how to use nano text editor

Using the Nano Text Editor: A Complete Guide

When working on Linux in command-line mode, you often need to create or edit text files. One of the well-known editors is Vim, but it can be difficult for beginners. For users looking for a simpler and more user-friendly alternative, the **Nano** text editor is available.

Nano is a lightweight, command-line text editor for Unix and Linux systems. It supports useful features beyond basic editing such as search and replace, cut and paste, and syntax highlighting.

In this guide, we will walk through the main functions of Nano: creating and opening files, editing and saving content, searching and replacing text, cutting and pasting, and customizing settings.

Installing Nano

Nano is typically pre-installed on most Linux distributions. To check if it is installed, run:

nano --version

If not installed, use the following commands:

Ubuntu/Debian

sudo apt install nano

CentOS/Fedora

sudo yum install nano

Creating and Opening Files

To open or create a file:

```
nano filename
```

This opens a text editing interface. You can start typing right away.

Shortcuts are displayed at the bottom of the screen:

- ^ = Ctrl key
- M = Alt key
- For example, ^J = Ctrl + J

Use Ctrl + G to view the full list of available commands.

Editing Files

Unlike vi, Nano allows immediate editing upon opening a file.

To jump to a specific line:

- Press Ctrl + _, then enter the line number.

Searching and Replacing

- **Search text**: Ctrl + W, type the keyword, then Enter.
- **Next match**: Alt + W

Search and Replace:

1. Press Ctrl + \
2. Enter the text to find
3. Enter replacement text
4. Confirm each replacement with Y (Yes), N (No), or replace all with A

Copying, Cutting, and Pasting

1. **Select text**: Move the cursor to start point, press Alt + A, move to the end.
2. **Copy**: Alt + 6
3. **Cut**: Ctrl + K
4. **Paste**: Move the cursor to the target location, press

Ctrl + U

To cancel selection: Ctrl + 6

Saving and Exiting

- **Save**: Ctrl + O, then Enter
- **Exit**: Ctrl + X. If changes are unsaved, Nano prompts you to save.

Nano Configuration (nanorc)

Nano reads its configuration from the following files (in order):

- System-wide: /etc/nanorc
- User-specific: ~/.config/nano/nanorc or ~/.nanorc

User settings override system defaults.

Syntax Highlighting

Nano supports syntax highlighting for common file types. Syntax files are stored in:

/usr/share/nano/

To include them:

include "/usr/share/nano/*.nanorc"

Set Nano as Default Editor

To use Nano as your default editor for commands like crontab or visudo, set the environment variables:

Add the following lines to your ~/.bashrc:

```
export VISUAL=nano
export EDITOR="$VISUAL"
```

Summary

- Launch Nano with: nano filename
- Start editing immediately
- Use Ctrl + O to save, Ctrl + X to exit
- Use shortcuts for advanced editing features

Nano is an intuitive and powerful tool for quick and easy file editing in Linux.