jless JSON viewer

START HERE

`jless <file>`
Open a JSON file

/<pattern>
Search forward

j / k
Line down / up

y › y
Copy value

h / l
Collapse or parent / expand

m
Toggle line mode

Space
Toggle collapse

q
Quit

CONCEPTS

jless is a read-only viewer, not an editor. It opens in data mode: no commas or closing braces, so structure stays visible. Press m for the familiar pretty-printed line mode.

Open file or pipe
↓ collapse
Navigate fold, search
↓ yank
Copy path or value paste into jq
Find a value, then take it with you

Most movement keys take a count first: 5j moves five lines. On macOS the same keys work; only clipboard behaviour depends on the terminal.

MOVING

j / Down / Ctrl + n
Down one line

k / Up / Ctrl + p
Up one line

J Next sibling

K Previous sibling

g / Home First line

G / End Last line

<n>g Jump to line <n>

w
Forward to next depth change

b
Backward to previous depth change

0 / ^ First sibling of parent

$ Last sibling of parent

Ctrl + f / PageDown
Down one screen

MOVING (cont.)

Ctrl + b / PageUp
Up one screen

FOLDING

h / Left
Collapse, or go to parent

l / Right
Expand, or go to first child

Space Toggle collapsed state

H
Go to parent without collapsing

c Collapse node and siblings

e Expand node and siblings

C
Deep collapse node and siblings

E
Deep expand node and siblings
Expands every level below, handy to see a whole small document.

SEARCHING

/<pattern> Search forward

?<pattern> Search backward

n Next match

N Previous match

* Next match for this key

Previous match for this key

/<pattern>/s
Case-sensitive search
The default is smart case: lowercase patterns ignore case.

\[/ \{
Escape a bracket in a pattern
[]{} are literal by default; escape them to get regex meaning.

COPY AND PRINT

y › y
Copy value, pretty-printed

y › v Copy value on one line

y › s
Copy string without escapes

y › k Copy the key

y › p Copy path from root
Gives a path like .foo[3].bar.

y › b
Copy path in bracket form

y › q Copy path as a jq filter
Array indexes become [], like .foo[].bar.

p<key>
Print instead of copy
Each y key has a p twin that prints to the terminal; useful over SSH without a clipboard.

VIEW AND SCROLL

m
Toggle data mode and line mode

% Jump to matching bracket
Works in line mode, with the cursor on a bracket.

Ctrl + d / Ctrl + u
Half screen down / up

Ctrl + e / Ctrl + y
Scroll one line down / up

z › z Center the focused line

z › t Focused line to top

z › b Focused line to bottom

, / .
Scroll long value right / left

;
Long value: jump to end or back

VIEW AND SCROLL (cont.)

> / <
Increase / decrease indentation

COMMANDS AND FLAGS

:help / F1 Show built-in help

q / Ctrl + c / :quit Quit

:set › number
Show line numbers
Use :set nonumber to hide or :set number! to toggle.

:set › relativenumber
Show relative line numbers

`jless -n <file>`
Show line numbers at start

`jless -r <file>`
Show relative line numbers

`jless --yaml <file>`
Parse input as YAML

`<cmd> | jless`
Read JSON from stdin

RECIPES

Explore an API response

```
curl -s https://api.example.com/
items | jless
# /name then n to find fields
# y q to copy the jq path, then
use it in jq
```

View YAML with an alias

```
alias yless='jless --yaml'
yless docker-compose.yml
```

Pretty-print jq output interactively

```
jq '.items[] | select(.ok)'
data.json | jless
# streams of JSON values are
accepted
```

Copy path, extract with jq

```
# in jless: focus a value, press
y q
jq '.foo[].bar' data.json
```