Universal Ctags

Source code indexer

CONCEPTS

ctags scans source files and writes a sorted index (the tags file) mapping each name to its file and location. Editors read it to jump to definitions without a language server.

Source files many languages
↓ `ctags -R`
tags file name, file, location
↓ editor reads
Jump Ctrl+] in Vim

Re-run ctags after larger edits: the index is a snapshot and does not update itself.

GENERATE TAGS

`ctags -R`
Index current directory recursively

`ctags -R <dir>...`
Index only these directories

`ctags <file>...`
Index specific files

`ctags -f <tagfile> -R`
Write to another file name

`ctags -f - <file>`
Write tags to stdout

`ctags -a <file>`
Append instead of overwrite

`ctags -L <list>`
Read file names from a list

`find . -name '*.c' | ctags -L -`
Read file names from stdin

`ctags --tag-relative=yes`
Store paths relative to tags file

SELECT FILES AND LANGUAGES

`ctags --exclude=<pattern>`
Skip matching files or dirs

`ctags --languages=<list>`
Only parse these languages

`ctags --languages=-<lang>`
Disable one language

`ctags --languages=+<lang>`
Enable one more language

`ctags --exclude=@<file>`
Read exclude patterns from a file

SELECT FILES AND LANGUAGES (cont.)

`ctags --list-languages`
List supported languages

`ctags --list-maps`
Show extension to language map

`ctags --map-<lang>=+<ext>`
Add an extension to a language

`ctags --print-language <file>`
Show the parser chosen for a file

TAG CONTENT

`ctags --list-kinds=<lang>`
List kinds of a language

`ctags --kinds-<lang>=+<kinds>`
Add kinds, e.g. --kinds-c=+p

`ctags --kinds-<lang>=-<kinds>`
Drop kinds

`ctags --fields=+n`
Add line numbers

`ctags --fields=+S`
Add function signatures

`ctags --extras=+q`
Add qualified names (Class.member)

`ctags --extras=+f`
Add a tag per file name

`ctags --list-fields`
List available fields

`ctags --list-extras`
List available extras

OUTPUT FORMATS

`ctags -x <file>`
Cross-reference table on stdout

`ctags --output-format=json`
One JSON object per tag

`ctags -e`
Emacs etags format (TAGS)

`ctags --version`
Show the version

CONFIG FILES

`ctags --options=<path>`
Read options from file or directory

CONFIG FILES (cont.)

`ctags --options=NONE`
Ignore preloaded config files

`~/.ctags.d/*.ctags`
Per-user options, one per line

`.ctags.d/*.ctags`
Per-project options

USE IN VIM

Vim looks for ./tags then the parent directories when 'tags' contains ./tags;, so run ctags -R at the project root.

`Ctrl+]`
Jump to tag under cursor

`Ctrl+T`
Jump back up the tag stack

`:tag <name>`
Jump to a tag by name

`g]`
List matches for tag under cursor

`:tselect <name>`
Choose among matching tags

`:tnext / :tprev`
Next or previous matching tag

`Ctrl+W ]`
Open tag in a split

`:set tags=./tags;,tags`
Search parent directories for tags

RECIPES

Project index, skipping noise

```
ctags -R \
  --exclude=.git --
exclude=node_modules \
  --exclude=build --
exclude='*.min.js' .
```

Per-project config (.ctags.d/main.ctags)

```
# one option per line
--recurse=yes
--exclude=.git
--exclude=node_modules
--languages=-JSON
```

Find definitions from the shell

```
ctags -R --fields=+n .
grep -P '^main\t' tags
ctags -x --kinds-c=f src/main.c
```

Tags of git-tracked files only

```
git ls-files | ctags -L - --
fields=+nS
# fast index of just what git
tracks
```