

Nano Cheatsheet

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GNU Nano is a simple, modeless terminal editor. Every keystroke is either text or a command — no modes to remember. Ideal for quick edits and SSH sessions.

Basic Keybindings

```
# Start Nano
nano file.txt          # open or create file
nano +10 file.txt     # open at line 10
nano -l file.txt      # show line numbers
nano -B file.txt      # create backup on save (.save)
nano -m file.txt      # enable mouse support
```

Key	Action	Description
Ctrl+G	Help	Show built-in help (lists all shortcuts)
Ctrl+O	Save	Write file to disk (prompts for filename)
Ctrl+X	Exit	Close Nano (prompts to save if modified)
Ctrl+K	Cut	Cut current line (or selected text)
Ctrl+U	Paste	Paste last cut text
Ctrl+T	Spell	Run spell checker (if configured)
Ctrl+J	Justify	Reformat/justify current paragraph

Navigation

Key	Action
Ctrl+A	Beginning of line
Ctrl+E	End of line
Ctrl+Y	Page up
Ctrl+V	Page down
Ctrl+F	Move forward one character
Ctrl+B	Move back one character

Key	Action
Ctrl+Space	Next word
Alt+Space	Previous word
Ctrl+_	Go to specific line (enter line number)
Alt+G	Go to specific line (alternative)
Ctrl+C	Show current cursor position (line, column)
Alt+]]	Go to matching bracket
Alt+(or Alt+)	Go to previous/next paragraph

Search & Replace

```
# Search
Ctrl+W      # search forward
Alt+W      # search backward
Alt+Q      # search without regex

# Replace
Ctrl+\      # search and replace (prompted)
# Enter search text, press Enter
# Enter replacement text
# Y = replace this, N = skip, A = replace all, Ctrl+C = cancel
```

Cut, Copy & Paste

Key	Action
Alt+A	Start/select text marking
Ctrl+6	Toggle mark (alternative)
Ctrl+K	Cut marked text or current line
Alt+6	Copy marked text (doesn't cut)
Ctrl+U	Paste (uncut) last cut/copied text

File Operations

Key	Action
Ctrl+R	Insert file (read a file into current buffer)
Ctrl+O	Write out (save) — Alt+D to save with different name
Ctrl+X	Exit

.nanorc Configuration

```
# ~/.nanorc – Nano configuration

# Line display
set linenumbers
set constantshow      # always show cursor position
```

```

# Editing behavior
set tabsize 4
set tabstospaces
set autoindent
set cutoff          # hard-wrap at 80 chars (or set fill 80)
set multibuffer     # insert-to-end, not replacing buffer

# Backup & history
set backup
set historylog
set mouse

# Syntax highlighting
include /usr/share/nano/*.nanorc
# Or include specific files:
include /usr/share/nano/sh.nanorc
include /usr/share/nano/python.nanorc
include /usr/share/nano/javascript.nanorc
include /usr/share/nano/html.nanorc
include /usr/share/nano/yaml.nanorc
include /usr/share/nano/dockerfile.nanorc
include /usr/share/nano/systemd.nanorc

```

Custom Syntax Highlighting

```

# Add to ~/.nanorc

# Custom syntax for .env files
syntax "env" "\.env$"
color brightwhite "^.*="
color cyan "^[A-Z_]+="
color yellow "\"[^\"]*"
color green "\'[^']*'"

# Custom syntax for log files
syntax "logs" "\.log$"
color brightred "ERROR"
color brightyellow "WARN(ING)?"
color brightgreen "INFO"
color brightmagenta "DEBUG"
color blue "^[0-9]{4}-[0-9]{2}-[0-9]{2}"

```

Common Flags

```

nano          # basic editor
nano -B file.txt # create backup file on save
nano -E file.txt # tab-to-space conversion
nano -l file.txt # show line numbers
nano -m file.txt # enable mouse
nano -S file.txt # smooth scrolling
nano -c file.txt # show cursor position constantly
nano -i file.txt # auto-indent new lines
nano -u file.txt # undo support (default in modern Nano)
nano -r 120 file.txt # set fill column to 120
nano -v file.txt # view mode (readonly)

```

```
nano -w file.txt      # don't wrap long lines
nano -R file.txt      # enable regular expression search
```

Practical Nano Workflow

```
# Quick SSH config edit
ssh server
sudo nano /etc/ssh/sshd_config
# Edit, Ctrl+O to save, Ctrl+X to exit
sudo systemctl restart sshd

# Edit a Docker Compose file with syntax highlighting
nano docker-compose.yml

# Create a new script with line numbers
nano -l -i deploy.sh

# View a log file (readonly mode)
nano -vw /var/log/syslog
# Search with Ctrl+W, page with Ctrl+Y/Ctrl+V
```

Tips

Enable Syntax Highlighting System-Wide

```
``bash
```

Install Nano syntax files (Debian/Ubuntu)

```
sudo apt install nano-syntax-highlighting
```

Enable all syntax highlighting for all users

```
echo "include /usr/share/nano/*.nanorc" | sudo tee -a /etc/nanorc ``
```

Choosing Nano

```
# Quick SSH config edit on a remote server
nano /etc/nginx/nginx.conf

# Edit a Docker Compose file with syntax highlighting
nano docker-compose.yml

# View a log file (readonly mode)
nano -vw /var/log/syslog
```

Next Steps

- [Bash CLI Tools Cheat Sheet](#) — Unix command-line utilities for power users
- [Vim Cheat Sheet](#) — Powerful modal editor for rapid editing
- [Emacs Cheat Sheet](#) — Extensible Lisp-based editor