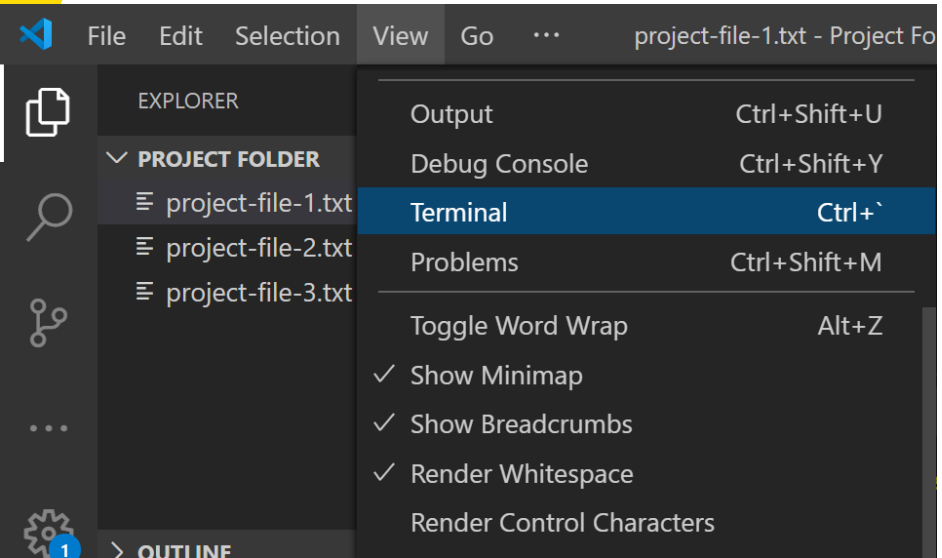


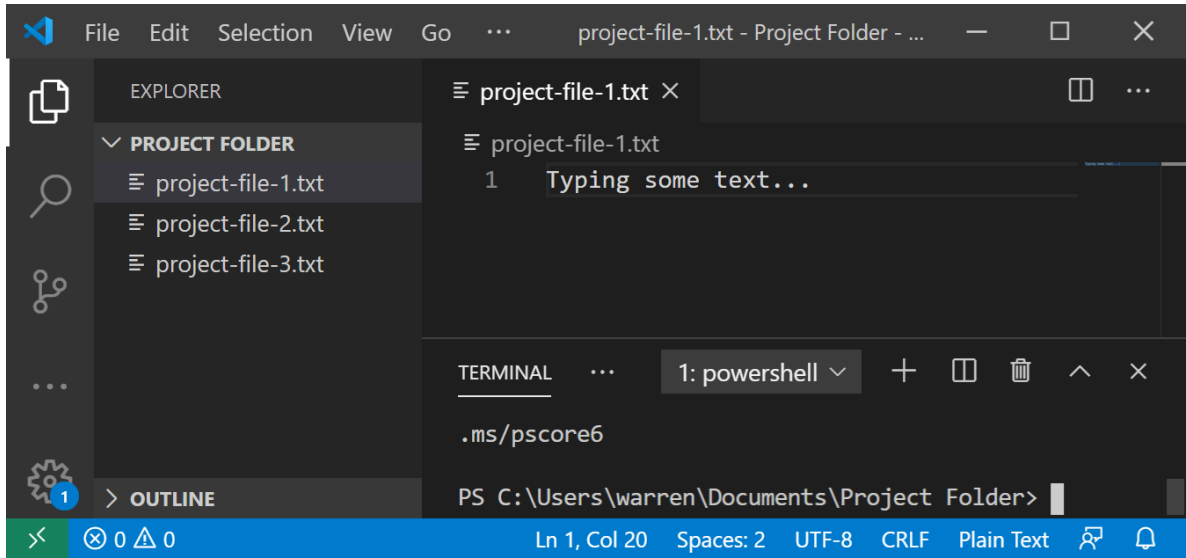


Opening the Terminal.

Sometimes it can be handy to access your Command Prompt, Console, or Terminal from Visual Studio Code.

You can either use the CTRL+` keyboard-shortcut, or select it from the “View” menu at the top of your window.



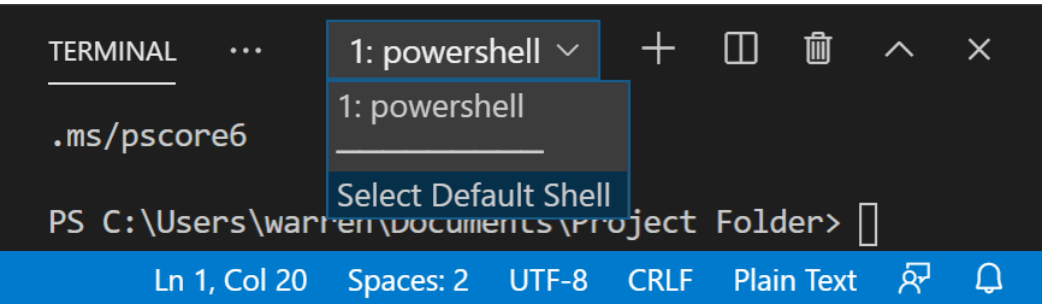


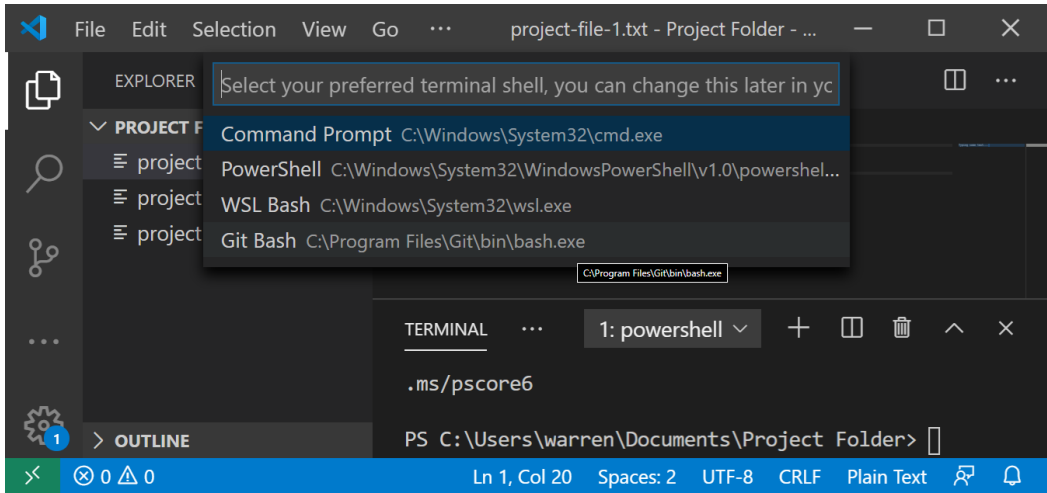
Selecting your default Terminal program.

By default your default may be set to Windows' "Command Prompt" or "Powershell" program.

If you'd like to change, click the terminal-name dropdown and click "Select Default Shell." A new dialogue will open with detected choices on your system.

We recommend: Git Bash

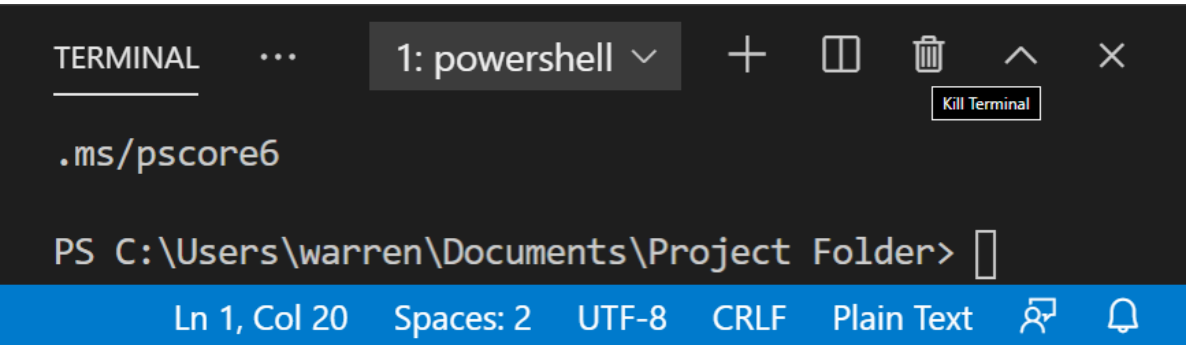


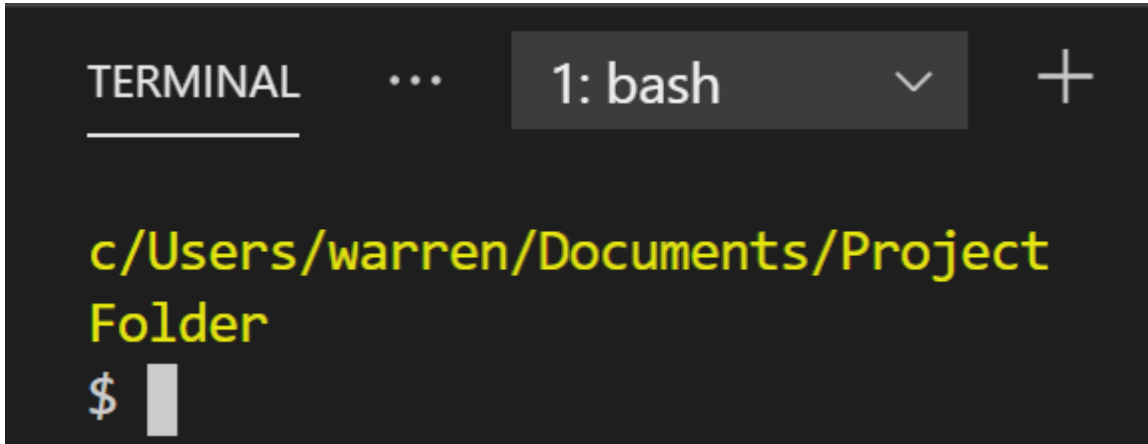


Closing a Terminal.

If you've just changed the default, you'll need open a fresh Terminal to benefit from the change. Click the "Trash Can" icon to close the terminal.

Open a new one to test if your change took place!





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