

What's the point of viEmu plugin for Visual Studio?

Asked 15 years, 8 months ago Modified 10 years, 5 months ago

Viewed 14k times



This may sound a bit provocative but it actually is a real question. Feel free to edit if you don't like the tone.

24



Now, as much as I understand vi from my short experience with it like 10 years ago, it's a primitive text editor with one editable line at the bottom of the screen created before the scrollbars were invented, with some crazy shortcuts to overcome this limitation.



Can somebody explain me how one can be more productive with it than with, say normal VS.NET editor? Moreover, why would anybody want to use viEmu which supposedly turns your VS.NET into an ancient vi?

I'm willing to give it a try but I need some motivation to overcome the learning curve.

visual-studio

vim

vi

viemu

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edited May 28, 2013 at 15:27

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asked Apr 5, 2009 at 21:36



Andriy Volkov

18.9k ● 9 ● 69 ● 84

4 I don't really know the answer, but I can refer you to xkcd.com/378 :P – Aziz Apr 5, 2009 at 21:41

13 vi is not a text editor "with one editable line at the bottom". You must be thinking of older editors like ed: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ed_\(Unix\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ed_(Unix)). – Wim Coenen Apr 5, 2009 at 22:15

1 If you want to try out Vi stuff, I'd suggest starting with GVim, not viEmu. My coworker just recently started using viEmu (never used Vi before) and he said it was much easier to start with GVim and learn the Vi stuff outside the context of VS, and only then start using it in visual studio. – Herms Apr 6, 2009 at 18:34

Also, check out vimtutor (comes with every version of vim I've used). I learned the basics of vim by going through that a couple times. – Herms Apr 6, 2009 at 18:42

11 Answers

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115



It honestly sounds like you have never seen someone use Vi who is truly proficient in it. When you normally use Visual Studio you frequently will move your hand over to your mouse, click through options, dialogs, classes, etc.

With ViEmu your hand never leaves the keyboard. You are compiling, switching files, highlighting groups of text, fixing indentation, performing complex motions on your

code and running regular expression searches in seconds. For people who are fast typists it allows you to achieve a speed for tasks you would not be able to otherwise.

Many people will counter this by saying things like, "Most of my development time is spent thinking. The extra speed I gain from using tools like these is negligible."

That is a non-argument in my opinion. It is true, for most large programming tasks you spend far more time planning and thinking then you do actually slinging code. But that *doesn't* mean that being able to express yourself through your IDE 2x faster doesn't have an impact on your productivity as a programmer.

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edited Apr 5, 2009 at 22:31

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answered Apr 5, 2009 at 21:46



[mmcdole](#)

92.7k ● 61 ● 188 ● 224

8 Wish I could double up vote your answer. I find ViEmu to be an invaluable tool – [JaredPar](#) Apr 5, 2009 at 21:54

1 But *how* does it make it possible? What is the secret sauce that other editors lack? – [Andriy Volkov](#) Apr 6, 2009 at 18:11

13 non-Insert mode. Most editors are just Insert mode, but Vi has many other modes, which interpret the keys differently. This lets you move around and modify things much faster

(for example: instead of just arrow keys to move you get a TON of navigation commands). – [Herms](#) Apr 6, 2009 at 18:20

@zvolkov, like Herms said, the non-insert mode. You have a ton of complex "motions" which you can combine with each other and certain commands to do some pretty nifty stuff.
– [mmcdole](#) Apr 6, 2009 at 18:32

- 1 Once it truly sits in your head it becomes like typing you just think what you want and your hands do the work for you.
– [Ben](#) Apr 7, 2009 at 12:31
-



96

The viEmu page itself has a pretty good article that might help to answer your question: [Why, oh WHY, do those #? @! nutheads use vi?](#)



I've spent the last couple months trying to teach myself to use vim "properly" and now I can hardly stand using other editors because they seem underpowered and clunky.
For a random example, imagine you have a line of code that looks like this:



```
$welcomeMessage = "Welcome to SiteName!"; // shows  
at the top of homepage
```

In a normal editor, how would you change the string?
You'd probably have to reach over and grab your mouse and carefully select it, or you'd move your cursor inside the first quotation mark, and hold down Shift and the right-arrow until you got to the closing quotation mark.

In vim, with my cursor anywhere in-between the quotes, I type `ci"` and it erases everything inside the quotation marks and puts me into insert-mode so I can type the new value I want. My hands didn't even have to move from my normal typing position.

There are so many things like this, I think you really have to spend a while using the editor to understand how powerful it is. It's very slow and hard to use at first, that's why a lot of people try it for a short time and think "this is dumb, everything is way harder", but after a while you start thinking in terms of the motions, it all starts to become automatic and it's much, much faster than using a "normal" editor. As I said, I can't go back now.

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answered Apr 6, 2009 at 18:25

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Chad Birch

74.5k ● 23 ● 154 ● 149

1 The `ci"` example didn't work in 6.4; then I tried it in 7.2 and it did. FYI – [gbarry](#) Apr 6, 2009 at 19:24

14 These are called text-objects and are truly awesome quite recent addition see `:help text-objects`. If you want to select/change/remove text between delimiters then chances are theres a text-object that can handle it – [Ben](#) Apr 7, 2009 at 12:28

1 @Ben, or anyone else: when were text objects added to vim? Even 2000s seems like really late to have such a core feature. I couldn't find an answer under "vim add text-objects changelog" – [TankorSmash](#) Jan 21, 2019 at 22:08 



27



I've also had trouble understanding why people choose vim as their editor, even though I was using it from time to time, until I've finally "got it". I think most explanations of "why?" fails, because they fail to show couple crucial points. To explain those points, first you need to understand that in vim you are manipulating text primarily being in command mode. Ie by default your key presses are commands, and do not usually insert any text, unless those commands (like **a**ppend, **i**nsert, **c**hange) switch to insert mode. This lets you navigate and edit your text easily without ever touching your mouse or moving your hands away from "editing pose".

Now the crucial points are:

- Vim commands are divided into nouns, verbs and modifiers.
- Editing is performed by combining them.

And this is what gives vim the power. To illustrate the point, here are some most used commands:

- Nouns: **w**ord, **s**entence, **b**lock, quotes and braces.
- Verbs: **c**hange, **i**nsert, **v**isual, **d**elete
- Modifiers: **i**nside, **a**round, **t**ill

And to illustrate how you can mix them:

- Want to change a word? **c** **w**

- Same, but cursor in the middle of the word? `c` `a`
`w`
- Change text inside quotes? `c` `i` `"`, also change quotes? `c` `a` `"`
- Delete function body? `d` `i` `{`
- Delete up till first comma? `d` `t` `,`
- Delete up till second comma? `d` `2` `t` `,`
- Jump to first comma? `t` `,`
- Select word? `v` `i` `w`

Also notice how all commands nicely translate into natural language:

- `d` elete `w` ord
- `c` hange `i` nside `{`

In vim if you learn a new verb, noun or modifier, you can easily mix and match with what you already know. So basically learning just one thing, you learn how to do a lot of different things.

Another great thing is that vim remembers what commands you have used, and you can repeat the sequence just by pressing `.`. For this post I've had to surround a lot of letters with `<kbd>` tag. But I've did that only once, and then just went over each letter and pressed `.`.

And that's basically the thing you "need to get" to understand the power of vim and become advanced user overnight.

P.S. if you don't like vim because it's console based and want a modern text editor, then I suggest looking into Sublime Text editor, which is a great editor and also supports vim mode.

P.S.2. I also recommend to map `Esc` key to `j` `j` and `k` `k`, which makes things a lot easier.

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edited Feb 10, 2014 at 16:15

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answered Feb 7, 2014 at 14:23



Smilediver

1,808 ● 26 ● 28

Would you please elaborate on the mapping of Esc to j j/k k?

– Drew Noakes May 4, 2017 at 8:37 

@DrewNoakes when you enter insert mode (ie when pressing keys actually inserts characters into editor) you normally exit back to command mode by pressing Esc key. This is a bit cumbersome, so a lot of vim users map jj and/or kk to exit the insert mode quickly, without lifting your hands from the typing pose. You can do this by adding `inoremap jj <ESC>` to your .vimrc file (or some other way for the given editor). This will make that if you press jj without a pause in between, vim will exit into command mode. If you have couple seconds between both j's, then vim will insert "jj" string. – Smilediver May 8, 2017 at 10:50



7

You are wrong about "one editable line at the bottom of the screen." All the text in the window is editable. And it does scroll (all versions) and in the case of gvim, has scrollbars.



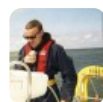
Maybe you inadvertently put it in "ex mode". This is easily done and can be confusing.



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answered Apr 5, 2009 at 22:05

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finnw

48.6k ● 24 ● 148 ● 223



4

Another answer got me thinking that watching some skilled editing using vim would be pretty revealing so I dug up this video showing basic and more advance motions while coding. This person could get even a bit efficient using some marks, etc but it gives an idea.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcpQ7koECgk&feature=related>

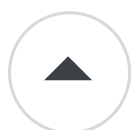
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answered May 1, 2009 at 19:47

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Sean



4

If you need inspiration or want to see someone who really knows what they are doing with Vim, check out Gary Bernhardt's String Calculator Kata In Python, look at him go! <http://vimeo.com/8569257>



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answered May 5, 2010 at 16:32

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7wp

12.7k ● 20 ● 78 ● 107



I think they have a long and acceptable answer for your question on the viEmu homepage:

3



One other even more powerful example: let's take the 'ce' command, which is composed of 'c' and 'e'. The 'c'hange command deletes the range specified by the next motion command, and also enters insert mode. It's the same as 'd', but with the distinction that it enters insert mode, instead of staying in normal mode. The boon is that the text you type in the next (short) input session is also part of the command. So if you do 'ceHello>', what you do is replace from the cursor to the end of the word by 'Hello', and the '.' command afterwards will work exactly like that: replace up to the end of the word with 'Hello'.

From: <http://www.viemu.com/a-why-vi-vim.html>

I have *viEmu* installed ~half year ago. But I have to say (maybe without strong linux experiences) I've never used it. Too alien, too far, too complex.

So IMHO *viEmu* it's a great technical&historical challenge but no more for the 95% of the developers.

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answered Apr 5, 2009 at 21:41

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[boj](#)

11.4k ● 5 ● 40 ● 58

Upon reading the linked page, I'm accepting this answer as "the right one". I liked Chad Birch's answer better but this was the first answer that gave the (now obvious) link.

– [Andriy Volkov](#) Apr 6, 2009 at 18:38

-
- 1 On the second thought, for the sake of future generations of readers I have to revoke my voice from this answer and give it to Chad Birch. Being the first to send a link is cool but being able to provide a useful answer is more important.

– [Andriy Volkov](#) Apr 6, 2009 at 18:47

Why did you (buy and) install it? – [Imat - Reinstall Monica](#)
Nov 10, 2011 at 13:11



2



Basically with Vi (or ViM) you get faster because you don't need to touch the mouse and the key-map is improved (this represent learning curve cost but worth the effort) for do any text manipulation in a very easy way once that the fundamentals are learned.



[Top 10 things Vi user need to know about Vim](#)



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answered Jul 2, 2014 at 2:26

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[PlainOldProgrammer](#)

2,901 ● 5 ● 23 ● 34



I have not experience with VS.Net but I guess it has the same features that any other IDE has.

1



I have found that learning the all the key commands of the editor in my IDE was a sufficient replacement for Vi. Things like renaming, indenting, formatting, moving lines and that kind of stuff.



So I guess the major win would be for someone who already know Vi to be productive without having to learn VS.Net.

But then again, Vi has some truly esoteric but powerful features that probably can't be matched by you standard IDE editor.

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answered Apr 5, 2009 at 23:01

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John Nilsson

17.3k ● 8 ● 35 ● 42



I think you really should give Vim a try.

1



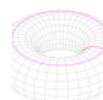
If you quickly tried Vi ten years ago, I may understand you didn't appreciate it. It's not really user-friendly at first sight. Actually its real power is revealed when you start feeling comfortable with the movements and start making it your own with customisation. Once Vim is familiar to you you may understand why it deserves to be learnt.



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answered Apr 6, 2009 at 23:27

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Taurus Olson



I actually use VS only for debugging these days. Coding with vim (real vim, not viemu) is just a better experience.

0



Now, I am not going to claim that using one over another makes any difference in productivity - after all I spend most of my time trying to figure out how to solve a problem - entering the code is the easy part.



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answered Apr 6, 2009 at 18:33

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[Nemanja Trifunovic](#)

24.5k ● 4 ● 52 ● 88

I tend to prefer an IDE with a vim plugin to just Vim itself. Regular Vim loses a lot of the IDE's extra features (language-aware autocomplete, etc). Netbeans + jVi plugin is so much better than just Netbeans or just Vim. Though regular Vim works great for languages w/o any good IDE. – [Herms](#) Apr 6, 2009 at 18:43