

Midnight Commander (mc) — one-stop cheatsheet

Midnight Commander is an orthodox (two-pane) terminal file manager—think “visual shell”: navigate directories, tag groups of files, and a Virtual File System (VFS) that lets you browse archives and remote hosts (for example, sftp:// and ssh://) as if they were local directories.

Legend / conventions

- **C-x** = Ctrl+x. **A-x** = Alt+x.
- No Alt/Meta? Press **Esc**, release, then type the character.
- Many terminals map **Esc+L**, **g**, **0** → **F1-LF10**.
- **Esc Esc** quickly dismisses menus and popups — gist.

- **Core model**
- **Current panel + other panel** (destination default).
- **Menu bar** (focus with **F9**); **command line** at bottom.
- **Tagged files**: if any are tagged, most operations apply to the tagged set.

Launch & CLI options — mc(1)

- Start: **mc** or **mc d[rl] [dlr2]** (set panel dirs).
- View: **mc -v FILE** Editor: **mc -e [FILE]**.
- Subshell: **mc -u** (disable) **mc -U** (force).
- Color: **mc -c** (force) **mc -b** (B/W) **mc -C ARG** (palette).
- Mouse/tty: **mc -d** (no mouse) **mc -g** (oldmouse) **mc -x** (xterm).
- Keymap: **mc -K FILE** **mc -nokeymap**.
- Directory print: **mc -P FILE** (for mc, sh “cd after exit” wrap-per).
- Info: **mc -V** (version) **mc -h** (help).

Quick navigation — gist

Key	Action
Tab/C-ī	Jump to other panel.
A-c	Quick cd dialog.
A-?	Search dialog.
C-s	Search for item.
A-s	Incremental search (repeat A-s to next occurrence).
C-\	Directory hoist.

VFS, configuration paths, subshell, troubleshooting, references

VFS: browse “special paths” — mc(1)

Key	Action
Concept	VFS lets you <i>cd into</i> archives and remotes like directories.
C-x a	List active VFS directories — gist
Tdp	VFS can slack (for example, an archive stored on an sftp:// path).
Remote VFS — mc(1)	
Key	Action
sh://	sh://[user@]machine[:port]/[remote-dir]
sftp://	sftp://[user@]machine[:port]/[remote-dir]
Example	sh://[oe@somehost:2222/private
Example	sftp://[oe@somehost:2222/private

Archives and EXTs — mc(1)

Key	Action
Example	cd documents.zip/uzip:// (man page example).
Pattern	cd file.tar.gz/utar:// (exits name varies).
Standalone	cd fsname:// (enter an exits “filesystem”, varies).
Key	Action
undel://	undel://sda2) if built with support.

References (URLs)

Key	Action
mc(1)	https://source.mdnight-commander.org/man/mc.html
gist	https://gist.github.com/sam1ragu1ar/9cd42644545cfd459d
site	https://mdnigh- commander.org/

Navigation, display, panels menu, and command prompt

Navigation keys — gist		Menus at a glance — F9	
Key	Action	Key	Action
C-p/Up	Move selection to previous entry.	Left/Right	Listing mode, sort, filter/select, quick view/info, tree, panelize, hotlist.
C-n/Down	Move selection to next entry.	File	View/edit/copy/move/mkdir/delete, link tools, quit.
A-g	First visible item.	Command	Find file, quick cd, hotlist, compare directories, external panelize, jobs.
A-r	Middle item.	Options	Configuration, appearance/layout, key learning, confirmations (build dependent).
A-j	Last visible item.		
A-v/PgUp	One page up.	File and directory operations — gist	
A-p/PgDn	One page down.	Key	Action
A-</Home	Top (first entry).	C-x d	Compare directories.
A->/End	Bottom (last entry).	C-x c	Chmod dialog.
		C-x o	Chown dialog.
		C-x C-s	Edit symlink.
		C-x s	Create symlink dialog.
		C-x l	Create hard link dialog.
		C-x v	Relative symlink tool on selected or tagged.
		C-x a	List active VFS directories.
Directory history — gist		Command prompt — gist	
Key	Action	Key	Action
A-y	Previous directory in directory history.	C-o	Drop to the console (toggle panels).
A-u	Next directory in directory history.	A-Enter	Put highlighted file name on command line.
A-Shift-h	Show path history.	C-x t	Put selected or tagged item names on command line.
		C-Shift-Enter	Put full path of highlighted file on command line.
		A-a/C-x p	Put full path of panel directory on command line.
Display — gist		A-h	Show command history.
Key	Action	A-n/A-p	Move up or down through command history.
C-r	Refresh current panel.	C-x	External panelize (fill panel with command output).
C-u	Swap panels.	C-x j	Show background jobs.
A-,	Toggle panel layout (horizontal/vertical).		
C-x i	Toggle other panel to information mode.	Quit variants — gist	
C-x q	Toggle other panel to quick view mode.	Key	Action
A-i	Other panel shows same directory as current.	F10	Quit (normal).
A-o	Show highlighted directory in the other panel.	Shift-F10	Quiet exit without confirmation.
A-t	Change panel view (full/brief/long).		
A-.	Toggle "Show hidden files".		
Panels menu — via F9 then Left/Right			
Key	Action		
(menu)	Listing mode: Full / Brief / Long / User-defined.		
(menu)	Info, Quick view, Tree, Tree view.		
(menu)	Sort order: name/ext/time/size/inode; reverse toggle.		
(menu)	Filter (limit visible); Select group (tag by pattern).		
(menu)	Rescan/reread directory; Panelize (fill from command output).		

Viewer/editor, panelize recipes, user menu macros, keymaps

File view — gist		User menu "@ " commands — gist	
Key	Action	Key	Action
C-f	View the next file.	F2-@	Run a command on the currently highlighted item.
C-b	View the previous file.	Example	F2-@ unzip — unzip selected file.
		Example	F2-@ zip -r foo.zip — zip current directory as foo.zip.
Viewer (mcview): practical extras		Example	F2-@ 7za x — extract selected file with 7zip.
Key	Action	Example	F2-@ 7za a foo.7z — 7zip current directory as foo.7z.
/	Search.	File	User menu file (common): ~/ .config/mc/menu.
n	Next match.		
Shift-n	Previous match.		
A-</A->	Begin/end of file (common navigation).		
Editor (mcedit): quick survival		User menu macros — mc(1)	
Key	Action	Key	Action
F2	Save.	%f,%p	Current file (name/path).
F10	Exit editor.	%d,%D	Current directory / other panel directory.
F7	Search.	%t,%T	Tagged files (this/other panel).
F4	Replace.	%v,%V	Tagged files with full paths.
C-y	Delete line.	%s,%S	Selected files (tagged if any else current).
C-k	Delete to end of line.	%cd	Change directory (useful for VFS entrypoints).
		%view[args]	Internal viewer (ascii/hex/nroff/...).
Panelize: "virtual panels" from commands		%{ prompt }	Prompt user for substitution text.
Key	Action	% var{ ENV:default }	Env var substitution with default.
C-x	External panelize (fill panel with command output).		
Example	<code>git ls-files</code> (repo file list).		
Example	<code>rg -l PATTERN</code> (files matching a pattern).		
Example	<code>find -type f -size +100M -print</code> (large files).		
Example	<code>ls -l ...</code> (pipelines that output one file per line).		
Background jobs — gist		Keymaps and Learn keys — mc(1)	
Key	Action	Key	Action
C-x j	Jobs list; inspect or cancel background operations.	Learn keys	Stores terminal sequences in ~/ .config/mc/ini under [terminal:TERM].
		-K/-keymap	Load a specific keymap file.
		MC_KEYMAP	Environment variable that selects a keymap.
		~/ .config/mc/mc.keymap	Common user keymap location.
		ap	