Vim Quick Reference

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1 Introduction

Vi is a text editor that originated in BSD UNIX in the mid 1970s. It was meant as a replacement to ed, a more limited text editor. Unlike ed, vi is a full screen editor featuring numerous commands to copy/paste and otherwise manipulate text. It is a popular programming editor in the UNIX community. Vi Improved, or simply vim, is a new editor based on vi that offers more capabilities over its older brother vi. Some of these new capabilities include: syntax highlighting, multiple buffers, and split screen editing.

2 Getting Started

To start vim, simply type 'vim' in the shell. On some UNIX flavors, one can type 'vi' instead of 'vim', but on other UNIX flavors 'vi' and 'vim' are different. Optionally, one can start 'vim' specifying the filename to open 'vim myfile'. Vi/Vim are mode based editors and so you cannot begin editing without placing them into insert mode. To place vim into insert mode press 'i'. You will see an `--INSERT--` message at the bottom. Once in insert mode, you can begin editing. To put vim back into command mode, press ESC. Once in command mode, you can save your file by typing `:w myfile` which will write a file called 'myfile'. If you had opened an existing file you can simply type `:w`. Finally, to exit vim, you can type `:q`.

3 Quick Reference

Command	Description
ESC	Escape to command mode
i	Insert mode, can write text
a	Append text, same as 'i' but moves cursor over one space
o	New line, same as 'i' but creates new line below cursor
O	Same as 'o' but creates new line above cursor
x	Delete character at cursor
r	Replace character at cursor
:q	Quit vim
:w [filename]	Write file (filename is optional)
:[command]!	Force command (e.g. :w! forces a write)
:#	Goto line #
yy	Copy line at cursor
dd	Cut/Delete line at cursor (Can be pasted with 'p')
p	Paste text at cursor
# [command]	Perform command # times

4 Resources

For more information and practice you can take an interactive tutorial. Simply run 'vimtutor' in the shell and follow the instructions. This is a good way to learn Vi/Vim.