

# How to use R for Windows with the RWinEdt extension

**Andy Eggers**  
**September 18, 2006**

## About WinEdt:

WinEdt ([www.winedt.com](http://www.winedt.com)) is the editor that I use for writing up papers and problem sets. It is particularly good for producing LaTeX documents. Key features include buttons for compiling documents in various formats (pdf, dvi, etc), tabs for each document you are working on, and text highlighting indicating misspellings, unbalanced parentheses, comments and labels. A student license costs \$30. Given the amount of time I spend producing documents and how frustrating I found the free editors, I consider this to be a negligible cost. There is a 31-day try-before-you-buy period.

## About R-WinEdt:

I also use WinEdt for writing R programs, using a plug-in called R-WinEdt to integrate R and WinEdt into a single system. I write the code in R-WinEdt, taking advantage of the text highlighting and file organization system, and I can use keyboard shortcuts and drop-down menus to send code to the R interpreter. To me this seems like a way to get many of the advantages of the XEmacs setup that many grad students use and advocate (namely, code highlighting, file organization, keyboard shortcuts to send code fragments to the interpreter) with a more user-friendly interface.

You can of course write R code in any text editor you'd like, including Notepad or Microsoft Word. You could paste lines of code from Word into R and, if you save your code as something like "myfile.R," you could run your whole file in R by typing `source("C:/data/myfile.R")` at the R command prompt. You could also use the built-in editor that comes with R for Windows (File --> New script, then use `ctrl+r` to run selected code). The advantages of R-WinEdt over these options are:

- It's a nicer editor than any of these, with R-specific text highlighting and tabs for files
- The editor is better integrated into R than they are, with easy commands to send code to the R prompt

## How to set up R-WinEdt on your PC:

Three easy steps, plus one optional step:

1. Download R for Windows (<http://cran.r-project.org/> --> R Sources)
2. Download WinEdt ([www.winedt.com](http://www.winedt.com))
3. In R, use the drop-down menus to install R-WinEdt: (Packages --> Install packages . . . --> RWinEdt)

At this point, you could start RWinEdt from R by typing `library(RWinEdt)` at the command line prompt:

```
> library(RWinEdt)
```

Check to see if it works. R-WinEdt should start up, and you should be able to highlight code you write in R-WinEdt and send it to the R prompt.

**Optional:** To automate the process, such that R-WinEdt opens up every time I start R, I modified my "R Profile." Open the `RProfile.site` file in the `etc` folder (in your R directory -- eg `C:\Program Files\R\R-2.3.1\etc`) and add the line:

```
options(defaultPackages = c(getOption("defaultPackages"),
"RWinEdt"))
```

Now when you restart R, R-WinEdt should start up automatically.

### Quick guide to using RWinEdt:

There's really not much to using RWinEdt, and since the program has easy-to-use drop-down menus listing keyboard shortcuts, you can figure it out yourself pretty quickly.

The commands I use the most (I am listing keyboard shortcuts but all (except Insert Comment) are available from drop-down menus):

- `alt+l`: send current line to R and go (ie, paste current line into R prompt and switch over to R to observe execution)
- `alt+p` (or "paste" button): send highlighted text to R and go
- `alt+s` (or "source" button): source file (ie, send entire file to the R interpreter) and go
- `ctrl+r`: find and replace
- `right click --> Insert Comment`: add "#" symbols to the left of all highlighted text, such that it won't be executed
- `highlight text and tab`: indent highlighted text
- `highlight text and shift-tab`: dedent highlighted text

### Comments/suggestions

Let me know if there are any updates to this process or if you have any questions.