

File & Directory Local Variables

Operation	Keystroke	Function	Note
Emacs File Variables	<p>Emacs supports specifying Emacs variable values directly inside a text (or source code) file. The following commands can be used to add, modify and remove the first line of the file that contains the specification of the Emacs variable(s) for the file.</p> <p>These can be quite useful to specify things like tab-width for files that use embed hard tabs, for example.</p> <p>Emacs supports 2 ways to write the file variable specification inside a file, these commands support the first of those two ways: the specification of the variable written inside the very first line of the file after the <code>-*</code> separator. Read the GNU reference manual to learn about the other way.</p>		
Add a file variable	<code><f11> f v =</code>	(add-file-local-variable-prop-line VARIABLE VALUE &optional INTERACTIVE)	Add file-local VARIABLE with its VALUE to the <code>-*</code> line. <ul style="list-style-type: none">This command prompts for variable name and value.It deletes all existing settings of VARIABLE (except 'mode' and 'eval') and adds a new file-local VARIABLE with VALUE to the <code>-*</code> line.If there is no <code>-*</code> line at the beginning of the current file buffer then this function adds it.
Delete a file variable	<code><f11> f v -</code>	(delete-file-local-variable-prop-line VARIABLE &optional INTERACTIVE)	Delete all settings of file-local VARIABLE from the <code>-*</code> line.
Copy all directory file variables	<code><f11> f v c</code>	(copy-dir-locals-to-file-locals-prop-line)	Copy directory-local variables to the <code>-*</code> line.
Per-Directory Local Variables	<p>Emacs supports directory local variables that can apply to all files inside a given directory and its sub-directory tree. The variables can be restricted by major modes and sub-directories. These files are stored inside a file named <code>.dir-locals.el</code> stored in the directory it controls.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">File local variables override directory local variables, so main settings may be stored inside the directory and can then be fined-tuned inside files.Normally directory local variables are stored inside a file named <code>.dir-locals.el</code>. It can also be stored inside the file <code>.dir-locals-2.el</code>. Emacs loads them both, and loads the <code>-2</code> file after the other. That way you can put the <code>.dir-locals.el</code> under version control and use the other to make personal or temporary customizations. <p>The following commands can be used to create and modify the content of the <code>.dir-locals.el</code> file located in the current directory.</p> <p>👉 If you are familiar with Emacs Lisp it is probably easier to edit the <code>.dir-locals.el</code> file directly, following the format described in the Emacs Manual Directory Local Variables section and to be aware of the security concerns and the ability to force customization of settings that may be identified as unsafe by reading the Safety of File Variables section. You may want to customize the value of safe-local-variable-values to allow some of your values. In any case, its best to check the code in <code>.dir-locals.el</code> and to check the value of <code>safe-local-variable-values</code>.</p>		
List/change buffer's current default directory	<code>M-x cd <RET></code>	(cd DIR)	Prompt: shows current directory and allows to change the buffer's default directory to a new DIRectory. <ul style="list-style-type: none">If your environment includes a 'CDPATH' variable, try each one of that list of directories (separated by occurrences of 'path-separator') when resolving a relative directory name.The path separator is colon in GNU and GNU-like systems.
Add a directory variable	<code><f11> f v D =</code>	(add-dir-local-variable MODE VARIABLE VALUE)	Add directory-local VARIABLE with its VALUE and MODE to <code>.dir-locals.el</code> .
Delete a directory variable	<code><f11> f v D -</code>	(delete-dir-local-variable MODE VARIABLE)	Delete all MODE settings of file-local VARIABLE from <code>.dir-locals.el</code> .
Copy file local variable to directory .dir-locals.el	<code><f11> f v D C</code>	(copy-file-locals-to-dir-locals)	Copy file-local variables to <code>.dir-locals.el</code> .

File & Directory Local Variables — References

Topic & Link	Description
GNU Emacs Manual: File Variables	Describes the concept of Emacs file variables
GNU Emacs: Safety of File Variables	Describes the concept of Emacs directory local variables
GNU Emacs: Per-Directory Local Variables	Describes the safety issues related to Emacs file variables and Emacs way of dealing with safety.