VI / VIM Cheat Sheet

Built for operators. Maintained in the open.

Essential VI / VIM commands for safely editing files and YAML on any system. Focused on the minimum needed to work confidently in terminals, bastions, and restricted environments.

Modes

i → insert mode (start editing)

Esc → command mode (always your escape hatch)

Save & Exit

:w # save

:q # quit

:wq # save and quit

:q! # quit without saving

Navigation

h # move left

j # move down

k # move up

l # move right

0 # start of line

$ # end of line

gg # top of file

G # bottom of file

/ # search for text

n # next match

N # previous match

Editing

dd # delete current line

yy # copy (yank) current line

p # paste below cursor

u # undo

Ctrl+r # redo

Visual Mode

v # visual (character selection)

V # visual line selection

YAML Survival Rules

☐ Use spaces only (no tabs)

☐ Be consistent with indentation (commonly 2 spaces)

☐ Indentation defines structure

☐ When in doubt, align with the parent key

Operator Tips

- If something feels wrong, press Esc repeatedly.
- If you're stuck, :q! is always an option.
- Practice basic movements until they are muscle memory.