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tmux 2

Productive Mouse-Free Development

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Productive
Mouse-Free
Development

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Working With Text and Buffers

Throughout the course of your average day, you'll copy and paste text more times than you can keep track of. When you're working with tmux, you will eventually come to the point where you need to scroll backwards through the terminal's output buffer to see something that scrolled off the screen. You might also need to copy some text and paste it into a file or into another program. This chapter is all about how to manage the text inside your sessions. You'll see how to use the keyboard to scroll through tmux's output buffer, how to work with multiple paste buffers, and how to work with the system clipboard.

Scrolling Through Output with Copy Mode

When you work with programs in the terminal, it's common that the output from these programs scrolls off the screen. But when you use tmux, you can use the keyboard to move backwards through the output buffer so you can see what you missed. This is especially useful for those times when you're running tests or watching log files and you can't just rely on the less command or your text editor.

Pressing PREFIX [places you in Copy mode. You can then use your movement keys to move the cursor around the screen. By default, the arrow keys work. But in Chapter 2, *Configuring tmux,* on page ?, you configured tmux to use Vim keys for moving between windows and resizing panes so you wouldn't have to take your hands off the home row. tmux has a vi mode for working with the buffer as well. To enable it, add this line to .tmux.conf:

config/tmux.conf
```
# enable vi keys.
setw -g mode-keys vi
```

With this option set, you can use h, j, k, and l to move around your buffer.

To get out of Copy mode, press the `ENTER` key. Moving around one character at a time isn't very efficient. Since you enabled vi mode, you can also use some other visible shortcuts to move around the buffer.

For example, you can use `w` to jump to the next word and `b` to jump back one word. And you can use `f`, followed by any character, to jump to that character on the same line, and `F` to jump backwards on the line.

Moving Quickly Through the Buffer

When you have several pages of buffered output, moving the cursor around to scroll isn't going to be that useful. Instead of moving word by word or character by character, you can scroll through the buffer page by page, or jump to the beginning or end of the buffer.

You can move up one page with `CTRL`-`b` and down one page with `CTRL`-`f`. You can jump all the way to the top of the buffer's history with `g`, and then jump all the way to the bottom with `G`.

Searching Through the Buffer

You don't have to browse through the hundreds of lines of content page by page if you know what you're looking for. By pressing `?` in Copy mode, you can search upwards for phrases or keywords. Simply press `?`, type in the search phrase, and press `ENTER` to jump to the first occurrence of the phrase. Then press `n` to jump to the next occurrence, or `N` to move to the previous.

To search downward, press `/` instead of `?`. Pressing `n` then jumps to the next occurrence, and `N` jumps to the previous occurrence.

Learning to move around the buffer this way will dramatically speed you up. It's faster to type the word you want to move to instead of using the arrows to move around, especially if you're looking through the output of log files.

Now let's explore how to copy text from one pane and paste it to another. This is Copy mode, after all.