

Recursive Editing

Operation	Keystroke	Function	Note
Recursive Editing	As described in Emacs manual, a "<i>recursive edit</i> is a situation in which you are using Emacs commands to perform arbitrary editing while in the middle of another Emacs command." - Although not often needed, this feature can be extremely useful in some situations such as extracting information from various sources during a search operation, or during a prompt or to perform some editing during a keyboard macro recording and execution to create keyboard macros with variations. - See how this can be used in the recursive palindrome vimgolf challenge example . - If you want to perform recursive editing during a prompt, when the minibuffer is used, then: - set the enable-recursive-minibuffers user-option to t. By default Emacs sets to nil to prevent recursive editing in the minibuffer because it's considered an advanced technique. - also execute (minibuffer-depth-indicate-mode 1) to display the recursion level in the prompt. - With PEL, simply set the pel-allow-recursive-minibuffer to activate minibuffer editing and activate the minibuffer-depth-indicate-mode. During recursive editing: - the modelling shows square brackets are placed around the parentheses that always surround the major and minor mode names.		
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Entering recursive edit	There are several ways to enter recursive edit. The following rows provide some examples.		
... during the recording of an Emacs macro See 📖 Keyboard Macros	C-u C-x q	(kbd-macro-query FLAG)	Used when defining a macro to force a query when the macro will be executed. With prefix argument (C-u), enters recursive edit, reading keyboard commands even within a kbd macro. You can give different commands each time the macro executes. Later during execution of that macro, use C-M-c to exit the recursive edit .
... during a query replace operation	C-r	Typing C-r at the prompt of a query replace operation (started with M-% for example) allows you to enter recursive edit and perform some manipulations in the text while pausing the replace operation and resume it by later exiting the recursive editing (with C-M-c , see below). See query-replace	
... during a prompt in the minibuffer	C-u M-!	Execute a shell command and insert the result into the minibuffer as a response to the prompt. See shell-command  Under PEL you must set pel-allow-recursive-minibuffer user-option to t to be able to do this.	
Exit recursive edit	C-M-c	(exit-recursive-edit)	Exit from the innermost recursive edit or minibuffer.
Abort recursive edit	C-] C-x X a	(abort-recursive-edit)	Abort the command that requested this recursive edit or minibuffer input.

Recursive Editing — References

Topic & Link	Notes
GNU EMacs Manual - Recursive Edit	Description of recursive editing and key bindings.
Other Articles on recursive editing.	Making The Emacs Minibuffer Recursive @ Irreal Exiting Recursive Edits @ Irreal How to enter recursive edit mode and abort command inside it? @ Stack Overflow What are the implications of working in multiple layers of recursive-edit? @ Stack Overflow VimGolf in Emacs 001: Recursively Palindrome : an example on how to use recursive edit during a keyboard macro.