Vimliner: The Smallest, Fastest Outliner for VIM

By Roger Keays, 6 March 2016

I was quite fond of the WorkFlowy outliner until the sync failed and broke my offline access. It was just lucky that I'd made an export of my data not too long before it failed.

But really, I didn't need sync that much. I just needed a fast outliner. And what could faster than Vim? With a bit of investigation into Vim's code folding capabilities, I came up with a **single-file script** to turn Vim into a **fast and simple outliner**. It is fully functional, and is only 21 lines of code.

To install Vimliner, just copy vimliner.vim to your $HOME/.vim/ftdetect directory and use a **.out** extension for your outliner files. You can also use `:set filetype=vimliner` if you prefer not to use the .out extension.

[Download vimliner.vim to $HOME/.vim/ftdetect]

Here is what it looks like. You just use **<TAB>** to open and close the folds, and navigate through your outline.

Here is the full code of vimliner.vim for the curious.

Enjoy!

```vim
"
" Vimliner is the smallest outliner for vim. It uses vim's existing code
" folding capabilities with some simple configuration. The result is a fast,
" powerful outliner using your favourite text editor.
"
" Install Vimliner by saving this file to $HOME/.vim/ftdetect/vimliner.vim
" on unix, or $HOME/vimfiles/ftdetect/vimliner.vim on Windows.
"
" Save your outliner files with a .out extension for Vimliner to be
" autodetected. Otherwise, use :set filetype=vimliner from within vim.
"
" The outliner uses an indentation level of 2 white spaces to create
" new levels. You can use vim's default code folding shortcuts to move
" throughout your outline, or just use <TAB> to open and close levels.
"
" The most frequent shortcut keys you will use are:
"
" <TAB> open or close the current fold
"   zx  close all other folds
"
" Use :help fold-commands in vim for additional shorcuts.
"
" The fold function consumes blank lines. If you need to separate one
" fold from another, use a string of space characters that match the
" current indent level.
"
" News And Updates:
"
" https://rogerkeays.com/vimliner
" https://www.vim.org/scripts/script.php?script_id=5343
"
" Release Notes:
"
" 20200430_1.2 - renamed to vimliner to avoid confusion with rival project
" 20200424_1.1 - allow lines containing only whitespace
" 20160305_1.0 - initial release
"
```

```
" License: https://opensource.org/licenses/Apache-2.0
" Author: Roger Keays
"
autocmd BufRead,BufNewFile *.out set filetype=vimliner
autocmd FileType vimliner set foldmethod=expr foldexpr=VimlinerFold(v:lnum)
autocmd FileType vimliner set foldtext=getline(v:foldstart).'\ ' fillchars=
autocmd FileType vimliner set shiftwidth=2 expandtab autoindent
autocmd FileType vimliner set linebreak breakindent showbreak=-------------\

autocmd FileType vimliner hi Folded ctermbg=black ctermfg=yellow
autocmd FileType vimliner nnoremap <TAB> za

function! VimlinerFold(lnum)
    if getline(a:lnum) =~? '^$'
        return VimlinerFold(a:lnum - 1)
    endif

    let this_indent = indent(a:lnum) / &shiftwidth
    let next_indent = indent(a:lnum + 1) / &shiftwidth

    if next_indent == this_indent
        return this_indent
    elseif next_indent < this_indent
        return this_indent
    elseif next_indent > this_indent
        return '>' . next_indent
    endif
endfunction
```

About Roger Keays

Roger Keays is an artist, an engineer, and a student of life. He has no fixed addressand has leftfootprints on 40-something different countries around the world. Roger is addicted to surfing. His other interests are music, psychology, languages, the proper use of semicolons, and finding good food.