

Appendix 3 – Using the vim (/vi) text editor

To start Vim, enter this command:

```
$ vim file.txt
```

If the file (`file.txt` in this example) is a new file, you get a blank window and the screen will look like:

```
█  
~  
~  
~  
~  
~  
"file.txt" [New file]
```

where █ is the cursor position.

The tilde (~) lines indicate lines not in the file. In other words, when Vim runs out of file to display, it displays tilde lines. At the bottom of the screen, a message line indicates the file is named `file.txt` and shows that you are creating a new file. The message information is temporary and other information overwrites it.

The Vim editor is a modal editor. That means that the editor behaves differently depending on which mode you are in. The two basic modes are called **Normal** mode and **Insert** mode. In **Normal** mode the characters you type are commands.

In **Insert** mode the characters are inserted as text. When you first start Vim it will be in Normal mode. To start Insert mode you type the "i" command (i for Insert). Then you can enter the text which will be inserted into the file. At the bottom of the window, -- INSERT -- will be displayed. This indicates you are in Insert mode.

Press the <Esc> key to stop Insert mode and go back to Normal mode (-- INSERT -- will disappear from the bottom of the screen). It can get confusing which mode you are in, or accidentally typing a command that switches modes. To get back to Normal mode, no matter what mode you are in, press the <Esc> key. Sometimes you have to press it twice. If Vim beeps back at you, you already are in Normal mode.

Moving around in the file

In both **Normal** and **Insert** modes, you can move around the file by using the cursor (arrow) keys.

In **Normal** mode, the <Ctrl-U> command scrolls up half a screen of text. (Up in this case is backward in the file; the text moves down on the screen.) The <Ctrl-D> command scrolls you down half a screen.

Editing

In **Insert** mode, press the <Enter> key to start a new line. In **Normal** mode, the "o" command creates a new, empty line below the cursor and puts Vim in Insert mode. Then you can type the text for the new line.

In **Insert** mode, the <Backspace> and <Delete> keys can be used to delete characters. In **Normal** mode: to delete a character, move the cursor over it and type "x", to delete a whole line use the "dd" command.

Saving

In **Normal** mode, use the "ZZ" (in CAPITALS!) command to exit. This command writes the file and exits.

If you want to discard your change and not save the file – Vim has a quit-and-throw-things-away command – in **Normal** mode, type:

```
:q!
```

SUMMARY

'i' enters **Insert** mode. Hit <Escape> to leave **Insert** mode and enter **Normal** mode.

From **Normal** mode, you can save-and-exit with 'ZZ', and exit-without-saving-changes by typing ':q!'.