

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 program copy/move/rename/delte at speed, while also having built-in Webeditor, a Virtual File System (VFS) that lets you browse archives and remote hosts (for example, `ftp://` and `sftp://`) as if they were local directories.

| Core navigation keys — file menu | |
|---|---|
| Key | Action |
| C-x = Ctl+x. A-x = Alt+x. | No/Alt/Meta? Press Esc , release, then type the char-acter |
| F1 | Help contextual). |
| F2 | User menu (custom actions and macros). |
| F3 | View line Shift-F3 raw view; disregard orientation). |
| F4 | Edit file Shift-F4 create new file). |
| F5 | Copy selected or tagged to other panel |
| F6 | Move selected or tagged Shift-F6 rename under cursor). |
| F7 | Mark). |
| F8 | Delete. |
| F9 | Focus top menu bar. |
| F10 | Quit. |
| | to the tagged set. |
| | Tagged files: If any are tagged, most operations apply to the tagged set. |
| | Menu bar (focus with F9): command line at bottom. |
| | Current panel + other panel (destination default). |
| | Core model |
| | Esc Esc quickly dismisses menus and popups — gists. |
| | Many terminals map Esc+C-l,q,o → F1-F10. |
| | Esc quickly dismisses menus and popups — gists. |
| | Core options — mc(l) |
| | Start: cc or mc dir [dir2] (set Panel dirs). |
| | Labels: mc -u (disable) mc -e [FILE]. |
| | Colors: mc -v FILE Editor: mc -c [ARG] |
| | Mouses/Tr: mc -d (no mouse) mc -g (old mouse) (pallette). |
| | Keymaps: mc -k FILE mc -nokeymap. |
| | Dictionary print: mc -P FILE (or mc .sh "cd after exit") |
| | Info: mc -V (version) mc -h (help). |
| | wrapper). |

VFS, configuration paths, subshell, troubleshooting, references

| Remote VFs — mc(1) | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Key | Action |
| keymap | ~/.conf5/mc/keymap |
| User map | ~/.conf5/mc/menu |
| External sources | ~/.conf5/mc/ext |
| Tip | Lists active LS's remote entries — glist. VFS can map remote path, in archive stored on an sftp:// Path). |
| Subshell notes — mc(1) | |
| Key | Action |
| sh:// | sh://([user@]machine[:]port[/remote-dir]) |
| sftp:// | sftp://([user@]host[:port][/remote-dir]) |
| Example | private host://([user@]host[:port][/remote-dir]) |
| Archive and EFTs — mc(1) | |
| Key | Action |
| key | cd documents.zip/zip:// (man page example). |
| password | cd file.tar.gz/utar:// (exts name var(s)). |
| Pattern | cd file.[ext].tar.gz/utar:// (exts name var(s)). |
| Example | cd documents.zip/zip:// (man page example). |
| Troubleshotting quick hits | |
| Key | Action |
| u- / -U | Disable / force subshell. |
| Conceptr | Subshell shares your shell environment and aliases while much. |
| bashrc | Offens /-. Local/share/mc/bashrc (aliases by itself). |
| Example | sftp://([user@]host[:port][/remote-dir]) |
| Archives and EFTs — mc(1) | |
| Key | Action |
| key | quit via menu fg begin : math : text |
| F10 stolen | quit via menu fg begin : math : text |
| Pattern | cd file.[ext].tar.gz/utar:// (exts name var(s)). |
| Example | cd documents.zip/zip:// (man page example). |
| Undelete (optional ext2) — mc(1) | |
| Key | Action |
| mc(1) | Use Esc then key (Mfile emulation). |
| glist | Try me -g, then re-run Learn keys, terminal key. |
| site | Use Esc then key (Mfile emulation). |
| undel:// | undel://DEVICEPART (for example, undel:// built with support). |
| References (URLs) | |
| Key | Action |
| site | https://midnight-commander.org/ |
| glist | https://glist.github.com/samiragui |
| mc(1) | https://source.midnight-commander.org/ |

Navigation, display, panels menu, and command prompt

Navigation keys — gist

| Key | Action |
|----------|-----------------------------------|
| C-p/Up | Move selection to previous entry. |
| C-n/Down | Move selection to next entry. |
| A-g | First visible item. |
| A-r | Middle item. |
| A-j | Last visible item. |
| A-v/PgUp | One page up. |
| A-p/PgDn | One page down. |
| A-</Home | Top (first entry). |
| A->/End | Bottom (last entry). |

Directory history — gist

| Key | Action |
|-----------|--|
| A-y | Previous directory in directory history. |
| A-u | Next directory in directory history. |
| A-Shift-h | Show path history. |

Display — gist

| Key | Action |
|-------|--|
| C-r | Refresh current panel. |
| C-u | Swap panels. |
| A-, | Toggle panel layout (horizontal/vertical). |
| C-x i | Toggle other panel to information mode. |
| C-x q | Toggle other panel to quick view mode. |
| A-i | Other panel shows same directory as current. |
| A-o | Show highlighted directory in the other panel. |
| 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). |

Menus at a glance — F9

| Key | Action |
|------------|--|
| Left/Right | Listing mode, sort, filter/select, quick view/info, tree, panelize, hotlist. |
| File | View/edit/copy/move/mkdir/delete, link tools, quit. |
| Command | Find file, quick cd, hotlist, compare directories, external panelize, jobs. |
| Options | Configuration, appearance/layout, key learning, confirmations (build dependent). |

File and directory operations — gist

| Key | Action |
|---------|--|
| C-x d | Compare directories. |
| C-x c | Chmod dialog. |
| C-x o | Chown dialog. |
| C-x S-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. |

Command prompt — gist

| Key | Action |
|---------------|---|
| C-o | Drop to the console (toggle panels). |
| A-Enter | Put highlighted file name on command line. |
| 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. |
| A-h | Show command history. |
| A-n/A-p | Move up or down through command history. |
| C-x | External panelize (fill panel with command output). |
| C-x j | Show background jobs. |

Quit variants — gist

| Key | Action |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| F10 | Quit (normal). |
| Shift-F10 | Quiet exit without confirmation. |

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

File view — gist

| Key | Action |
|-----|-------------------------|
| C-f | View the next file. |
| C-b | View the previous file. |

Viewer (mcview): practical extras

| Key | Action |
|---------|--|
| / | Search. |
| n | Next match. |
| Shift-n | Previous match. |
| A-</A-> | Begin/end of file (common navigation). |

Editor (mcedit): quick survival

| Key | Action |
|-----|------------------------|
| F2 | Save. |
| F10 | Exit editor. |
| F7 | Search. |
| F4 | Replace. |
| C-y | Delete line. |
| C-k | Delete to end of line. |

Panelize: "virtual panels" from commands

| Key | Action |
|---------|--|
| C-x | External panelize (fill panel with command output). |
| Example | git ls-files (repo file list). |
| Example | rg -l PATTERN (files matching a pattern). |
| Example | find -type f -size +100M -print (large files). |
| Example | ls -1 ... (pipelines that output one file per line). |

Background jobs — gist

| Key | Action |
|-------|---|
| C-x j | Jobs list; inspect or cancel background operations. |

User menu "@" commands — gist

| Key | Action |
|---------|---|
| F2-@ | Run a command on the currently highlighted item. |
| Example | F2-@ unzip — unzip selected file. |
| Example | F2-@ zip -r foo.zip — zip current directory as foo.zip. |
| Example | F2-@ 7za x — extract selected file with 7zip. |
| Example | F2-@ 7za a foo.7z — 7zip current directory as foo.7z. |
| File | User menu file (common): ~/.config/mc/menu. |

User menu macros — mc(1)

| Key | Action |
|--------------|--|
| %f, %p | Current file (name/path). |
| %d, %D | Current directory / other panel directory. |
| %t, %T | Tagged files (this/other panel). |
| %v, %V | Tagged files with full paths. |
| %s, %S | Selected files (tagged if any else current). |
| %cd | Change directory (useful for VFS entrypoints). |
| %view[args] | Internal viewer (ascii/hex/nroff/...). |
| {% prompt} | Prompt user for substitution text. |
| % var{ | Env var substitution with default. |
| ENV:default} | |

Keymaps and Learn keys — mc(1)

| Key | Action |
|------------------------|--|
| 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. |