

Files and **Buffers** and **Windows** and **Tabs** (and **More!**)

Bill Odom (billodom@gmail.com)
St. Louis UNIX Users Group

Definitions

File

Buffer

- ✦ Usually associated with a file, but doesn't have to be
- ✦ Usually has a name, but doesn't have to
- ✦ Doesn't have to be visible
- ✦ Several different types
(that you mostly don't have to care about)

Window

- ✦ Displays the contents of a buffer
- ✦ Always at least one window open
- ✦ More than one window can display the same buffer

Tab

- ✦ A group of windows
- ✦ Not like tabs in other editors
- ✦ Sometimes called “tab pages”
- ✦ Better name might be “layout” or “viewport”

Instance

- ✦ A single running copy of Vim
- ✦ GUI or terminal
- ✦ Doesn't share (well) with other Vim instances

Loading Multiple Files

- ✧ `vim *.sh`
- ✧ `vim foo.txt bar.txt baz.txt`
- ✧ `vim -o widget.c header.h`
- ✧ `vim -p widget.c header.h`

Loading Multiple Files

- ✧ `:edit foo.txt`
- ✧ `:args *.sh`
- ✧ `:args foo.txt bar.txt baz.txt`
- ✧ The args list is modifiable

Moving Between Buffers

- ✧ `:set hidden`
- ✧ `:ls`
- ✧ `:b N`
- ✧ `:b name`
- ✧ `:bfirst :blast :bnext :bprev`
- ✧ `<C-^>`

Closing Buffers

- ✧ :bdelete
- ✧ :bd *N*
- ✧ :bd *name*
- ✧ :bd!

Buffer Settings

- ✦ hidden
- ✦ switchbuf

Buffer Commands

- ✦ :ball
- ✦ :bufdo

Creating Windows

- ✧ `:split`
- ✧ `:vsplit`
- ✧ `<C-W> s`
- ✧ `<C-W> v`

Moving Between Windows

- ✧ <C-W> h
- ✧ <C-W> j
- ✧ <C-W> k
- ✧ <C-W> l

Moving Between Windows

- ✦ $\langle C-W \rangle p$
- ✦ $\langle C-W \rangle \langle C-W \rangle$

Resizing Windows

- ✧ <C-W> +
- ✧ <C-W> -
- ✧ <C-W> <
- ✧ <C-W> >
- ✧ ...or just use the mouse

Resizing Windows

- ✧ `<C-W> =`
- ✧ `<C-W> _`
- ✧ `<C-W> |`

Moving Windows

- ✧ <C-W> H
- ✧ <C-W> J
- ✧ <C-W> K
- ✧ <C-W> L

- ✧ <C-W> x

Closing Windows

- ✦ :q
- ✦ <C-W> c
- ✦ :hide

Closing *Other* Windows

- ✦ :only
- ✦ <C-W> o

Window Commands

- ✦ :vertical
- ✦ :windo
- ✦ :wincmd

Window Keys

- ✦ More than you'll ever need (or want)
- ✦ Good candidates for your own key maps
- ✦ `:help windows.txt`
- ✦ `:help ctrl-w`

Window Settings

- ✦ splitbelow
- ✦ splitright
- ✦ winminheight
- ✦ winminwidth
- ✦ winheight

Creating Tab Pages

- ✦ :tabnew
- ✦ :tabedit
- ✦ <C-W> T

Moving Between Tab Pages

- ✦ `gt`
- ✦ `gT`
- ✦ `Ngt`
- ✦ Often mapped to OS-specific keystrokes

Moving Tab Pages

- ✦ :tabmove
- ✦ :tabmove *N*
- ✦ ...or just use the mouse (in the GUI)

Closing Tab Pages

- ✦ `:q` in last window
- ✦ `:tabclose`
- ✦ GUI often provides a close button

Closing *Other* Tab Pages

- ✦ :tabclose *N*
- ✦ :tabonly

Tab Page Settings

- ✦ `tabline`
- ✦ `guitablabel`
- ✦ May be OS-specific options as well

Tab Page Commands

- ✦ :tab
- ✦ :tabs
- ✦ :tabdo

What Good are Tab Pages?

- ✦ Full-page help, docs, etc.
- ✦ Alternate layouts
- ✦ Temporary work
- ✦ Diffs
- ✦ Multiple projects
- ✦ Mini-sessions

Instances

- ✦ A single instance includes all buffers, windows, tabs, settings, etc.
- ✦ Easy to create more than one, especially in the terminal
- ✦ ...but that's usually not necessary
- ✦ ...and usually isn't a good idea

Plugins

- ✧ NERD Tree
- ✧ BufExplorer
- ✧ MiniBufExpl

Resources

- **godlygeek's explanation of buffers, windows, and tabs**
<http://billodom.com/vim/vim-buffers-windows-tabs-explanation.txt>
- **VimCasts - How to use buffers/windows/tabs**
<http://vimcasts.org/episodes/working-with-buffers/>
<http://vimcasts.org/episodes/working-with-windows/>
<http://vimcasts.org/episodes/working-with-tabs/>
<http://vimcasts.org/episodes/how-to-use-tabs/>
- **Derek Wyatt - Working with Many Files**
<http://vimeo.com/6306508>
- **Vim Tips Wiki - Tabs**
<http://vim.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Tabs>