

Nano Editor Cheat Sheet

The shortcuts you'll actually use - tested on GNU Nano 7.2 (April 2026)

SAVE & EXIT

Ctrl+O	Save file (Write Out)
Enter	Confirm filename after Ctrl+O
Ctrl+X	Exit Nano
Y / N	Save / discard on exit prompt
Ctrl+C	Cancel current prompt

EDIT

Alt+A	Mark start of selection
Alt+6	Copy selection (or line)
Ctrl+K	Cut line / selection
Ctrl+U	Paste
Alt+U	Undo
Alt+E	Redo

SEARCH & REPLACE

Ctrl+W	Search (Where Is)
Alt+W	Next match
Ctrl+\	Search and replace
Alt+R	Toggle regex mode at prompt
Y / N / A	Replace one / skip / replace all

INSTALL COMMANDS

Ubuntu / Debian	sudo apt install -y nano
Fedora / RHEL 8+	sudo dnf install -y nano
Arch / Manjaro	sudo pacman -S nano
Alpine / Docker	apk add nano
macOS	brew install nano
Termux (Android)	pkg install nano

NAVIGATE

Ctrl+_	Go to line,column
Ctrl+A / Ctrl+E	Start / end of line
Ctrl+Y / Ctrl+V	Page up / page down
Alt+\ / Alt+/	First / last line of file
Alt+> / Alt+<	Next / previous buffer

BUFFERS & FILES

nano f1 f2 f3	Open multiple files as buffers
Ctrl+R	Read file into current buffer
Ctrl+T	Spell check (needs aspell)
nano +42 file	Open file at line 42
nano -B file	Enable backup on save

NANORC CONFIG (~/.NANORC)

set linenumbers	Show line numbers in gutter
set tabsize 4	Tab width in spaces
set tabstospaces	Convert tabs to spaces
set mouse	Enable mouse click support
set positionlog	Remember cursor between edits
include "/usr/share/nano/*"	Load syntax highlighting

MYTHS BUSTED

- Ctrl+R does NOT split the screen - it reads a file into the buffer.
- The -c flag shows cursor position; it does NOT fix encoding (use iconv).
- For real side-by-side editing, use tmux or screen panes.