
Subject: Re: emacs/idl

Posted by [Carsten Dominik](#) on Wed, 16 Feb 2000 08:00:00 GMT

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>>>> > "SC" == CS <Steven> writes:

SC> I was wondering if anyone can let me know how to use emacs for
SC> idl. I'm not really conversant in emacs, so it'll have to be from
SC> a pretty basic level, but I'm interested in finding out if the
SC> advantages are everything I've heard they might be...

Well, here we go.

1. The first problem you have to solve is that you need to install the IDLWAVE mode for Emacs. If you are using XEmacs version 21.x, this is easy using the normal package installation tools to download and install the package from the XEmacs website. If you are using the Emacs 20.x, (or XEmacs 20.x) you must install the mode yourself. I suggest you get a friend to do it for you who knows how it works. Or the system administrator, of course. The URL for the IDLWAVE package is
<http://www.strw.leidenuniv.nl/~dominik/Tools/idlwave>
2. Print the documentation for IDLWAVE available at the same site. It explains in some detail how to use IDLWAVE to work with IDL files. The documentation also describes many configuration options, but you can ignore these for now - maybe later when you have figured out how things work, you want to change some of these options. The chapter "IDLWAVE in a Nutshell" describes a few of option settings many people use.
3. IDL for Emacs means actually two things:
 - A) You can *very* comfortably edit IDL programs in Emacs.
 - B) On a Unix system you can also run idl through Emacs, in a special window.

Editing IDL .pro files in Emacs

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When the IDLWAVE mode is properly installed, files you open in Emacs which have the ".pro" extensions will automatically be placed in IDLWAVE mode. The code will be colorized (maybe you need to turn on font-lock first - ask a friend how uses Emacs frequently). You can use the TAB key to automatically indent a line of code relative to context. IDLWAVE knows about all IDL built-in functions and the available keywords to each of these functions and helps you to insert them (with "completion" - i.e. you type part of the keyword and hit M-TAB to have it fill in the rest). There are *many* more features,

all of which are explained in the documentation.

Running IDL in Emacs

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On UNIX systems you can launch idl as a subprocess of Emacs. This means that Emacs will open a special window. In this window you can type commands to be sent to IDL - it is similar to command line IDL. When idl is running as a subprocess of Emacs, you can .COMPILE any files you have open in Emacs. Emacs will automatically jump to the lines with syntax error etc. So running IDL inside Emacs gives you an environment similar to IDLDE, but with the huge advantage that you never have to deal with that terrible editor in idlde. Of course, if you like the point-and-click stuff in idlde, you might want to use it anyway. But after you have edited an idl file inside Emacs, I bet you *never* want to edit it anywhere else.

Hope this gets you started - feel free to contact me for additional questions.

- Carsten

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