

Getting syntax coloring for C++ in nano

with thanks to: Justin Freye, Tyler Mobray

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What is syntax coloring?

Syntax coloring is when your development environment or text editor tries to display parts of a program in a color indicating what kind of "thing" it is in that language -- comments are in one color, language keywords are in another, literals are yet another. It can help you in more easily seeing and avoiding certain kinds of errors (forgetting to close a multi-line comment, or mistyping a language keyword, or forgetting to end a string literal, etc.)

Caveats

I've heard from several students that this does not work-and-play well with the Windows SSH client installed in BSS 313. It does work fine via ssh from the Mac OS X Terminal, and I have heard that it works fine if you connect to nrs-labs via the **Putty** version of ssh on Windows (which is installed in many Academic Computing labs on campus).

(You can download putty for your home Windows machine by following the links from www.putty.org)

Setup to get syntax coloring for nano

1. You need to create a file `.nanorc` in your home directory on nrs-labs. You can find an example of one at <http://www.digitalpeer.com/id/nano>; this version was sent to me from J. Freye, and I used it, changing the color of comments from brightwhite to green, with success.

If you would like to simply copy this from my directory on nrs-labs, the following commands will allow you to do so:

- ssh to nrs-labs
- type the following at your nrs-labs prompt:

```
cp ~/st10/.nanorc .
```

2. Now, when you start up `nano` for a file whose name ends in `.cpp`, you should get syntax coloring (at least if you are using ssh from putty, or from the Mac OS X Terminal). Note that you can toggle it on or off by typing ESC-y (type the escape key, esc, and y at the same time).

Additional notes

You can edit `.nanorc` to change the colors being used, and can also muck with other options as well, if you are curious/adventurous. For example, if you remove the `#` (shell comment) before

```
set suspend
```

...then you can use `^z` to suspend nano, and type `f9` at the UNIX prompt to re-enter that session.

You might save an "original" version copy of your `.nanorc` before playing around with it, just in case you make a change you regret! 8-)