

Nano Cheatsheet

By Dejan Panovski • Updated on Jan 12, 2026 • [Download PDF](#)

Quick reference for Nano text editor shortcuts

Nano is a simple, user-friendly command-line text editor that comes pre-installed on most Linux distributions. Unlike Vim, Nano displays keyboard shortcuts at the bottom of the screen, making it ideal for beginners. The caret symbol (^) represents the Ctrl key.

Open & Create

Open files and create new ones.

<code>nano</code>	Open empty editor
<code>nano file</code>	Open/create file
<code>nano +10 file</code>	Open at line 10
<code>nano +10,5 file</code>	Open at line 10, col 5
<code>nano -v file</code>	View only (read-only)
<code>nano -l file</code>	Show line numbers

Save & Exit

Save files and close the editor.

<code>Ctrl+O</code>	Save file (Write Out)
<code>Ctrl+X</code>	Exit nano
<code>Ctrl+X then Y</code>	Save and exit
<code>Ctrl+X then N</code>	Exit without saving
<code>Ctrl+O then Enter</code>	Save with same name

Navigation

Move around the file.

Arrow keys	Move cursor
Ctrl+F	Move forward (right)
Ctrl+B	Move backward (left)
Ctrl+P	Previous line (up)
Ctrl+N	Next line (down)
Ctrl+A	Beginning of line
Ctrl+E	End of line

Page Navigation

Move through the file quickly.

Ctrl+V	Page down
Ctrl+Y	Page up
Ctrl+_	Go to line number
Alt+\	First line
Alt+/ /	Last line
Alt+G	Go to line (same as Ctrl+_)

Cut, Copy & Paste

Manipulate text blocks.

Ctrl+K	Cut current line
Alt+6	Copy current line
Ctrl+U	Paste (uncut)
Ctrl+K (multiple)	Cut multiple lines
Alt+A	Start selection mark
Ctrl+K	Cut selection

Selection

Select text blocks.

Alt+A	Start selection
Shift+Arrow	Select text
Alt+A then move	Extend selection
Ctrl+^	Mark text start
Alt+^	Copy selection

Delete

Remove text from the file.

Backspace	Delete char before
Delete	Delete char at cursor
Ctrl+H	Delete char before
Ctrl+D	Delete char at cursor
Ctrl+K	Delete (cut) line
Alt+Delete	Delete word before
Ctrl+Delete	Delete word after

Search

Find text in the file.

Ctrl+W	Search (Where Is)
Alt+W	Repeat last search
Ctrl+W then Enter	Find next
Alt+B	Search backward
Alt+C	Case sensitive toggle
Alt+R	Regex toggle

Search & Replace

Find and replace text.

Ctrl+\	Search and replace
Alt+R	Replace (in search)
Y	Replace this instance
N	Skip this instance
A	Replace all
Ctrl+C	Cancel replace

Undo & Redo

Reverse and repeat changes.

Alt+U	Undo
Alt+E	Redo

Line Operations

Work with lines.

Ctrl+K	Cut line
Alt+6	Copy line
Ctrl+U	Paste line
Ctrl+J	Justify paragraph
Alt+J	Justify entire file
Alt+3	Comment/uncomment

Display Options

Change how content is displayed.

Alt+#	Toggle line numbers
Alt+P	Toggle whitespace
Alt+Y	Toggle syntax color
Alt+X	Toggle help display
Alt+L	Toggle long line wrap
Alt+S	Toggle smooth scroll

Multiple Buffers

Work with multiple files.

Ctrl+R	Read file into buffer
Alt+<	Switch to prev buffer
Alt+>	Switch to next buffer
nano file1 file2	Open multiple files

Spell Check

Check spelling in text.

Ctrl+T	Invoke spell checker
(requires spell installed)	

Information

Get help and file info.

Ctrl+G	Display help
Ctrl+C	Cursor position info
Alt+D	Word/line/char count

Command Line Options

Launch nano with options.

nano -l file	Show line numbers
nano -m file	Enable mouse
nano -i file	Auto indent
nano -E file	Convert tabs to spaces
nano -T 4 file	Set tab size to 4
nano -w file	Don't wrap lines
nano -c file	Show cursor position
nano -B file	Backup before edit

Configuration

Customize nano settings.

<code>~/.nanorc</code>	User config file
<code>/etc/nanorc</code>	System config
<code>set linenumbers</code>	Show line numbers
<code>set autoindent</code>	Auto indentation
<code>set tabsize 4</code>	Tab width
<code>set mouse</code>	Enable mouse
<code>include /usr/share/nano/*.nanorc</code>	Syntax highlighting