

# ATM 419 – Exorcising the evil vi

Spring, 2016 – Fovell

The vi editor has two modes: full screen view, and command line entry mode. When you invoke the vi editor with a command like

```
vi test.f
```

you are put immediately into full screen mode. In this mode, you can move around – horizontally and/or vertically – using the cursor (arrow) keys. Some shortcut operations while in in full screen mode include:

- \$ – moves cursor to end of current line
- caret (above the number “6”) or 0 (zero) – moves cursor to beginning of current line
- w – moves cursor one word to the right (to the beginning of the next word)
- e – moves cursor to the right (to the end of the word)
- b – moves cursor one word to the left
- SPACEBAR – moves cursor one space to the right
- h – moves cursor one space to the left
- H – moves cursor to first line on page
- L – moves cursor to bottom line on page
- G – moves cursor to last line of file
- 1G – moves cursor to first line of file
- <control>f – scroll forward by one screenful
- <control>b – scroll backwards by one screenful
- <control>u – scroll up by one-half screenful
- <control>d – scroll down by one screenful

Here are some commands for modifying text while in full screen mode:

- r [char] – replace character in present location with whatever you’ve typed as [char].
- i – inserts new text *before* the current cursor location.
- a – appends new text *after* the current cursor location.
- C – replaces text from cursor position to end of line with entered text
- x – deletes character at present cursor location.
- o – insert a blank line below the current line (lowercase “o”)
- O – insert a blank line above the current line (uppercase “O”)
- J – join next line to the end of the current line
- u – **UNDO** last action! (lowercase “u”)
- U – restore current line to original (uppercase “U”)
- / – drop into command line mode for a forward search
- ? – drop into command line mode for a backwards search
- dw – delete the current word (and the space following it)
- dd – delete the entire current line

When you are finished inserting or appending text in full screen mode, you terminate the task with CONTROL-[ (left square bracket), or the ESC key (although the latter may not function properly on some computers). This returns you to full screen mode. You don’t need to do this for replace (“r”) or delete (“x”) tasks since they operate only on one character at a time.

To get to command line mode, you type a **colon** while in full screen mode. (If this isn’t working, and you are entering a colon into your text instead, you need to ESC first.) Then, to get back to full screen mode, simply hit the RETURN key.

Things to do in command line mode:

- `/pattern` – does forward search for the character “pattern”. If the search reaches the end of file, it will wrap around back to the file’s beginning and keep looking.
- `?pattern` – does that search backwards from the present location. This search also wraps.
- `q` – quit (only if you made no changes to the file)
- `q!` – quit *WITHOUT saving changes made to file*
- `wq` – save changes and quit (“w” = write file)
- `ZZ` – also saves changes and quits (those are uppercase)
- `w` – save changes but keep file open for editing

Note that `vi` does not edit the file itself, but rather a COPY of it. Thus, **nothing is saved until you explicitly command it**. Instead, while editing your file, `vi` creates a “swap file” that is removed when you exit `vi` normally after saving or discarding your changes. If your `vi` session ends abnormally, however, the swap file is NOT removed, and `vi` will issue this complaint the next time you try to edit the file

E325: ATTENTION

Found a swap file by the name ".crap.txt.swp"

```
    owned by: atm419    dated: Mon Jan 18 12:04:31 2016
    file name: ~atm419/WRFV371_ATM419_SB/crap.txt
    modified: no
    user name: atm419    host name: headnode.rit.albany.edu
    process ID: 19158 (still running)
```

While opening file "crap.txt"

```
    dated: Mon Jan 18 12:04:30 2016
```

[...lines deleted...]

Swap file ".crap.txt.swp" already exists!

[O]pen Read-Only, (E)dit anyway, (R)ecover, (Q)uit, (A)bort:

Note the filename `.crap.txt.swp` starts with a period, which means it is hidden by default when you use the `ls` command. (`ls -a` would reveal this file.) To remove this file, type `rm .crap.txt.swp`.