

# Emacs Basics

## Physics 91SI Spring 2011 Handout 10

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### Introduction

There's a link to an emacs reference card on the handouts page that gives you a comprehensive introduction to the basics, but there are probably more commands on there than you want to look through. This handout teaches you the absolute basics.

Remember `C-<key>` means "`Ctrl-<key>`" and `M-<key>` means "`Alt-<key>`" or "`Esc-<key>`" (you don't have to hold Esc down, but you do have to hold Ctrl and Alt). If you're on SecureCRT, "`Alt-<key>`" won't work by default because Alt puts you in the menu bar. Ask Alex how to change that if you'd like to use Alt.

### Opening and Saving Files

The easiest way to open a file is from the terminal, where you type `emacs <filename> [&]`. Once you already have emacs open, you can use the command `C-x C-f` to open a new file in the current buffer.

Save with `C-x C-s`. You can do "save as" by doing `C-x C-w`.

### Moving the Cursor

Obviously you can use the arrow keys to move around, as well as Home/End/PgUp/PgDn. As a keyboard shortcut to Home and End, you can use `C-a` and `C-e`. These two shortcuts also work at your terminal, which is REALLY handy!

### Undo

You can use `C-/` or `C-_` to undo your previous action.

### Find/Replace

If you type `C-s`, you start something called "Incremental Search". Start typing what you want to search for, and emacs will automatically find the next string that matches your search. If you want to go to the next match, type `C-s` again.

To do find/replace, use `M-%` (aka Alt-Shift-5). Type the string you want to find and press enter, then type the string you want to replace it with and press enter. Emacs will highlight each instance of the string it finds. If you type “y” it will replace and move to the next instance. If you type “n” it won’t replace but will still move to the next instance.

## Cut and Paste

Emacs has cut and paste functionality, but it’s a little bit weird. First you have to select what is called the *region*. You can do this by clicking and dragging with your mouse, or you can type `C-<space>` or `C-@` to set a “mark”, in which case the region is any text between the mark and your cursor.

Once you’ve selected a region, you can type `M-w` to copy or `C-w` to cut. The text is copied to something called the “kill ring”. You can paste, or “yank”, by typing `C-y`.

A handy shortcut is `C-k` (“kill”), which cuts everything from the cursor to the end of the current line. I often use `C-a C-k` to delete the line my cursor is at. This also copies the line you killed to the kill ring, which means you can paste the line you just killed. (If you use `C-k` multiple times in a row before pushing any other key, it copies everything you killed into the kill ring. This is how you can copy more than one line with `C-k`.)

Note that `C-k` also works on the command line.

## Buffers

A “buffer” is just a window where you can edit in emacs. You can have multiple buffers open at the same time, which is awesome. Try `C-x 2` and `C-x 3` to split buffers, then use `C-x C-b` or `C-x b` to swap around buffers. (You can also just choose a buffer from the “Buffers” menu bar.) Close extra buffers with `C-x 0`.

## Editing `~/ .emacs`

Like the `.hgrc` and `.cshrc` files in your home directory, the `.emacs` file stores a bunch of settings.

You can look up things online and type them in here, but an easier way to change it is to go just open emacs and in the menu bar click Options -> Customize Emacs -> Browse Customization Groups. You can click around and change anything you want.

In particular, one you’ll want to do is open Environment -> Initialization and turn “Inhibit Startup Screen” on. Make sure you click “Save for future sessions” at the top.