


## Recursive Editing

Operation	Keystroke	Function	Note
<a href="#">Recursive Editing</a>	<p>As described in Emacs manual, a " <i>recursive edit</i> is a situation in which you are using Emacs commands to perform arbitrary editing while in the middle of another Emacs command."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although not often needed, this feature can be extremely useful in some situations such as extracting information from various sources during a search operation, or during a prompt or to perform some editing during a <a href="#">keyboard macro</a> recording and execution to create <a href="#">keyboard macros with variations</a>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See how this can be used in the <a href="#">recursive palindrome vimgolf challenge example</a> .</li> </ul> </li> <li>If you want to perform recursive editing during a prompt, when the minibuffer is used, then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>set the <b>enable-recursive-minibuffers</b> user-option to t. By default Emacs sets to nil to prevent recursive editing in the minibuffer because it's considered an advanced technique.</li> <li>also execute (minibuffer-depth-indicate-mode 1) to display the recursion level in the prompt.</li> </ul> </li> <li>With PEL, simply set the <b>pel-allow-recursive-minibuffer</b> to activate minibuffer editing and activate the minibuffer-depth-indicate-mode.</li> </ul> <p>During recursive editing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the modelling shows square brackets are placed around the parentheses that always surround the major and minor mode names.</li> </ul>		
Last updated on:	2025-08-29		
<b>Entering recursive edit</b>	There are several ways to enter recursive edit. The following rows provide some examples.		
... during the recording of an Emacs macro  See <a href="#">📖 Keyboard Macros</a>	<b>C-u C-x q</b>	<b>(kbd-macro-query FLAG)</b>	Used when defining a macro to force a query when the macro will be executed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With prefix argument (<b>C-u</b>), enters <b>recursive edit</b>, reading keyboard commands even within a kbd macro. You can give different commands each time the macro executes.</li> </ul> Later during execution of that macro, use <b>C-M-c</b> to exit the <b>recursive edit</b> .
... during a query replace operation	<b>C-r</b>	Typing <b>C-r</b> at the prompt of a query replace operation (started with <b>M-%</b> for example) allows you to enter recursive edit and perform some manipulations in the text while pausing the replace operation and resume it by later exiting the recursive editing (with <b>C-M-c</b> , see below). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See <a href="#">query-replace</a></li> </ul>	
... during a prompt in the minibuffer	<b>C-u M-!</b>	Execute a shell command and insert the result into the minibuffer as a response to the prompt. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See <a href="#">shell-command</a></li> </ul>  Under PEL you must set <b>pel-allow-recursive-minibuffer</b> user-option to t to be able to do this.	
Exit recursive edit	<b>C-M-c</b>	<b>(exit-recursive-edit)</b>	Exit from the innermost recursive edit or minibuffer.
Abort recursive edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>C-]</b></li> <li><b>C-x X a</b></li> </ul>	<b>(abort-recursive-edit)</b>	Abort the command that requested this recursive edit or minibuffer input.

### Recursive Editing — References

Topic & Link	Notes
<a href="#">GNU EMacs Manual - Recursive Edit</a>	Description of recursive editing and key bindings.
Other Articles on recursive editing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Making The Emacs Minibuffer Recursive @ Irreal</a></li> <li><a href="#">Exiting Recursive Edits @ Irreal</a></li> <li><a href="#">How to enter recursive edit mode and abort command inside it? @ Stack Overflow</a></li> <li><a href="#">What are the implications of working in multiple layers of recursive-edit? @ Stack Overflow</a></li> <li><a href="#">VimGolf in Emacs 001: Recursively Palindrome</a> : an example on how to use recursive edit during a keyboard macro.</li> </ul>