**Turn On or Off Color Syntax Highlighting In vi or vim Editor**

by Vivek Gite on October 30, 2006 *last updated* October 26, 2015

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How do I turn on or off color syntax highlighting in vi or vim text editor on a Linux or Unix-like operating system?  
  
Vim or vi is a text editor. It can be used to edit all kinds of plain text files, editing programs, and UNIX/Linux configuration files. Vim supports additional options and it includes a lot of enhancements above old good vi text editor.

Syntax highlighting is nothing but a feature of vi/vim text editors that displays text, especially source code, in different colors and fonts according to the category of terms.

**Task: Turn on color syntax highlighting**

Open a file, for example open existing file called file.c, enter:  
$ vi file.c

Now press ESC key, type “: syntax on” i.e. type as follows:  
:syntax on  
C source code editing while syntax highlighting is on in vi or vim:

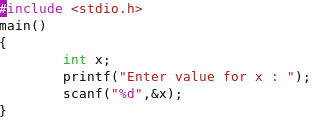
[](http://s0.cyberciti.org/uploads/faq/2006/10/vim-color-syntax-on.png)

Fig.01: Turn on or off color syntax highlighting in vi or vim

**Task: Turn off color syntax highlighting**

To turn it back off, press ESC key, type : syntax off  
:syntax off

**How do I make the syntax highlighting permanent?**

You can edit ~/.vimrc file and add append vim command syntax on to it. This ensures that vim will start with color syntax highlighting option:  
$ cd  
$ vi .vimrc  
Append the following line:  
syntax on