25 Useful Tips for Emacs (for beginners and advanced users)

1. Insert today's date into the buffer

`M-x shell-command` or `C-u M-!`

```
date +%Y-%m-%d
```

2. Quickly save snippets of text from a buffer to a file

`M-x shell-command-on-region` or `M-|`

```
> cat >> tips
```

Note by Sebastián Monía: One can also use the command `write-region`.

3. Links are not immediately clickable in Emacs in Text files

Change this with `global-goto-address-mode`

Then invoke `C-c RET` on the link.

4. Open multiple files in Dired

- Mark the desired files
- `M-x dired-do-find-marked-files`

5. Flush empty lines from a buffer

`M-x flush-lines RET ^$ RET`

6. Delete empty directories in Dired

One can just use the find tool. Navigate to the directory you want to clear of empty folders.

`M-! find . -empty -type d -delete <RET>`

Hit `g` to refresh.

The echo area confirms if the command has run successfully.

7. Repeat complex (i.e. minibuffer commands)

`C-x Esc Esc`

8. Insert x number of lines of a single character

```
C-u 70 *
```

9. Change the encoding system for a file

```
C-x C-m f
```

10. Cycle org lists

Try the command `org-cycle-list-bullet` on a list and see it change:

1. org-cycle-list-bullet
2. org-cycle-list-bullet
3. org-cycle-list-bullet

11. Auto-expand without an external package

One can use `M-/ =dabbrev-expand`

12. Cycle org-agenda files

Invoke `org-agenda`, then use `C-'` to cycle between files.

13. Add a package manually

Add the path of the package:

```
(add-to-list 'load-path "~/.emacs.d/packages/session")
```

Then require it:

```
(require 'session)
```

Note: One can also use `package-install-file` which integrates the package with Emacs' package management. Also interesting and new:

If you are following `master`, you can use the related command `package-install-from-buffer` together with Dired to only install the files as a package that you have marked in the Dired buffer. See this [commit](#) (thanks to Philip Kaludercic on [mastadon](#).)

14. xah-make-backup

For easy manual backups of a given buffer:

http://xahlee.info/emacs/emacs/elisp_make-backup.html

15. Copy a link in Dired

```
C-0 w Provides an absolute path
C-u w Provides a relative path
```

16. Numbered lists in org

If you were to type this in Emacs:

1. item 1
2. item 2

And then go on to type text like this. It would interrupt the list and the next item would be numbered as 1) not 3). So, do this:

```
3) [@3] This will be item 3
4) and this will be item 4
```

17. Bind global keys interactively

```
M-x global-set-key
```

Bind whatever key you want. E.g. C-c f

Choose the command you want. E.g. `flush-lines`

Invoke: `C-x ESC ESC`

Yank that code into your Dot Emacs.

18. Preserve line breaks during org export

Customize this variable:

`org-export-preserve-breaks`

Or on a per file basis: `OPTIONS: \n:t`

19. Set mark at a place and return to it

`C-SPC`
`C-u C-SPC`

Note by Sebastián Monía: One could also use registers: `C-x r SPC`, save the position to a letter. Then `C-x r j` to jump to the position(s). More complex, but allows for storing multiple positions.

20. Delete text completely WITHOUT copying it to the kill ring

There are three methods:

- `M-x delete-region`
- `C-d`
- `Backspace` (on some keyboards the `DEL` key)

21. Get rid of peculiar `^M` characters in an Emacs file

One of the most straightforward ways is with just an Emacs command one-liner:

- Select the buffer (`C-x h`)
- Invoke `C-u M-⌐ dos2unix`

(dos2unix would need to be installed.)

Note by Sebastián Monía: One can also change the encoding of the file between DOS
and Unix, which may remove them. Otherwise, use `query-replace`. For input, type `C-q` followed by `C-m` to replace the literal `^M`.

22. Search the web

`M-s M-w`

23. Dired Listing Switches: change the way Dired sorts files and folders.

`C-u s`

Type `-alh` to sort by name
Type `-alt` to sort by date
Type `-lhS` to sort by size

24. Create new lines at end of a buffer

Set this variable:

`(setq next-line-add-newlines t)`

Then invoking `C-n` at a buffer's end will create new lines without `RET`.

25. How to RENAME a file while working on it in a buffer

Think out the box!

Simply use `C-x C-w` (`write-file`)

This is basically equivalent to `Save As` in Microsoft Word.

Advantage: You do not need to leave the buffer.

Then use `M-n` which will insert the current file name into the mini-buffer.

One can also just use `TAB` or `M-/` for name expansion.

The only "disadvantage" of this Method: The old file remains as a backup. But maybe that's a good thing!

You would need to delete it if you did not want it.

@cryptk@mastodon.social has also suggested the `rename-visited-file` function from Emacs 29.1.

That's all for today folks.

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