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copy paste in tmux

June 20, 2010 by [awhan](#)

i m assuming that the tmux prefix is **Control+b** and that you have **emacs style key bindings** on

- 1) enter copy mode using **Control+b** [
- 2) navigate to beginning of text, you want to select and hit **Control+Space**
- 3) move around using arrow keys to select region
- 4) when you reach end of region simply hit **Alt+w** to copy the region
- 5) now **Control+b]** will paste the selection

you can navigate the text using the emacs style navigation key
Control+p, Control+n, Control+f, Control+b etc.

Dan (<https://awhan.wordpress.com/2010/06/20/copy-paste-in-tmux/#comment-342>) in the comments informs me that if you have **vi style key bindings** on then the following applies:

- 1) enter copy mode using **Control+b** [
- 2) navigate to beginning of text, you want to select and hit **Space**
- 3) move around using arrow keys to select region
- 4) when you reach end of region simply hit **Enter** to copy the region
- 5) now **Control+b]** will paste the selection

To enable vi like cursor movement in copy mode put the following in your `~/.tmux.conf`:

```
1 | set-window-option -g mode-keys vi
```

more over what ever you copy, you may dump that out in your terminal using

```
1 | tmux show-buffer
```

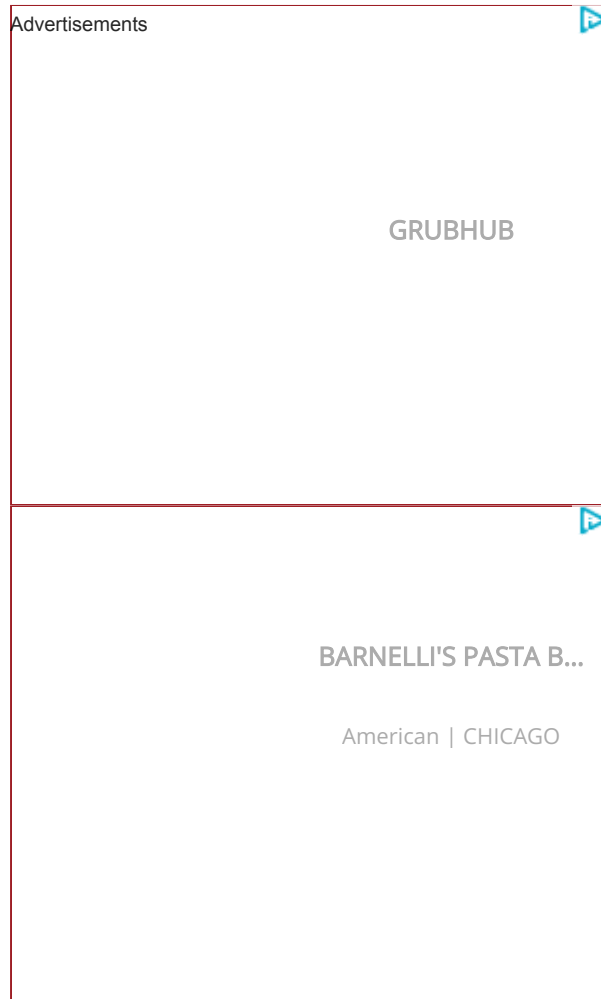
and even save to a file(say, foo.txt) using

```
1 | tmux save-buffer foo.txt
```

To see all the paste buffers try **Control + b #**. To dump out the various buffers on to the terminal or file you may use

```
1 | tmux list-buffers
2 | tmux show-buffer -b n
3 | tmux save-buffer -b n foo.txt
```

where n is the index of the paste buffer.



Posted in [keyboard navigation](#), [tmux](#) | Tagged [linux](#), [tmux](#) | 27 Comments

27 Responses

baltazar

on [June 25, 2010 at 1:02 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

tmux is really great, I'm using it too. However I have a problem when it comes to use emacs inside of tmux. Basically, I have shortcuts defined in my ~/.emacs as follows:

```
(global-set-key (kbd "M-1") 'bs-show)
(global-set-key (kbd "C-1") 'bs-show)
(global-set-key (kbd "") 'bs-show)
```



(global-set-key (kbd "M-") 'bs-show)
 (global-set-key (kbd "C-") 'bs-show)
 (global-set-key (kbd "S-") 'bs-show)

Generally I connect to linux box from Windows using putty. When emacs is running inside of tmux, the only first combination is working: "M-1" (Alt+1). For M- and C- emacs prints tilda "~".

When emacs is running without tmux, 1st, 3rd and 4th shortcuts are working.

Is there any way to make other combinations working when inside of tmux? Is it tmux who prevents them to pass to emacs?

baltazar

on [June 25, 2010 at 1:04 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

Oh, the parser has taken LT and GT signs away. Four last lines are bindings to F2: F2, M-F2, C-F2 and S-F2.



awhan

on [June 25, 2010 at 4:03 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

well i suspect that putty is to be blamed here ... i use gnu/linux so i really don't know about this ... but i will try and reproduce the problems on a windows box and report back



i generally run emacs with X and rarely in a terminal ... so i have had problems with copy paste between emacs and tmux. which i solve using a mouse 😞 ... any selection with mouse is immediately available with the mouse middle click ... so i use that but am not satisfied with it...

as for the parser taking away the LT and GT signs.. next time use the "

1 | " and ``

" tags when commenting in wordpress with code or commands.

Ion

on [August 10, 2010 at 9:16 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

Alt+w does not seem to work for me, it was so simple in screen.



awhan

on [August 12, 2010 at 2:01 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

that is strange. what terminal program r u using? xterm? urxvt? u can check if Alt key is sending the right code using xev ...



Ion

on [August 13, 2010 at 1:51 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

It seems that I had another instance of tmux running, and creating new instances of tmux would inherit the config values from the running instance, instead of "re reading" the config file.



I am using xterm -class UXTerm -title uxterm -u8 -bg black -fg gray.

awhan

on [August 13, 2010 at 4:07 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

by the config file do you mean the config file for tmux or that of xterm? in case of tmux you can simply source the new config file (~/.tmux.conf) by



```
1 | C-b : source-file ~/.tmux.conf
```

as for how u invoke xterm ... i think its best to set all the corresponding values in ~/.Xresources that way when new instances of xterm are launched they will all have the same config.

however with tmux you don't need to launch new instance of xterm.

simply launch xterm, then start tmux and then if u need a another terminal simply open a new window or pane in tmux

```
1 | C-b c
```

at least that is how i work.

u know what i had some problems with the Alt key when trying to use readline editing features at the command line so i had this in the ~/.Xresources

```
1 | XTerm*metaSendsEscape: true
```

that really helped.

Dan

on [December 6, 2013 at 3:46 am](#) | [Reply](#)

Selecting text, copying, pasting, none of this seems to work for me at all. I'm using tmux 1.6, Gnome Terminal 3.4.1.1



Dan

on [December 6, 2013 at 4:03 am](#) | [Reply](#)

Ok my problem was that I have vim-style key bindings. So in translation:



- 1) enter copy mode using Control+b [
- 2) navigate to beginning of text, you want to select and hit Space
- 3) move around using arrow keys to select region
- 4) when you reach end of region simply hit Enter to copy the region
- 5) now Control+b] will paste the selection

awhan

on [December 6, 2013 at 10:46 am](#) | [Reply](#)

thanks. if you do not mind i will update the blog post with these instructions.



Dan

on [December 6, 2013 at 10:58 am](#)

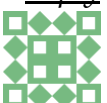
Go for it. It's straight from the man page anyway 😊



Christy

on [December 20, 2013 at 4:09 am](#) | [Reply](#)

Thank you! It took me forever to find someone stating that Ctl+Space starts text-selection, not just Space. Looks like I have emacs-style keybindings.



awhan

You are welcome 😊

on December 20, 2013 at 6:16 am | [Reply](#)**ben**

How do I access and use multiple copy-paste buffers?

Also, is there a way to share this buffer with my operating system clipboard if i'm using putty?

on January 1, 2014 at 9:28 pm | [Reply](#)**awhan****Prefix + #** will list all the paste buffers. **Prefix + =** will let you select which paste buffer to use.On gnu/linux i use xclip or xsel to transfer content between tmux's paste buffer and the OS clipboard. sorry can't help you with putty.on January 2, 2014 at 7:34 pm | [Reply](#)**AranHase's Archive | "vim + tmux + tmuxifier" setup with Konsole**

[...] Copy paste in tmux [...]

on August 12, 2014 at 7:07 am | [Reply](#)**sharath**

using tmux for a day or two now... Here is my problem.

on September 22, 2014 at 3:44 pm | [Reply](#)

I have split the screen into two vertical pane. On one pane I have a build going on which will put lot of logs on the pane & on the other window I am coding using vi. When there is lot of logs on the build pane, the control seems to ping pong between the panes. Because of this ping pong it becomes difficult to code on the other pane.

Do you know a solution for this.?

awhan

@sharath

sorry i have never faced this problem and frankly can't suggest anything. sorry.

on October 22, 2014 at 6:13 pm | [Reply](#)**Christian Berendt**

Thank you for this entry, especially the Vi-mode is very useful.

on February 4, 2015 at 3:53 pm | [Reply](#)**Ted Bedwell**

Great start...not quite there for me yet.

on March 5, 2015 at 5:29 am | [Reply](#)

What is the Alt-W binding on a Mac?

Opt-W does not seem to do it for me.

fyi...I'm sshing into an ubuntu box using iTerm2 where I'm running tmux.

Ted Bedwellon [March 5, 2015 at 5:43 am](#) | [Reply](#)

I figured it out. Per the manpage it is M-w. So, Esc-w does the trick for me!
Thanks again for the post.

**Daniel Serrano**on [June 4, 2015 at 6:30 am](#) | [Reply](#)

thanks bru

**awhan**on [June 11, 2015 at 3:03 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

thanks 😊

**FreeBSD OSXer**on [November 17, 2015 at 12:17 am](#) | [Reply](#)

Arwhan a few excellent tmux resources on you blog, thanks! Suggestions for topics: macros; colour schemes ; tricks with ssh ; etc. ; maybe a short video with a seamless editing session: local to server, remote to server with cut and paste, mouse pasting; then shared session over ssh with read only “watching” of the terminal etc. (using various BSD OSX hosts and maybe even Linux 😊)

**awhan**on [November 17, 2015 at 8:14 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

Many many thanks for your comment. I feel pumped with excitement already. Am a bit busy with work at the moment but I will surely embark on this project. Many thanks for the encouragement 😊

**Sundaram**on [February 15, 2017 at 11:45 am](#) | [Reply](#)

This helped! Thanks 😊

**awhan**on [February 15, 2017 at 2:50 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

thanks 😊



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