How-To Use Notepad++ Advanced Text Editor for Windows

Notepad is the default option for text editing in Windows. It generally does a sufficient job, though it's not a word processor like Microsoft Word or LibreOffice Writer, nor is that its intended purpose. It can be used to write computer programs, but it's not always ideal for that, either. For large projects, consider a program like **Visual Studio Code**.But what if you want a bit more out of your text editor, without turning to a full programming IDE or using word processing software? Is there something full featured and highly customizable, while not being bloated? If that sounds interesting, check out the free and open source Notepad++.
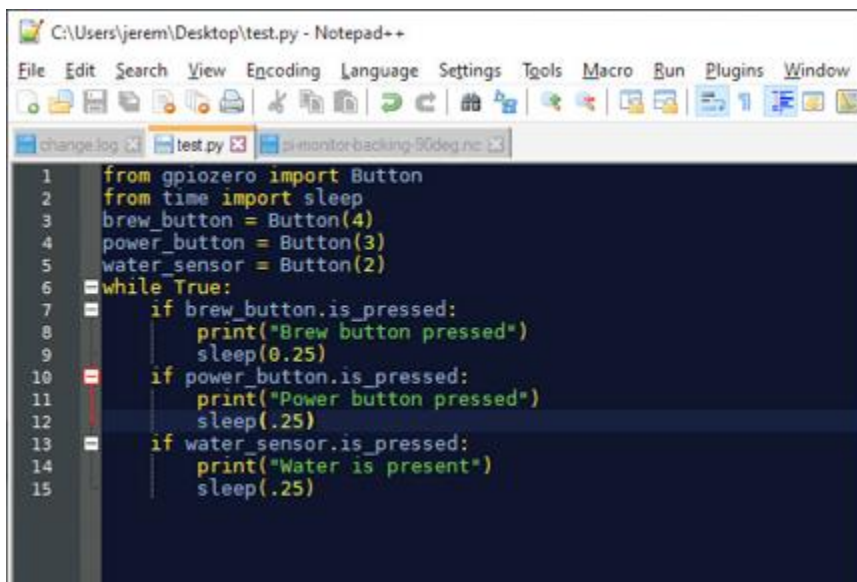
Edit with Notepad++

According to Notepad++'s official webpage:

> Notepad++ is written in C++ and uses pure Win32 API and STL which ensures a higher execution speed and smaller program size. By optimizing as many routines as possible without losing user friendliness, Notepad++ is trying to reduce the world carbon dioxide emissions. When using less **CPU** power, the PC can throttle down and reduce power consumption, resulting in a greener environment.

That's probably not the introduction you were expecting, but it does highlight Notepad++'s svelte code design, created as a personal project by software engineer Don Ho. You probably won't notice this efficiency in your power bill, but the aggregate impact of every installation is significant. What you *will* notice is that it opens near-instantly. You'll also find that it occupies less than 10MB of drive space when installed. In a world where hundreds of megabytes is nothing for programs that do much less, it's refreshing to see code designed for efficiency.
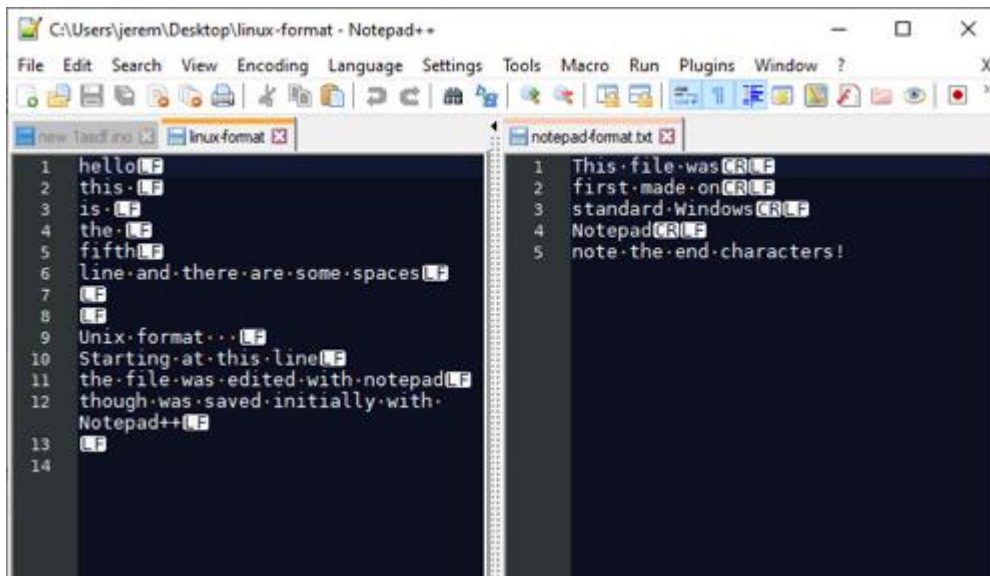
Notepad++ Features

When you open Notepad++, you are greeted with a blank new text entry area. This works just like the standard Windows Notepad. However, if you open a new file or create one in the program, this pops up in a new tab, like a web browser.

When typing, it suggests words for auto-completion, a potentially huge time savings. Just press tab or enter and it finishes the word for you. Additionally, if you save a document with an extension like .py for Python, it color codes words based on the implied programming language you're using.

Notepad++ is highly customizable, and you can choose a variety of display styles with the **Settings—Style Configurator** menu. I personally use a theme called **Black board**, which features a dark background and light lettering. The **Default** theme shows a white background and dark letters, similar to most other editors.
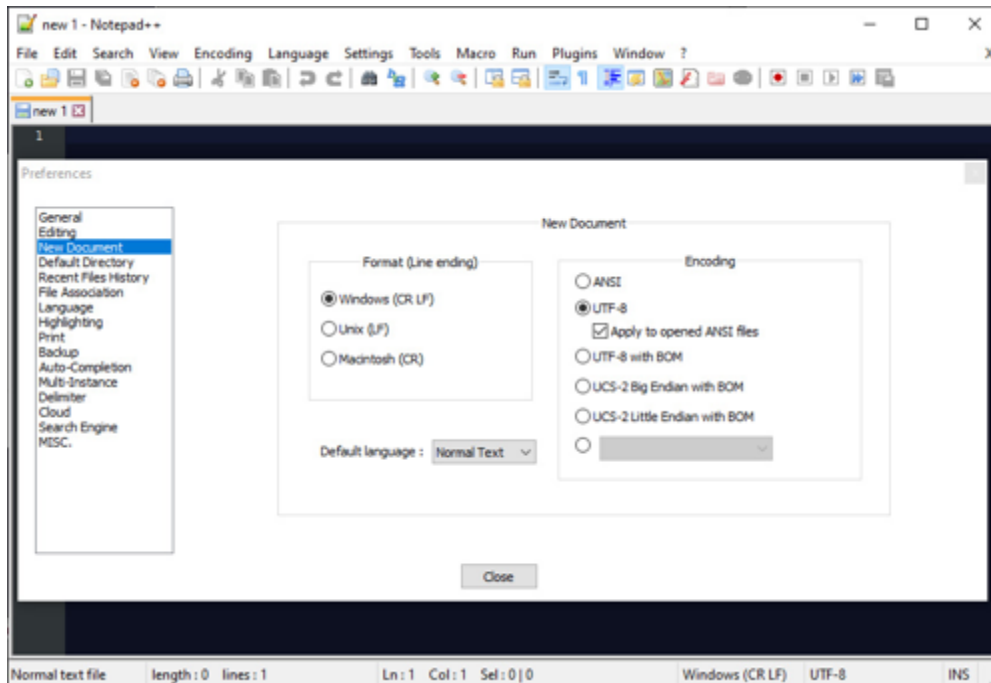
Another neat feature is that you can easily record a macro by clicking on the **Macro** main menu item, then **Start Recording**. Type in whatever you want; then you can play it back in the same menu area, or via **Ctrl+Shift+P**.

Notepad++ Raspberry Pi Configuration

*Ending characters on display—[Linux](#) format on left, Windows format on right. Note that split view is available by right-clicking on tab, then selecting **Move to Other View**.*

One thing that pushes some people to use Notepad++ is that the standard Windows Notepad line endings aren't understood by Linux-based systems like the [**Raspberry Pi**](#). The good news is that Windows Notepad can now open and edit these files (saving them with the Linux LF (line feed) character; new documents will have a Windows format), so it's not as much of an issue as it once was. On the other hand, this won't give you the same kind of control over these normally hidden characters that you have with Notepad++.

To change line ending specifications on new files, navigate to **Settings—Preferences—New Document**, where you can configure the program for Windows, Unix (and Linux/Raspberry Pi) or Macintosh. You can also view these otherwise hidden characters with **View—Show Symbol—Show All Characters**, which is a great tool to have available when things aren't quite working correctly.

Conclusion

Of course, what's presented here is just scratching the surface of Notepad++'s abilities and configuration options. If there's one weakness to this software, it's that you'll likely never discover or use all it has to offer, especially since it's in active development.

It's free to download and the code is even available under an open source license, meaning you can make changes to it to suit your particular needs. While free, if you find it useful, you can donate to its development monetarily via the Notepad++ website, or help with coding tasks to make it even better.