

The nano editor in Linux – A Complete Beginner's Reference to the nano editor

By Jayant Verma / September 17, 2020

NANO EDITOR IN LINUX



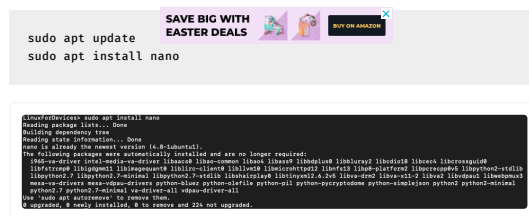
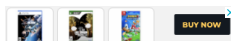
Nano is a user friendly text editor available on Linux. It is easy to learn as compared to other text editors such as vim and emacs. Nano is a modeless, WYSIWYG command-line text editor. Modeless means that it doesn't have modes like Vim editor and WYSIWYG means What You See Is What You Get.

Beginner's reference to the nano editor in Linux

This tutorial will cover everything you need to know in order to get started with Nano editor.

1. Install the nano editor

Nano editor comes pre-installed with your Linux distribution. However, if you need to install it you can follow the steps below. Run `sudo apt update` and then install nano editor.



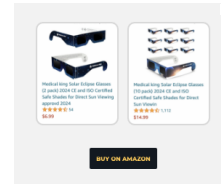
Install Nano

This will install nano editor on your system and you can start editing your files.

2. Creating a new file

Creating a new file using nano editor is as simple as typing nano in your terminal and hitting enter.

nano



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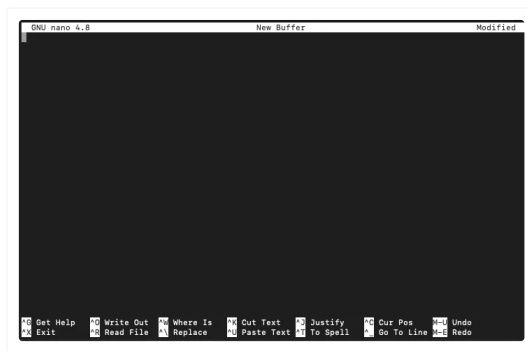
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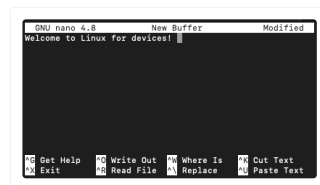
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This opens a new buffer where you can start writing. Unlike **Vim editor** you don't need to enter any mode to start editing. Let's write some text.



Once you are done with writing your text, you can give your file a name and save it. We will see this next. To edit an existing file in nano editor use :



```
nano [filename]
```

3. Save a file and exit the nano

Once you are done editing your file. You can save and exit. Nano provides you with a list of controls at the bottom.



- Here (^) means **Ctrl key** and M- means **Alt key**.
- We can see that the shortcut to exit is **Cntrl + X**.
- When you press **Ctrl + X**, nano editor will ask whether you want to save your changes.



Press "y".

Nano editor will then ask you to name your file. In case you are editing an existing file, the filename will appear here.



Name The File

Give your file a name and hit enter. This will save your file and exit the editor.



Filename

To check if the file was created, you can use [cat command](#).

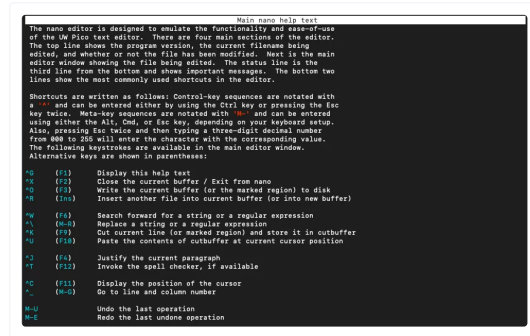


```
cat [filename]
```

```
LinuxForDevices> cat LinuxforDevices.txt
Welcome to Linux for devices!

LinuxForDevices> █
```

You can get the entire list of shortcuts available in nano editor. To get the list press **Ctrl + G**.



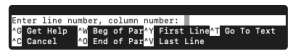
4. Navigating the nano editor interface

To navigate through the text you can use the arrow keys. Alternatively you can also use the shortcuts available in nano editor.

These shortcuts are :

- **Ctrl+F**: move the cursor forward.
- **Ctrl+B**: move the cursor backward.
- **Ctrl+Space**: move forward one word.
- **Alt+Space**: move backward one word.
- **Ctrl+V**: move to the next page.
- **Ctrl+Y**: move to the previous page.
- **Ctrl+N**: move to the next line.
- **Ctrl+P**: move to the previous line.

Alternatively you can also use **Ctrl+_** to jump to a particular line.



5. Select/Copy/Paste

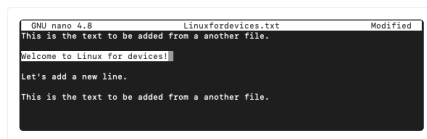
Nano editor provides you with the option to select content, copy the selected content and paste the copied content.



The shortcut to select is **Alt + A**.

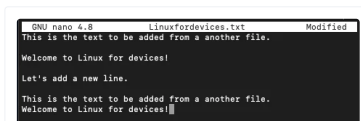


Mark set means that now you can use the arrow keys to start selecting in your file.



Selection In A File

To copy the selection use **Alt + 6**. To paste the copied content use **Ctrl + U**.



6. Search and Replace

Nano editor gives you the option to search for text in your file. To search in your file use **Ctrl + W**.



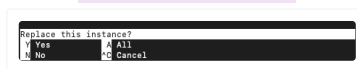
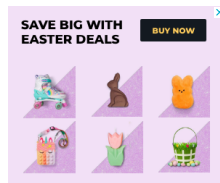
Search

- You can type the word/text you want to search.
- To move among occurrences of the word use **Alt+W**.
- You can also replace words using **Ctrl + **.



Replace With

After searching, you have to type in the replacement for the word. Nano gives you the option to decide whether you want to replace just this particular instance or all the instances.



To replace the current instance press **Y**, to replace all the instances press **A**.

7. Add contents of another file

While editing a file in Nano you can add the contents of another file as well. You can do this using **Ctrl + R**. Nano will ask you for the name of the file to copy text from.

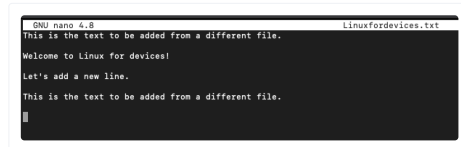


Insert From File

Text from the new file will be added at the current cursor position.



Text To Add

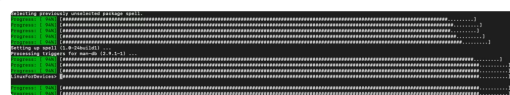


Text From Another File

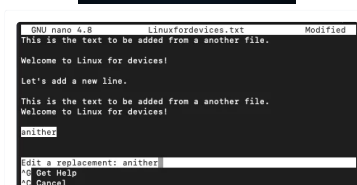
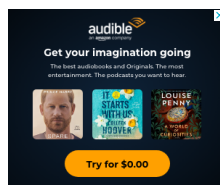
8. Spell check text in nano

Nano editor also offers the option to run a spell check on your file. You will first have to install spell check. To install spell check use the command:

```
sudo apt install spell
```



To run spell check use **Ctrl + T**.



Spell Check Wrong Spelling

You can replace the word with its correct spelling.

```
GNU nano 2.8.0 LinuxForDevices.txt Modified
This is the text to be added from a another file.

Welcome to Linux for devices!

Let's add a new line.

This is the text to be added from a another file.
Welcome to Linux for devices!

another
Edit a replacement: another
^G Get Help
^C Cancel
```

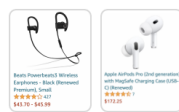
Spell Check Correct Spelling

After entering the correct spelling, nano editor will ask whether you want to replace all instances.

```
Replace this instance?
^Y Yes      ^A All
^N No       ^C Cancel
```

Conclusion

This tutorial was about the basics of nano editor that will help you get started.
Read its [documentation](#) to learn more.



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