

QDL's GUI

Introduction

QDL comes with a built in Swing GUI (Graphical User Interface). This is intended to keep with the philosophy that QDL “just works” out of the box everywhere. As long as your environment supports graphics, it should function. QDL is used heavily for server-side work and these generally have no graphical user environment. As such, the character mode workspace will continue to be the de facto work environment.

Getting started

To invoke the GUI, you simply add the **-gui** flag to the command line

```
java -jar qdl.jar -cfg path/to/config.xml -name config_name -gui
```

And you will be greeted with this



This has an input area (white) and an output area (blue). The output area is not editable, but you can certainly copy things from it. In both areas, highlighting a work and hitting F1 will pop up help for that topic.

The Bottom Line

The usual *modus operandi* of QDL remain the same: type in QDL expressions or workspace commands, get results. This entire interface just allows for more convenience input. The major innovation is that the line editor is replaced with a much snazzier dedicated QDL editor. Everything in the workspace is still there and everything works the same from the command line. You still make buffers, execute them, etc. Since the input area is now a full fledged QDL-aware , multi-line editor, you will need a lot fewer buffers in practice.

The Input Area

This supports (unlike the command line version) multiple lines and statements. Simply type as per normal. *To execute, enter **ctrl+enter***. The result will display in the blue area.

The input area supports

- QDL's keyboard (view mappings with **)help keyboard**)
- syntax highlighting
- auto complete (type ctrl+space)
- auto-indent and parenthesis/bracket matching.
- local clipboard history (ctrl+shift+v)

It should be noted that the syntax highlighting could be better. This is because ideally every keystroke would run the entire input through the lexer and pick it apart, but that makes performance miserable after a point (type a key, go get a cup of coffee...) Therefore, regular expressions are used to more or less identify syntax. This allows for real time typing and a responsive interface.

(QDL is backed by a grammar and uses ANTLR, which is an industrial strength parser generator precisely because it is in general impossible for regular expressions to parse such a language.)

Shorthand

Editor Operations

| Key | Type | Description |
|-----|------|---|
| ^a | E | Select all text |
| ^c | E | Copy current selection to clipboard <i>or</i> current line (no selection) |
| ^d | E | delete current line |
| ^j | E | join next line to current |
| ^h | B | run <code>check_syntax</code> on the selected text or current input. |
| ^f | E | Set the font |
| ^i | E | paste clipboard as input form |

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| ^I | E | paste long input form of clipboard, multiline if linebreaks (useful!!) |
| ^k | E | goes to next occurrence of occurrence of selected text |
| ^@k | E | goes to previous occurrence of selected text |
| ^m | E | toggle comment for line or selection. |
| ^q | W | Quit QDL (w/ save prompt) |
| ^Q | W | Quit QDL now (no prompt) |
| ^r | E | replicate current line or selection |
| ^s | E | save workspace. See note for edit window. |
| ^v | E | Paste from clipboard |
| ^@v | E | Show local clipboard history |
| ^x | E | Cut current selection to clipboard |
| ^y | E | redo last action |
| ^z | E | undo last action |
| ^backspace | E | delete previous word |
| ^space | E | Complete word |
| ^@enter | W | execute current code |
| ^@page up | B | Go to previous entry in history |
| ^@page down | B | Got to next entry in history |
| @+up | B | move line up in buffer |
| @+down | B | move line down in buffer |
| F1 | E | Show help for selected keyword, or general editor help if no selection. |
| ^F1 | E | Show QDL keyboard layout |
| ^left mouse click | B | In the output window, this will open the result in a dumb edit window. By dumb we mean that it is not a buffer. Cut and paste it where you need it. |

Key:

^a = ctrl + a

@a = alt + a

^@a = ctrl + alt + a

Types:

B = buffer operation

E = edit operation

W = workspace operation

Note about pasting input form.

The clipboard is only read as string. You may opt to try and have it interpreted into input form. This means that if the clipboard can parse as a number, null or boolean it will be pasted as is. If it is a string, it will be turned into a single line. So if the clipboard had

```
mairzy doats
    and dozey
    doates
```

```
and liddle
labsie      divey
^i would insert
'mairzy doats\n\tand dozey \n\t\tdoates\nand liddle\nlabsie\tdivey '
```

where ^I would try to preserve the formatting across lines as

```
'mairzy doats\n'+
'  and dozey \n'+
'    doates\n'+
'and liddle\n'+
'labsie  divey'
```

which is very useful when pasting long formatted text strings (like JSON). In this case, tabs are converted to characters.

Syntax checking!

If you hit ^h, then the entire buffer is checked for syntax. If you select an area and hit ^h, then only that selection is checked. You may therefore check bits and pieces of code. There is never a reason to get a syntax error when running QDL if you remember to use this!

Searching

To search, select a bit of text and hit ^k. This goes to the next occurrence. ^@k goes to the previous one.

Special characters

The QDL keyboard supports many special characters. These are typically accessed with @+key (@ = alt), so that @+p inserts the Greek letter π (pi). Help for the workspace (under keyboard if you want to see the layout, or unicode if you just want a list) is provided.

The Output Area

The output area is, indeed, simply a read-only area that captures the output. If you issue ctrl+mouse button 1, the current result will pop up in an edit window. This window is independent of the workspace, so it will not be updated when the workspace is.

The Editor

Buffers work as per usual, and instead of the line editor, there is a graphical editor. This is really just an input area with no execution.

Help

- F1 (no selection) – displays a help message for editor
- F1 with selection – displays help (if any) for the selection
- ^F1 – show the keyboard layout.

Saving your work

In the workspace

You can hit ^s to save the workspace to disk. The workspace must have a name already. A good idea is to run **)save name** first to set it, then ^s thereafter.

In the editor

^s saves the edits *to the workspace* where you can run it, etc. You can just leave the window open if you want and test out snippets of code then update the window, for instance. Do remember that operations on the editor will update the QDL workspace, but you may need to use **)b save handle** to save files. (If you are saving your workspace and forget, QDL will save the pending changes internally there so you can just save them later, though you should make sure you proactively keep your files updated as you want them to be.)

Hey, you should make a full featured GUI with menus etc...

Yes I should. At this writing (Aug. 2022) it is clear that Swing in Java is going the way of the Dodo. Largely this is due to vastly improved graphics (so Swing applications looks awful without a lot of platform and hardware specific tweaking, which defeats the purpose) or people are just interested in phone apps. It will remain as a basic cross-platform solution for some time to come (though it will officially cease upgrades in 2026 and go into maintenance mode). The designated successor, JavaFX, was removed *in toto* from the most recent Java release because few used it and it was more of a scripting language, not a GUI development language in the final analysis. At some point, a full featured GUI for QDL is certainly planned, but it is unclear where or how that should be written. Perhaps in Котлин...