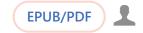🏠 → The JavaScript language → An introduction

📅 11th September 2021

Code editors

A code editor is the place where programmers spend most of their time.

There are two main types of code editors: IDEs and lightweight editors. Many people use one tool of each type.

IDE

The term IDE (Integrated Development Environment) refers to a powerful editor with many features that usually operates on a "whole project." As the name suggests, it's not just an editor, but a full-scale "development environment."

An IDE loads the project (which can be many files), allows navigation between files, provides autocompletion based on the whole project (not just the open file), and integrates with a version management system (like git), a testing environment, and other "project-level" stuff.

If you haven't selected an IDE yet, consider the following options:

- Visual Studio Code (cross-platform, free).
- WebStorm (cross-platform, paid).

For Windows, there's also "Visual Studio", not to be confused with "Visual Studio Code". "Visual Studio" is a paid and mighty Windows-only editor, well-suited for the .NET platform. It's also good at JavaScript. There's also a free version Visual Studio Community.

Many IDEs are paid, but have a trial period. Their cost is usually negligible compared to a qualified developer's salary, so just choose the best one for you.

Lightweight editors

"Lightweight editors" are not as powerful as IDEs, but they're fast, elegant and simple.

They are mainly used to open and edit a file instantly.

The main difference between a "lightweight editor" and an "IDE" is that an IDE works on a project-level, so it loads much more data on start, analyzes the project structure if needed and so on. A lightweight editor is much faster if we need only one file.

In practice, lightweight editors may have a lot of plugins including directory-level syntax analyzers and autocompleters, so there's no strict border between a lightweight editor and an IDE.

The following options deserve your attention:

- Atom (cross-platform, free).
- Sublime Text (cross-platform, shareware).
- Notepad++ (Windows, free).
- Vim and Emacs are also cool if you know how to use them.

Let's not argue

The editors in the lists above are those that either I or my friends whom I consider good developers have been using for a long time and are happy with.

There are other great editors in our big world. Please choose the one you like the most.

The choice of an editor, like any other tool, is individual and depends on your projects, habits, and personal preferences.

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