vim_cheatsheet

Vim is modal: Normal mode moves and edits, Insert mode types text, Visual mode selects, and : opens the command line. The keys below work in Normal mode unless they say otherwise; press Esc to get back to it. Commands that start with a colon are typed at the bottom and run with Enter. Neovim uses the same keys: switch to nvim and the shell commands update. Click a command to copy it.

:modes — 10 keys

Get into a mode, and back to Normal with Esc.

Insert before the cursor / after it

`i` / `a`

Insert at the start / end of the line

`I` / `A`

Open a new line below / above

`o` / `O`

Visual mode by character

`v`

Visual mode by line

`V`

Visual block mode

`Ctrl` `v`

Replace mode (overwrite as you type)

`R`

Back to Normal mode

`Esc` / `Ctrl` `[`

Open the command line

`:`

Run one Normal command from Insert mode

`Ctrl` `o`

:motions — 15 keys

Move around. Put a number first to repeat (5j moves down 5 lines).

Left, down, up, right

`h` / `j` / `k` / `l`

Next word / back a word / end of word

`w` / `b` / `e`

Same, by space-separated WORD

`W` / `B` / `E`

Start of line / first character / end of line

`0` / `^` / `$`

First line / last line of the file

`gg` / `G`

Go to line 42

`42G`

`:42`

Half a page down / up

`Ctrl` `d` / `Ctrl` `u`

A page down / up

`Ctrl` `f` / `Ctrl` `b`

Top / middle / bottom of the screen

`H` / `M` / `L`

Jump to the matching bracket

`%`

Jump to / just before a character on the line

`f{char}` / `t{char}`

Repeat that jump forward / backward

`;` / `,`

Previous / next paragraph

`{` / `}`

Scroll so the cursor is centred / at the top / at the bottom

`zz` / `zt` / `zb`

Back / forward through the jump list

`Ctrl` `o` / `Ctrl` `i`

:editing

14 keys

Change text without leaving Normal mode.

Delete the character under the cursor

`x`

Delete the line

`dd`

Delete to the end of the line

`D`

Copy (yank) the line

`yy`

Paste after / before the cursor

`p` / `P`

Undo / redo

`u` / `Ctrl` `r`

Repeat the last change

`.`

Join the next line onto this one

`J`

Replace one character

`r{char}`

Toggle case of the character

`~`

Indent / unindent the line

`>>` / `<<`

Change the whole line / to the end of the line

`cc` / `C`

Swap two characters / two lines

`xp` / `ddp`

Increment / decrement the number under the cursor

`Ctrl` `a` / `Ctrl` `x`

:operators

11 keys

Operator + motion or text object: d (delete), c (change), y (yank).

Delete to the end of the word

`dw`

Change the word under the cursor

`ciw`

Delete the word and the space after it

`daw`

Change inside quotes / parentheses / braces

`ci"` / `ci(` / `ci{`

Change inside an HTML tag

`cit`

Delete the paragraph

`dap`

Yank inside braces

`yi{`

Delete up to a character

`dt{char}`

Uppercase / lowercase the word

`gUiw` / `guiw`

Re-indent the paragraph

`=ap`

Re-indent the whole file

`gg=G`

:search

10 keys

Find text and substitute it.

Search forward / backward

`/pattern` / `?pattern`

Next / previous match

`n` / `N`

Search the word under the cursor forward / backward

`*` / `#`

Replace in the whole file

```
:%s/old/new/g
```

Replace in the whole file, asking each time

```
:%s/old/new/gc
```

Replace on the current line

```
:s/old/new/g
```

Replace in the visual selection

```
:'<,'>s/old/new/g
```

Clear the search highlight

```
:noh
```

Delete every line that matches

```
:g/pattern/d
```

Delete every line that does not match

```
:v/pattern/d
```

:visual

6 keys

Select first, then act on the selection.

Jump to the other end of the selection

`o`

Select the last selection again

`gv`

Indent / unindent the selection

`>` / `<`

Yank / delete / change the selection

`y` / `d` / `c`

Insert / append on every line of a block

`Ctrl` `v` then `I` / `Ctrl` `v` then `A`

Sort the selected lines

```
:'<,'>sort
```

:files

13 keys

Save, quit and move between open files.

Save

```
:w
```

Save and quit

`ZZ`

```
:wq   :x
```

Quit

```
:q
```

Quit without saving

`ZQ`

```
:q!
```

Save with sudo (Vim only)

```
:w !sudo tee %
```

Open a file

```
:e path/to/file
```

Reload the file, dropping changes

```
:e!
```

Save as a new file

```
:w newname.txt
```

Insert another file below the cursor

```
:r path/to/file
```

List buffers

```
:ls
```

Next / previous buffer

```
:bn   :bp
```

Go to buffer 2

```
:b 2
```

Close the buffer

```
:bd
```

:windows

8 keys

Split the screen and use tab pages.

Split horizontally / vertically

Ctrl w then s / Ctrl w then v

:sp :vsp

Move to the window in a direction

Ctrl w then h / Ctrl w then j / Ctrl w then k / Ctrl w then l

Go to the next window

Ctrl w then w

Close the window / every other window

Ctrl w then q / Ctrl w then o

Make all windows the same size

Ctrl w then =

Open a new tab

:tabnew :tabe path/to/file

Next / previous tab

gt / gT

Close the tab

:tabclose

:registers

9 keys

Named clipboards, bookmarks and recorded keystrokes.

Yank the line into register a / paste from it

"ayy / "ap

Yank to / paste from the system clipboard

"+y / "+p

Show all registers

:reg

Set mark a

ma

Jump to mark a / to its line

`a / 'a

List marks

:marks

Record a macro into a, then stop

qa / q

Play macro a / play the last macro

@a / @@

Play macro a ten times

10@a

:config

8 keys

Run at the : prompt, or put in your vimrc without the colon.

Line numbers / relative line numbers

:set number :set relativenumber

Highlight search results as you type

:set hlsearch incsearch

Case-insensitive search unless you type capitals

:set ignorecase smartcase

Indent with 2 spaces

:set expandtab shiftwidth=2 tabstop=2

Turn on syntax highlighting

:syntax on

Run a shell command

:!ls

Insert the output of a shell command

:r !date

Open help on a topic

:help motion

:cli

6 keys

Start Vim from the shell.

Open a file

```
$ vim file.txt
```

Open at line 42

```
$ vim +42 file.txt
```

Open files side by side

```
$ vim -O a.txt b.txt
```

Compare two files

```
$ vim -d a.txt b.txt
```

Open read-only

```
$ vim -R file.txt
```

Start without any config or plugins

```
$ vim --clean
```

Updated Nov 8, 2026 · checked against Vim 9 and Neovim 0.10+ · sources: Vim help, Neovim docs

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