**What is Emacs?**

Emacs is a text editor designed for operating systems and available Windows, and more. Users love Emacs because it features efficient commands for common but complex actions and for the plugins and configuration hacks that have developed around it for nearly 40 years. Because it's an old editor that was developed well before modern computer conventions and terminology existed (for instance, you "visit" instead of "opening" a file, and you "write" instead of "save," and so on), Emacs is often viewed as complex and even mysterious. As time has shown, however, once you learn the basics, you have a powerful, efficient, and extremely hackable editor for life. Learning Emacs can be difficult because it uses keyboard combinations fundamentally different from the way modern computers do. There's a method to this apparent madness, though, because Emacs is built to be flexible in how it's used. This includes devices without traditional keyboards and over networks that may not transmit modifier keys (such as **Ctrl** and **Alt**) correctly.By default, Emacs keybindings revolve mostly around the **Ctrl** and **Alt** keys. In the documentation, the **Ctrl** key is represented as **C** and the **Alt** key as **M** (because before the **Alt** key was called "Alt," it was called "Meta"). When you need to press the **Ctrl** key and another key together, the action is written as, for example, **C-x** (meaning **Ctrl+X**) or **C-c** (**Ctrl+C**). The same goes for Alt/Meta: if you're meant to press **Alt-X**, then the notation is **M-x**.