

VS Code: Protips

Some advanced features that (**spoiler alert**) just might come in handy some day

9 steps

60 minutes

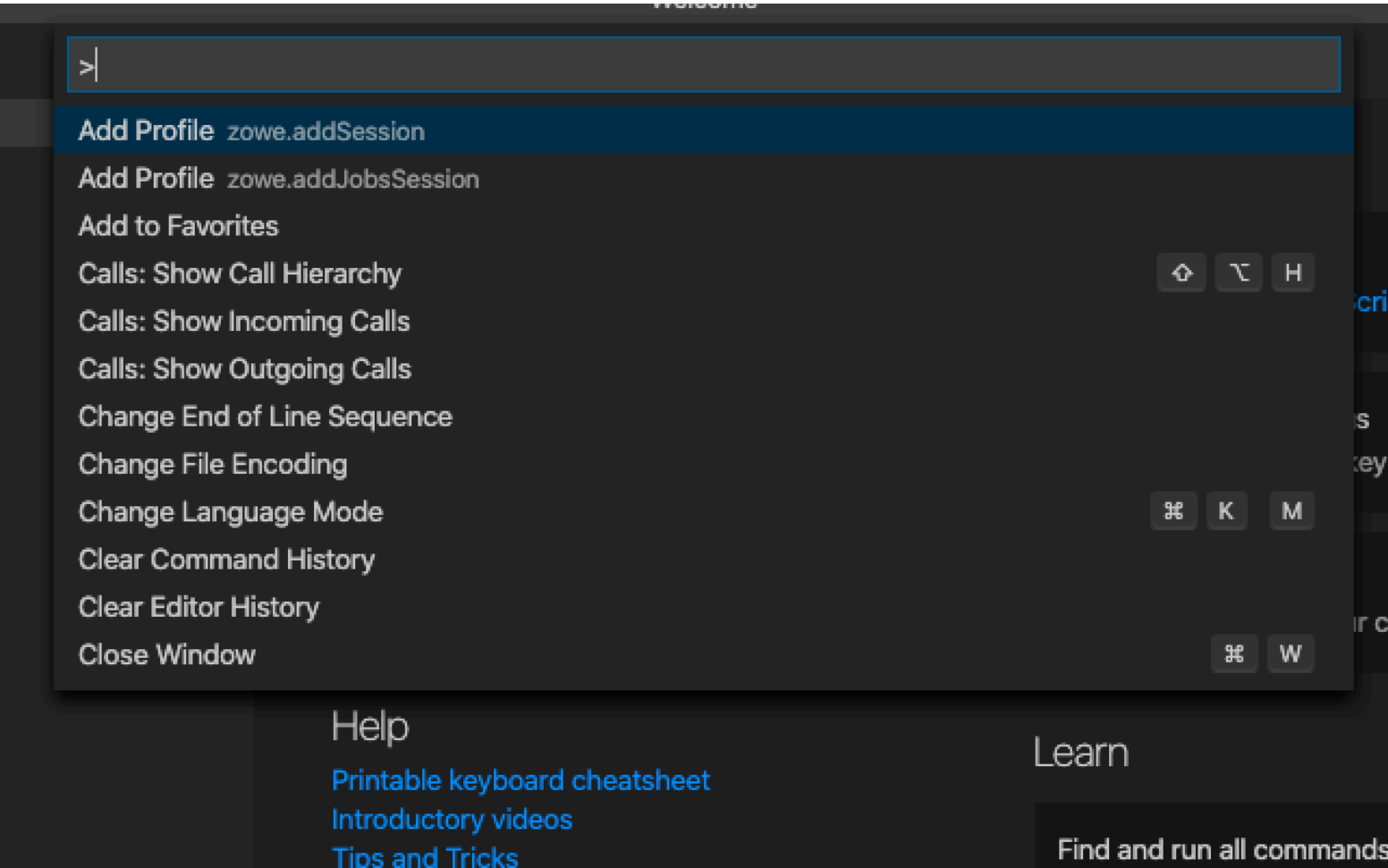
THE CHALLENGE

You’ve got VS Code set up to connect to the system, but there are a few extra features that will help you make the most of this editor.

There are challenges later on in that will assume you know how to use these features, so while there is not a lot of required work in this specific challenge, it is important you familiarize yourself with them.

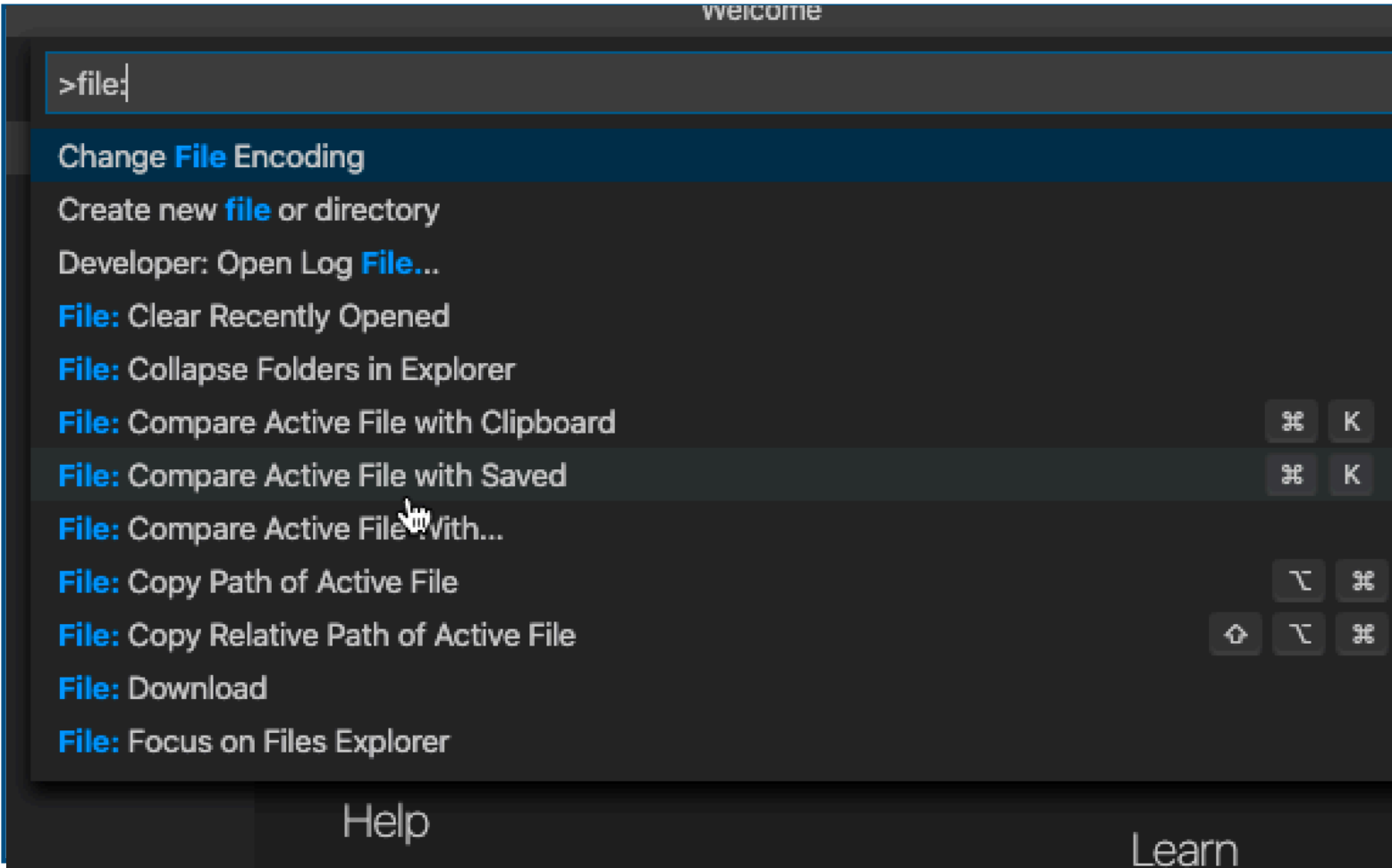
BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Make sure you’ve installed and configured VS Code and connected to the system before trying these out. No other skills are needed, you’re just getting started!



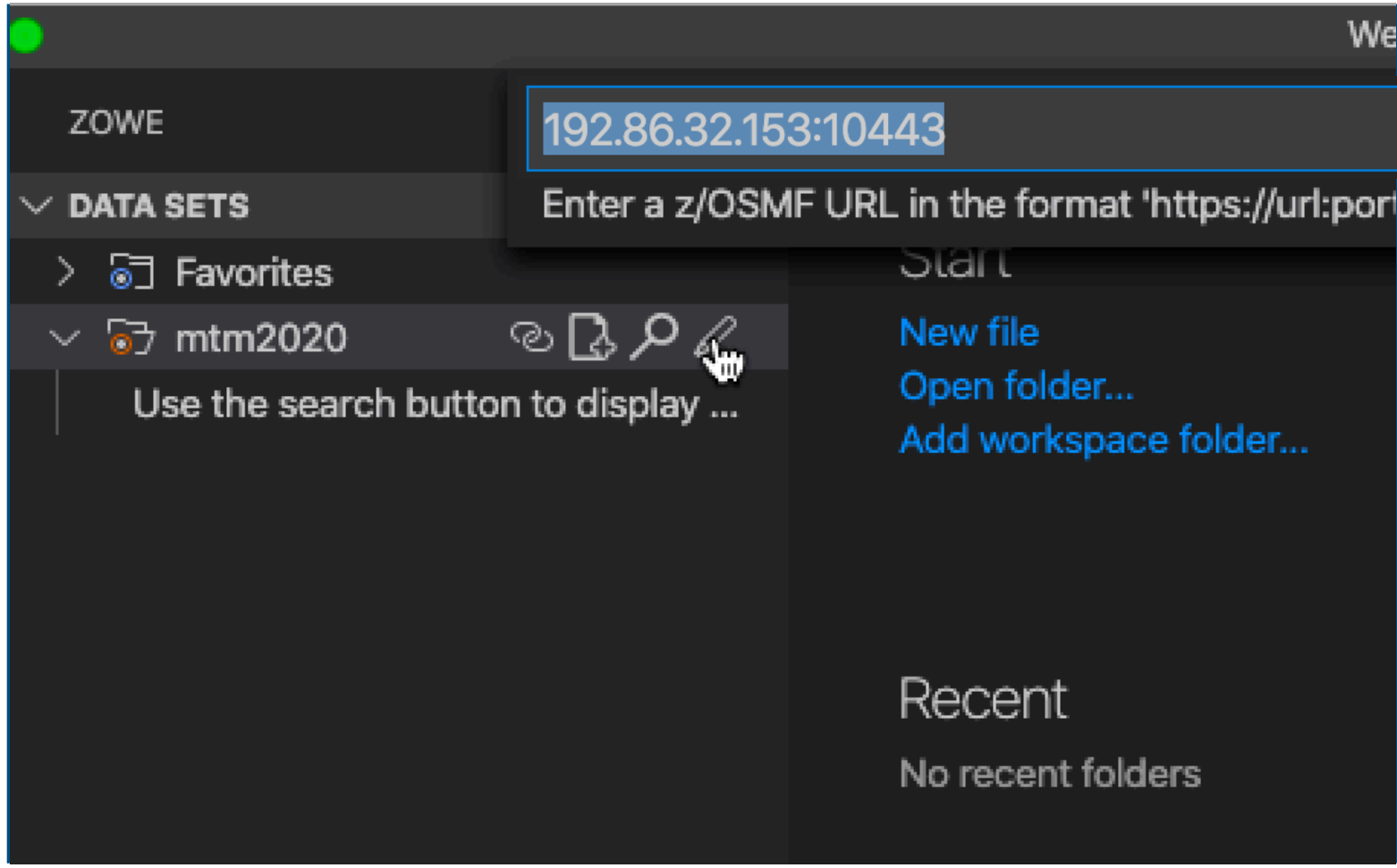
1. OPEN THE COMMAND PALETTE

In VS Code, go to View -> Command Palette. This opens up a window with every command you can enter, including your most recently-used commands up top. From here, you can type in the name of the command you want until it appears selectable.



2. LOOK AT THOSE SHORTCUTS

Open up the Command Palette again and start typing **File**: A series of commands based around file operations will appear. Also note that many of these have keyboard shortcuts listed on the right side of them. These will differ from computer to computer, but VS Code will show you the shortcuts that you can memorize to help speed things along.

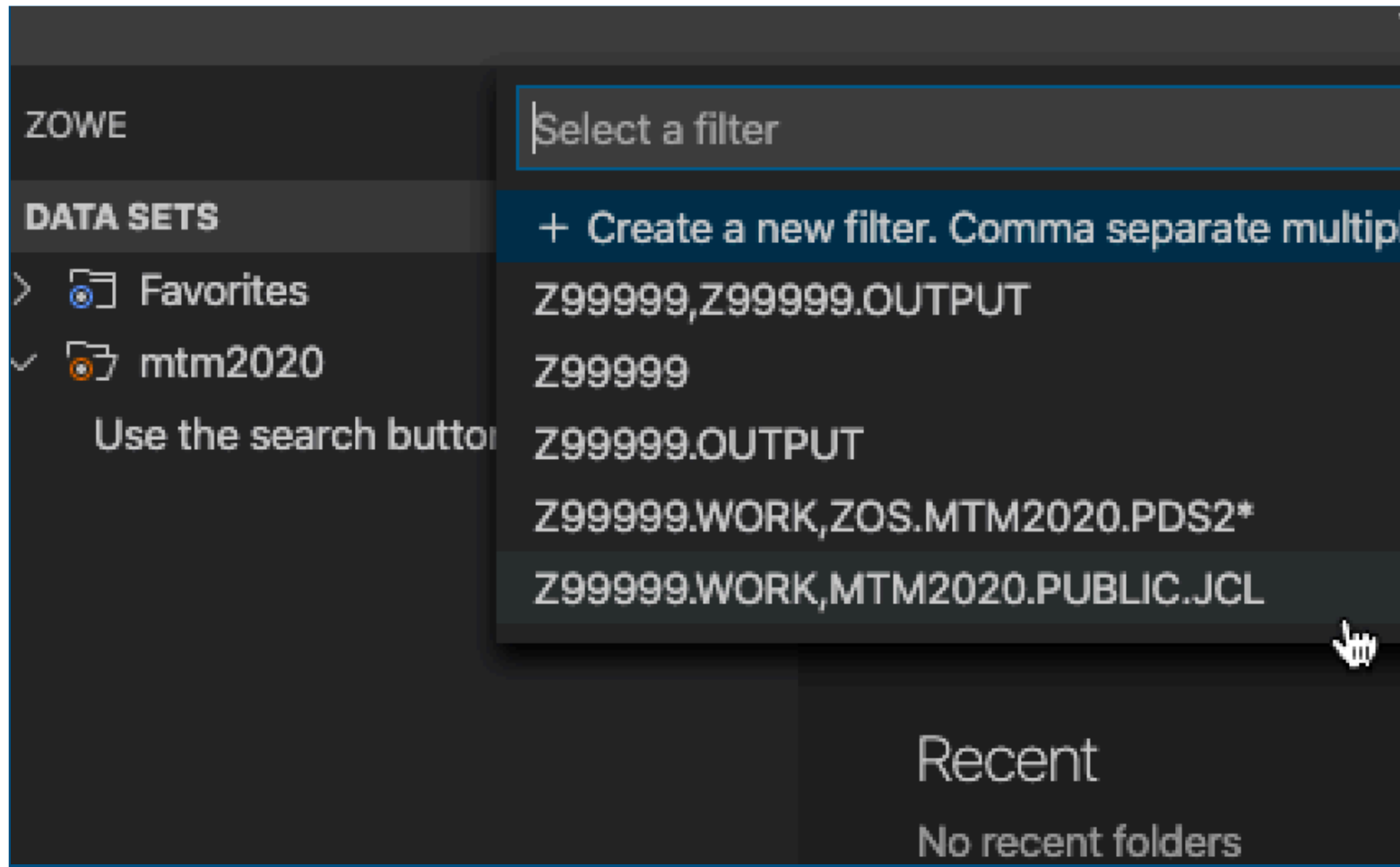


3. EDIT YOUR PROFILE

Click on the Pencil icon to the right of your Data Sets profile. You probably don’t want to change anything, but in case you need to change the URL or connection information, this is where you do it.

Don’t worry if you get an RSE error if you go all the way through it, this can safely be ignored.





4. FISH FOR FILTERS

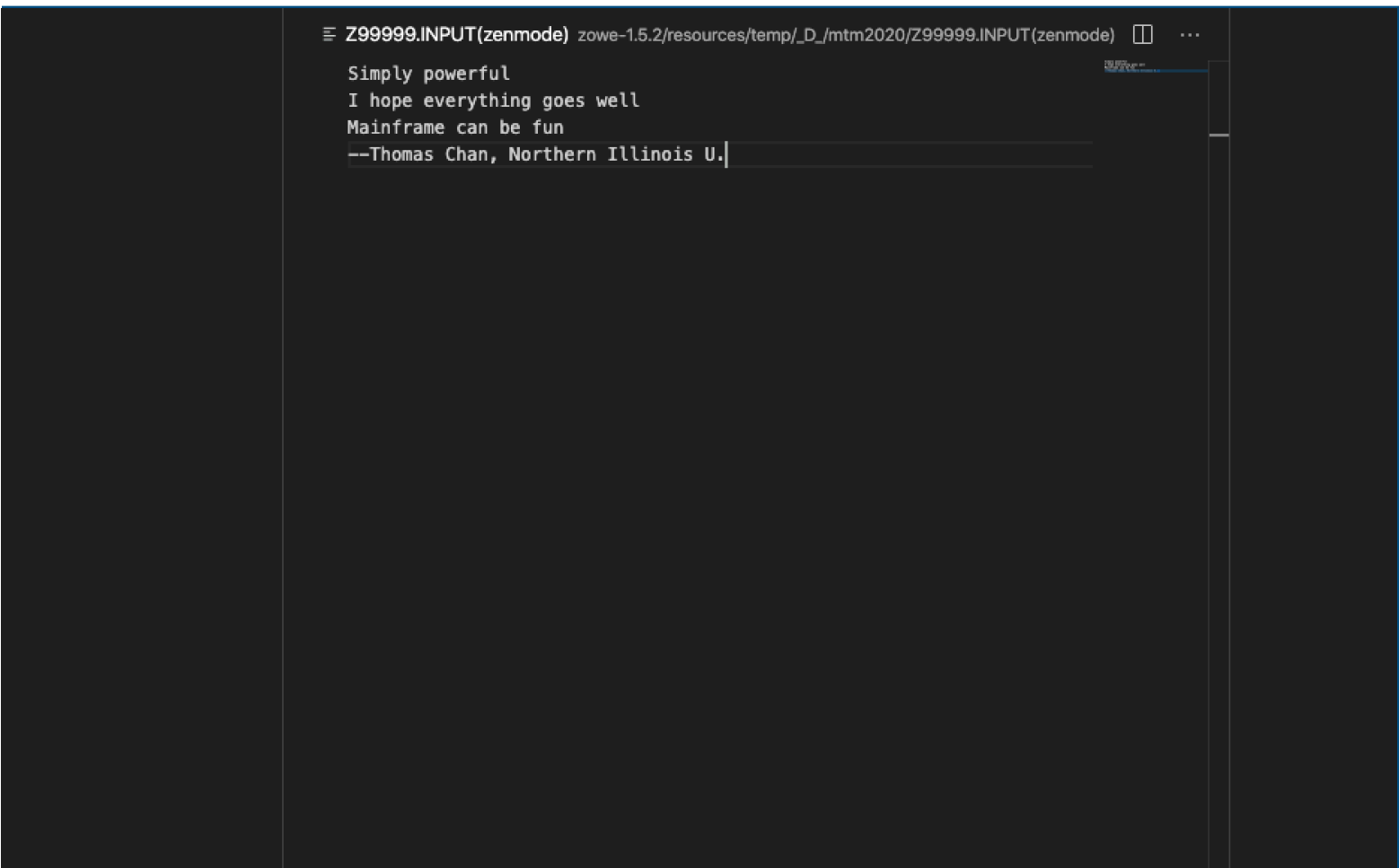
Click on the magnifying glass next to the profile you created for Data Sets, USS, or Jobs. They all present different dialogs, and you can either type in a new filter, or click on the first option(s), which show up with a plus sign (+) to let it prompt you.

Filters will help you make effective use of your screen space, making it so you only see the data sets or job output that you care about right now. Once you create a new filter, it can be easily recalled if you want to use it later on.

“DO I NEED TO DO ALL OF THIS?”

Obviously, Zen Mode is not a hard core requirement for mastering the mainframe. However, as you get further in your progress with these challenges, you will appreciate the ability to streamline certain actions and move around faster.

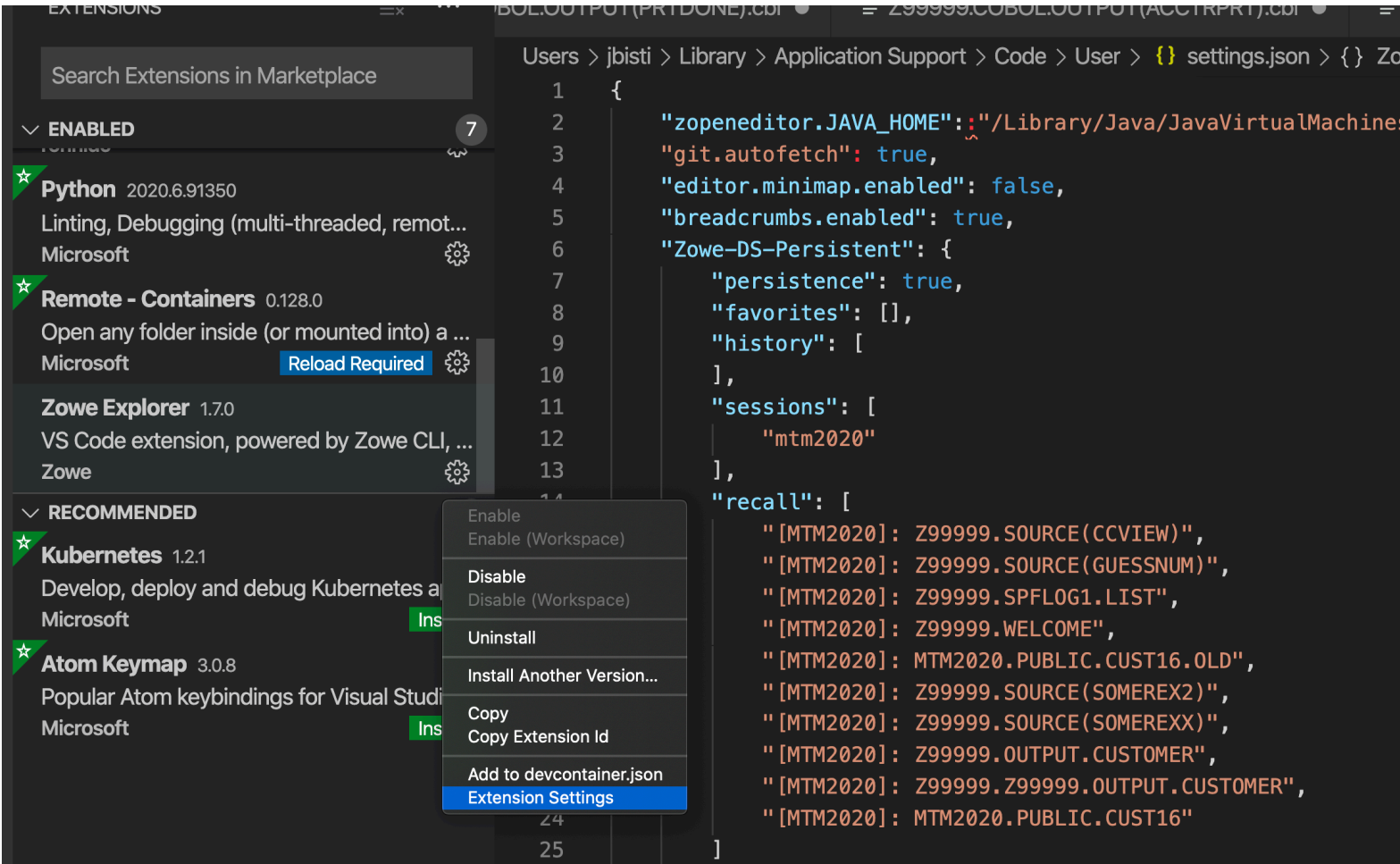
But to answer the actual question being asked, there is a step in here that is actually required to mark this particular challenge as complete, so make sure you follow the steps to the end.



5. ENTER ZEN MODE

Go up to View -> Appearance -> Zen Mode, or become a Zen Master and use the keyboard shortcut it shows you. This will fullscreen VS Code and hide all elements except the editor.

Inhale. Feel the air around you. Enjoy the moment. Feel better? To exit Zen mode, enter the same keyboard shortcut OR hit ESC a couple of times.



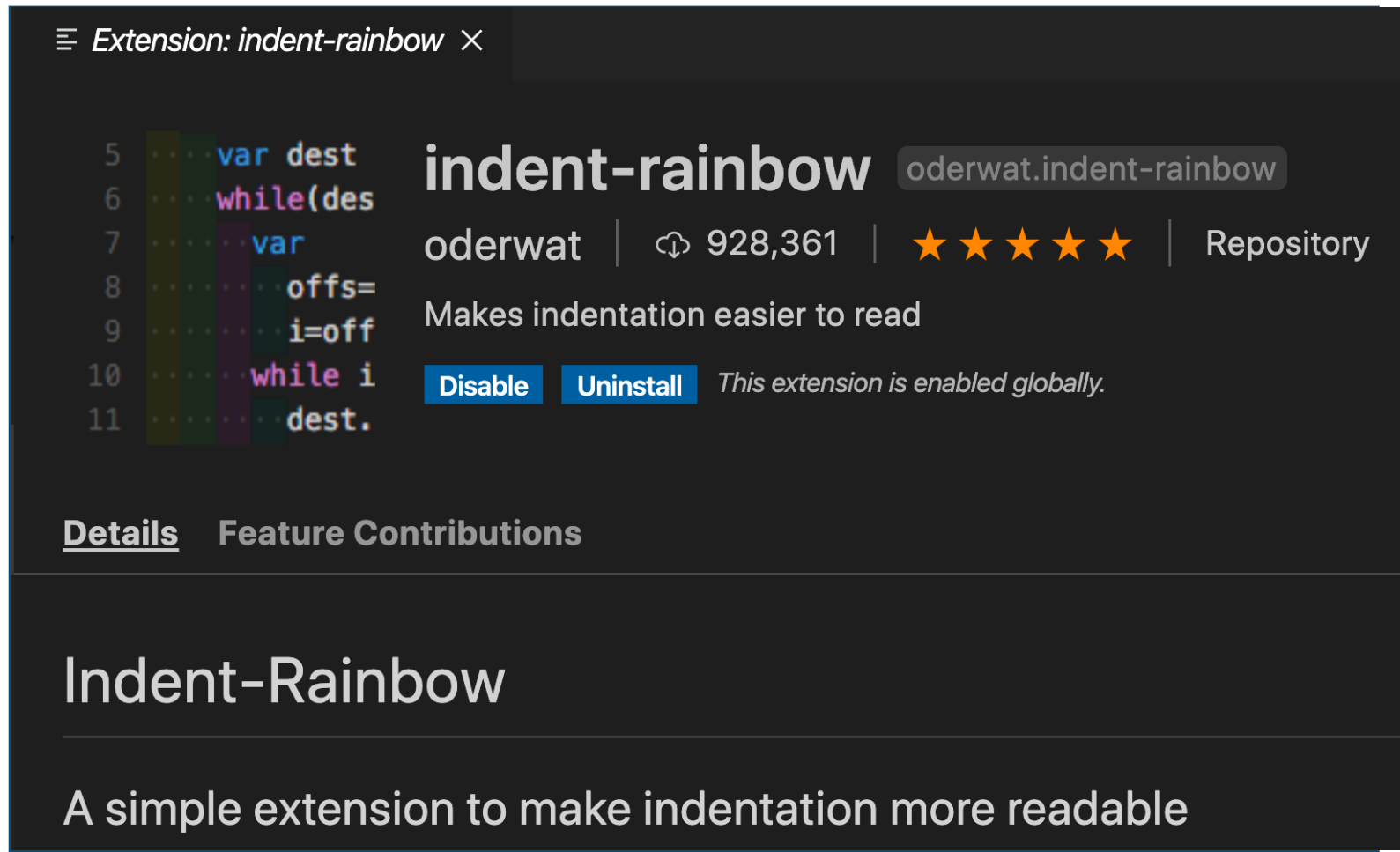
6. UNDER THE HOOD

Click on the Extensions button on the left side menu and find the Zowe Explorer extension. Click on its gear (bottom right) and click “Extension Settings”. This will bring up a few options you can tweak right from here, but you can dive in even deeper by clicking on one of those “Edit in settings.json” links.

There are some settings in here you might want to edit, including file associations, recently-used filters, and your preference for the minimap and breadcrumbs.

If you want to make adjustments, mind the syntax, because it is possible to break an extension with an un-readable settings file. You may not need to visit here, but some minor nuisances can be fixed by simply getting into the config file.



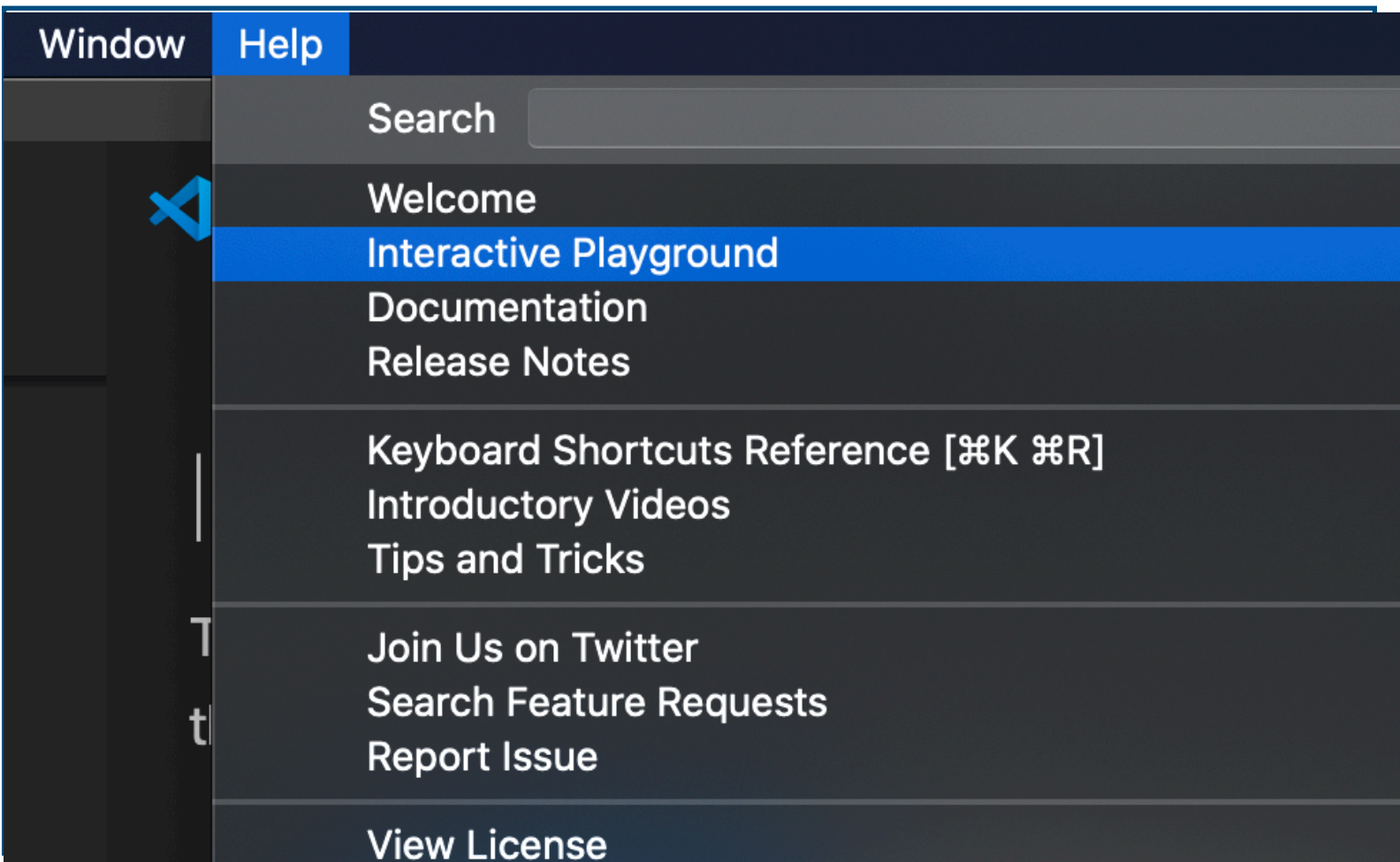


7. BROWSE THE MARKETPLACE

Head over the the Extensions Marketplace and see what’s available. Whenever an extension, or additional software is required, we’ll let you know, so you don’t have to install anything additional here, but you should also know that there is an option to personalize your experience.

We really like the Indent Rainbow extension, which marks each level of indentation as a different color. Makes it easier to keep track of your formatting!

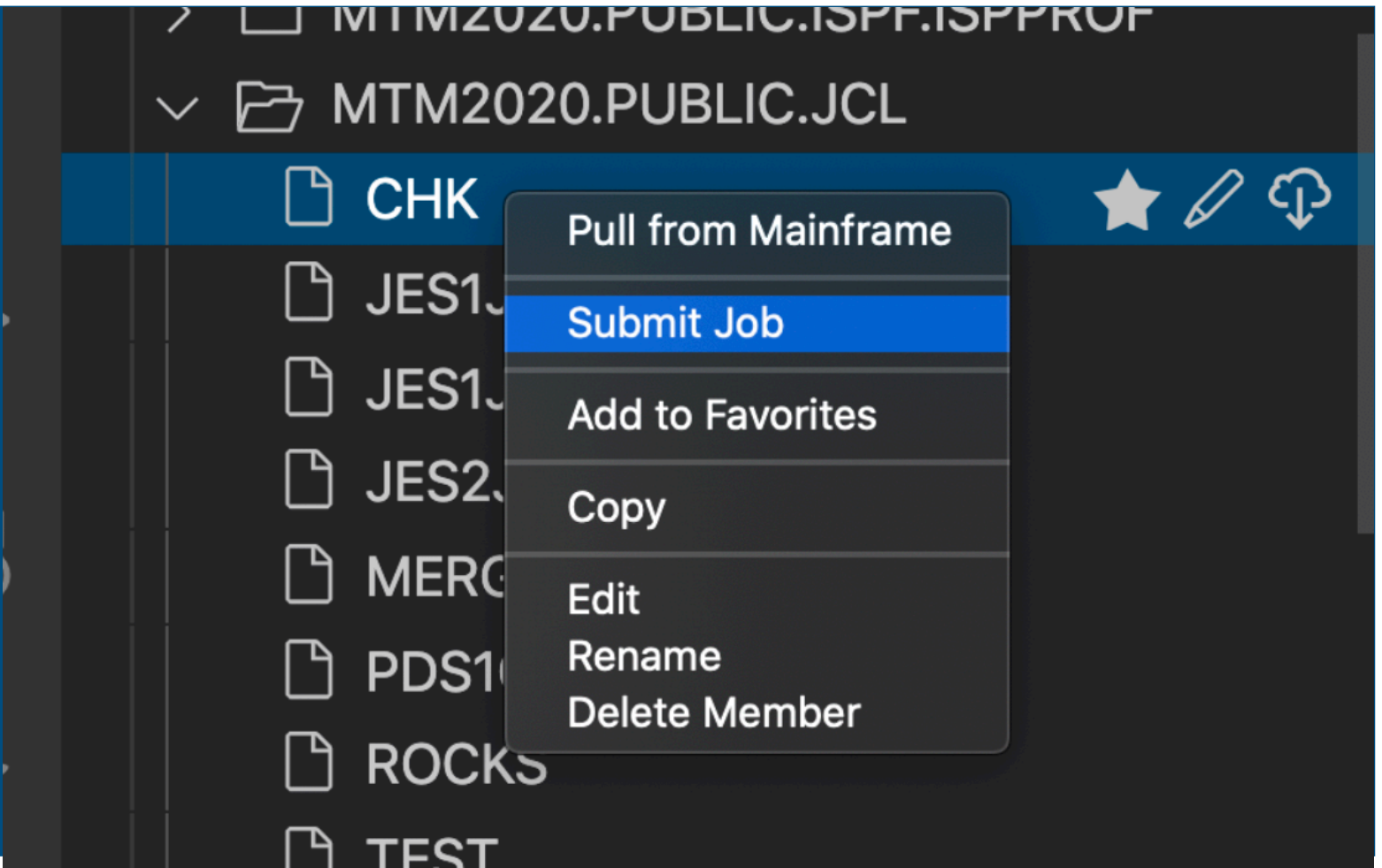
Don’t go nuts installing too many extensions right away, as sometimes extensions conflict with one another, and you want things to be as fast and simple when you’re first starting out.



8. HIT THE PLAYGROUND

Go up to Help -> Interactive Playground

This is a guide that will teach you all about some of the more advanced features and shortcuts available through VS Code. This is the easiest way to get good, as you can see everything spelled out with sample sections, and you can try it all out in a penalty-free environment.



9. MARK AS DONE

The last step is to submit the validation job. Simply open up MTM2020.PUBLIC.JCL and look for the member named CHK. Right-click on that and select Submit Job. This will check all of your work and mark any completed challenges as complete on the contest system.

NICE JOB! LET’S RECAP

You’ve taken your VS Code installation to the next level, and now you’re ready to fully tackle the series of challenges ahead. Hopefully you feel a little more confident in all of this, because your next step is where we really start digging into this system.

NEXT UP...

You’re all ready. Where to go from here? We suggest the PDS challenges as your first one, though you could also go into JCL if that looks interesting.

