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Asterisk (*) and plus (+) are not working in Notepad++ as a regular expression

I am using [Notepad++](#) and learning regular expressions, but I am wondering why some of the meta characters are not working in the editor, that is, asterisk (*) and plus (+).

For example:

The tree is looking awesome with leaves and flowers.

Regular expression: `[tre*]`

The above regular expression is not working in Notepad++ as expected.

[notepad++](#) [regex](#)

edited Mar 17 at 19:19



[Peter Mortensen](#)

6,224 ● 10 ● 44 ● 76

asked Mar 17 at 10:20



[rajper](#)

126 ● 5

Is your regular expression `[tre*]` or `tre*`? – [James](#) Mar 17 at 10:30

My regular expression is `[tre*]` – [rajper](#) Mar 17 at 10:31

2 Answers

my purpose is to match `tre` and its preceding characters.

Well in your example `The tree is looking awesome with leaves and flowers.` the word fragment `tre` is not *preceded* by any characters in the same word, it is preceded by characters which are part of earlier words. This makes it your question seem a bit ambiguous.

To match any characters followed by "t" then "r" then "e", I would use `.*tre`.

To match "t" then "r" then "e" followed by any characters, I would use `tre.*`.

To match a **word** beginning with "t" then "r" then "e", I would use `tre\w*`

My regular expression is `[tre*]`

That matches a single character, the character matched can be any *one* of the four specified. Inside `[]` the metacharacter `*` is just treated like an ordinary character (because that is the most useful way for it to be treated in that context).

The brackets `[]` are for specifying one character to be found in the text that can have several possibilities. For example, if you want to match either of the words `Tree` or `tree` you could use `[Tt]ree` which means match a character that is either `T` or `t` followed by a second character that is `r` followed by a third character that is `e` followed by a fourth character that is `e`.

You could match `Tree` and `tree` using `.ree` but the `.` matches any single character so the RE would also match `free` and other words you might not want. `[]` provides a means for you to be more specific than `.` in specifying the values of a single character in the text which you want to match

edited Mar 17 at 11:00

answered Mar 17 at 10:43



[RedGrittyBrick](#)

49.4k ● 8 ● 66 ● 105

Yes This is exactly what I was trying to solve. But Please explain one thing further in terms of notepad++ that, I was searching the word with square brackets like `[tre*]` and the editor matches character by character while I want the editor to match a complete word and `tre\w*` solved my problem. – [rajper](#) Mar 17 at 10:53

- 1 @Rajper, see updated answer. For more info, I suggest using a search engine to find `regular expression tutorial`. – [RedGrittyBrick](#) Mar 17 at 11:00

@rajper, for more info on regex, I recommend [MSDN's regex quick reference](#). Basically, anything in between square brackets (`[]`) means: "find any of the characters inside those brackets, I don't care which". The only exception is when you have a hyphen (`-`), for instance `[A-Z]`, which means: "find any character in between A and Z", in my particular example it simply means "find any character of the Latin alphabet". – [Nolonar](#) Mar 17 at 13:50

@RedGrittyBrick could you edit the question so it isn't ambiguous anymore? – [Braiam](#) Mar 17 at 16:59

`*` and `+` aren't meta characters when in a character class. This is true for regex in general, not only for Notepad++. `[a*+]` means "match single `a`, `*` or `+`".

If you want to match any number of characters `t`, `r` or `e`, use `[tre]*`. It will match any of these:

```
tttrreerer
rrrrrr
er
t
(empty line)
```

If you want to match single `t`, single `r` or any number of `e`s, use `([tr]|e*)` or `(t|r|e*)`. This regex matches following lines:

```
t
r
eeeeeeee
(empty line)
```

And won't match eg. `tre`.

Here's a [good regex tutorial](#).

answered Mar 17 at 10:31



[gronostaj](#)

13.6k ● 10 ● 33 ● 55

Well, my purpose is to match `tre` and its preceding characters. As you said in answer; It may be right but in terms of notepad++ it is not working even `[tre]*` that you had mentioned. – [rajper](#) Mar 17 at 10:39

@Rajper Can you post few examples of strings you want to match? – [gronostaj](#) Mar 17 at 10:41

String-1: The furniture of office is old. I want to search literal 'office' for that I write a regex as `[offic]*` as the asterisk would add any character and office literal will be found but this is not working. – [rajper](#) Mar 17 at 10:45

- 1 @Rajper `[offic]*` would match any sequence of zero or more characters `o`, `f`, `i`, `c`. For example `ofic` or `fcio` or `foiicffocicoeo` or empty string. Please read the tutorial I have linked. – [gronostaj](#) Mar 17 at 11:04