# Recursive Editing

| Operation | Keystroke | Function | Note |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Recursive Editing** | As described in Emacs manual, a " *recursive edit* is a situation in which you are using Emacs commands to perform arbitrary editing while in the middle of another Emacs command.".<br>• 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 **keyboard macro** recording and execution to create **keyboard macros with variations**.<br>  • See how this can be used in the recursive palindrome vimgolf challenge example .<br>• If you want to perform recursive editing during a prompt, when the minibuffer is used, then:<br>  • set the **enable-recursive-minibuffers** user-option to t.  By default Emacs sets to nil to prevent recursive editing in the minibuffer because it's considered an advanced technique.<br>  • also execute (minibuffer-depth-indicate-mode 1) to display the recursion level in the prompt.<br>• With PEL, simply set the **pel-allow-recursive-minibuffer** to activate minibuffer editing and activate the minibuffer-depth-indicate-mode.<br><br>During recursive editing:<br>  • the modelling shows square brackets are placed around the parentheses that always surround the major and minor mode names. | | |
| <div align="right">Last updated on:</div> | 2025-08-29 | | |
| **Entering recursive edit** | There are several ways to enter recursive edit.   The following rows provide some examples. | | |
| **... during the recording of an Emacs macro**<br><br>**See ⬚ Keyboard Macros** | `C-u C-x q` | (**kbd-macro-query** FLAG) | Used when defining a macro to force a query when the macro will be executed.<br>• With prefix argument (**C-u**), enters **recursive edit**, reading keyboard commands even within a kbd macro.  You can give different commands each time the macro executes.<br>Later during execution of that macro, use `C-M-c` to exit the **recursive edit**. |
| **... during a query replace operation** | `C-r` | Typing `C-r` at the prompt of a query replace operation (started with `M-%` 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 `C-M-c`, see below).<br>• See **query-replace** | |
| **... during a prompt in the minibuffer** | `C-u M-!` | Execute a shell command and insert the result into the minibuffer as a response to the prompt.<br>• See **shell-command** | |
| | | | |
| **Exit recursive edit** | `C-M-c` | (**exit-recursive-edit**) | Exit from the innermost recursive edit or minibuffer. |
| **Abort recursive edit** | • `C-]`<br>• `C-x X a` | (**abort-recursive-edit**) | Abort the command that requested this recursive edit or minibuffer input. |

# Rectangle — References

| Topic & Link | Notes |
|---|---|
| **GNU EMacs Manual - Recursive Edit** | Description of recursive editing and key bindings. |
| **Other Articles on recursive editing.** | • Making The Emacs Minibuffer Recursive @ Irreal<br>• Exiting Recursive Edits @ Irreal<br>• How to enter recursive edit mode and abort command inside it? @ Stack Overflow<br>• What are the implications of working in multiple layers of recursive-edit? @ Stack Overflow<br>• VimGolf in Emacs 001: Recursively Palindrome : an example on how to use recursive edit during a keyboard macro. |