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# **alot Documentation**

*Release 0.8*

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# Contents

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<b>1</b>	<b>Installation</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Manual installation . . . . .	3
1.2	Generating the Docs . . . . .	4
<b>2</b>	<b>Usage</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Command-Line Invocation . . . . .	5
2.2	UNIX Signals . . . . .	6
2.3	First Steps in the UI . . . . .	6
2.4	Commands . . . . .	6
2.5	Cryptography . . . . .	15
<b>3</b>	<b>Configuration</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1	Configuration Options . . . . .	17
3.2	Accounts . . . . .	27
3.3	Contacts Completion . . . . .	31
3.4	Key Bindings . . . . .	32
3.5	Hooks . . . . .	35
3.6	Theming . . . . .	38
<b>4</b>	<b>API and Development</b>	<b>43</b>
4.1	Overview . . . . .	43
4.2	Email Database . . . . .	43
4.3	User Interface . . . . .	53
4.4	User Settings . . . . .	67
4.5	Utils . . . . .	75
4.6	Commands . . . . .	78
4.7	Crypto . . . . .	90
<b>5</b>	<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Manpage</b>	<b>95</b>
6.1	Synopsis . . . . .	95
6.2	Description . . . . .	95
6.3	Options . . . . .	95
6.4	Commands . . . . .	96
6.5	Usage . . . . .	96
6.6	UNIX Signals . . . . .	96

6.7 See Also .....	96
<b>Python Module Index</b>	<b>97</b>

Alot is a terminal-based mail user agent for the notmuch mail system. It features a modular and command prompt driven interface to provide a full MUA experience as an alternative to the Emacs mode shipped with notmuch.



These days, `alot` can be installed directly using your favourite package manager. On a recent Debian (-derived) systems for instance, just do `sudo apt install alot` and you're done.

**Note:** `Alot` uses `mailcap` to look up mime-handler for inline rendering and opening of attachments. To avoid surprises you should at least have an inline renderer (`copiousoutput`) set up for `text/html` in your `~/.mailcap`:

```
text/html; w3m -dump -o document_charset=%{charset} '%s'; nametemplate=%s.html;
↳copiousoutput
```

See the manpage `mailcap(5)` or [RFC 1524](#) for more details on your mailcap setup.

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## 1.1 Manual installation

`Alot` depends on recent versions of `notmuch` and `urwid`. Note that due to restrictions on `argparse` and `subprocess`, you need to run `python 3.5` (see [faq](#)). A full list of dependencies is below:

- `libmagic` and `python bindings`, *5.04*
- `configobj`, *4.7.0*
- `libnotmuch` and it's `python bindings`, *0.13*
- `urwid toolkit`, *1.3.0*
- `urwidtrees`, *1.0*
- `gpg` and it's `python bindings`, *1.9.0*

On Debian/Ubuntu these are packaged as:

```
python3-setuptools python3-magic python3-configobj python3-notmuch python3-urwid_
↳python3-urwidtrees python3-gpg
```

On Fedora/Redhat these are packaged as:

```
python-setuptools python-magic python-configobj python-notmuch python-urwid python-urwidtrees python-gpg
```

To set up and install the latest development version:

```
git clone https://github.com/pazz/alot
./setup.py develop --user
```

Make sure `~/local/bin` is in your `PATH`. For system-wide installation omit the `--user` flag and call with the respective permissions.

## 1.2 Generating the Docs

This requires [sphinx](#), *1.3* to be installed. To generate the documentation from the source directory simply do:

```
make -C docs html
```

A man page can be generated using:

```
make -C docs man
```

Both will end up in their respective subfolders in `docs/build`.



## 2.1 Command-Line Invocation

### Synopsis

alot [options ...] [subcommand]

### Options

- r, --read-only** open notmuch database in read-only mode
- c FILENAME, --config=FILENAME** configuration file (default: `~/config/alot/config`)
- n FILENAME, --notmuch-config=FILENAME** notmuch configuration file (default: `$NOTMUCH_CONFIG` or `~/notmuch-config`)
- C COLOURS, --colour-mode=COLOURS** number of colours to use on the terminal; must be 1, 16 or 256 (default: configuration option `colourmode` or 256)
- p PATH, --mailindex-path=PATH** path to notmuch index
- d LEVEL, --debug-level=LEVEL** debug level; must be one of debug, info, warning or error (default: info)
- l FILENAME, --logfile=FILENAME** log file (default: `/dev/null`)
- h, --help** display help and exit
- v, --version** output version information and exit

### Commands

alot can be invoked with an optional subcommand from the command line. Those have their own parameters (see e.g. `alot search -help`). The following commands are available.

**search** start in a search buffer using the query string provided as parameter (see *notmuch-search-terms(7)*)

**compose** compose a new message

**bufferlist** start with only a bufferlist buffer open

**taglist** start with only a taglist buffer open

**namedqueries** start with list of named queries

**pyshell** start the interactive python shell inside alot

## 2.2 UNIX Signals

**SIGUSR1** Refreshes the current buffer.

**SIGINT** Shuts down the user interface.

## 2.3 First Steps in the UI

The arrow keys, *page-up/down*, *j*, *k* and *Space* can be used to move the focus. *Escape* cancels prompts and *Enter* selects. Hit `:` at any time and type in commands to the prompt.

The interface shows one buffer at a time, you can use *Tab* and *Shift-Tab* to switch between them, close the current buffer with *d* and list them all with `;`.

The buffer type or *mode* (displayed at the bottom left) determines which prompt commands are available. Usage information on any command can be listed by typing *help YOURCOMMAND* to the prompt. The keybindings for the current mode are listed upon pressing `?`.

## 2.4 Commands

Alot interprets user input as command line strings given via its prompt or *bound to keys* in the config. Command lines are semi-colon separated command strings, each of which starts with a command name and possibly followed by arguments.

See the sections below for which commands are available in which (UI) mode. *global* commands are available independently of the mode.

*Global commands* globally available commands

*Commands in bufferlist mode* commands while listing active buffers

*Commands in envelope mode* commands during message composition

*Commands in namedqueries mode* commands while listing all named queries from the notmuch database

*Commands in search mode* commands available when showing thread search results

*Commands in taglist mode* commands while listing all tagstrings present in the notmuch database

*Commands in thread mode* commands available while displaying a thread

## 2.4.1 Global commands

The following commands are available globally:

### **bclose**

close a buffer

#### **optional arguments**

- redraw** redraw current buffer after command has finished
- force** never ask for confirmation

### **bnext**

focus next buffer

### **bprevious**

focus previous buffer

### **buffer**

focus buffer with given index

**argument** buffer index to focus

### **bufferlist**

open a list of active buffers

### **call**

execute python code

**argument** python command string to call

### **compose**

compose a new email

**argument** None

#### **optional arguments**

- sender** sender
- template** path to a template message file
- tags** comma-separated list of tags to apply to message
- subject** subject line
- to** recipients
- cc** copy to
- bcc** blind copy to
- attach** attach files
- omit\_signature** do not add signature
- spawn** spawn editor in new terminal

### **exit**

shut down cleanly

### **flush**

flush write operations or retry until committed

### **help**

display help for a command (use ‘bindings’ to display all keybindings interpreted in current mode)

**argument** command or ‘bindings’

**move**

move focus in current buffer

**argument** up, down, [half]page up, [half]page down, first, last

**namedqueries**

opens named queries buffer

**prompt**

prompts for commandline and interprets it upon select

**argument** initial content

**pyshell**

open an interactive python shell for introspection

**refresh**

refresh the current buffer

**reload**

reload all configuration files

**removequery**

removes a “named query” from the database

**argument** alias to remove

**optional arguments**

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

**repeat**

repeat the command executed last time

**savequery**

store query string as a “named query” in the database

**positional arguments** 0: alias to use for query string 1: query string to store

**optional arguments**

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

**search**

open a new search buffer. Search obeys the notmuch *search.exclude\_tags* setting.

**argument** search string

**optional arguments**

—**sort** sort order; valid choices are: ‘oldest\_first’, ‘newest\_first’, ‘message\_id’, ‘unsorted’

**shellescape**

run external command

**argument** command line to execute

**optional arguments**

—**spawn** run in terminal window

—**thread** run in separate thread

—**refocus** refocus current buffer after command has finished

**taglist**

opens taglist buffer

**optional arguments**

—**tags** tags to display

## 2.4.2 Commands in *bufferlist* mode

The following commands are available in bufferlist mode:

**close**

close focussed buffer

**open**

focus selected buffer

## 2.4.3 Commands in *envelope* mode

The following commands are available in envelope mode:

**attach**

attach files to the mail

**argument** file(s) to attach (accepts wildcards)

**edit**

edit mail

**optional arguments**

—**spawn** spawn editor in new terminal

—**refocus** refocus envelope after editing (defaults to: 'True')

**encrypt**

request encryption of message before sendout

**argument** keyid of the key to encrypt with

**optional arguments**

—**trusted** only add trusted keys

**refine**

prompt to change the value of a header

**argument** header to refine

**retag**

set message tags

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**rmencrypt**

do not encrypt to given recipient key

**argument** keyid of the key to encrypt with

**save**

save draft

**send**

send mail

**set**

set header value

**positional arguments** 0: header to refine 1: value

**optional arguments**

—**append** keep previous values

**sign**

mark mail to be signed before sending

**argument** which key id to use

**tag**

add tags to message

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**toggleencrypt**

toggle if message should be encrypted before sendout

**argument** keyid of the key to encrypt with

**optional arguments**

—**trusted** only add trusted keys

**toggleheaders**

toggle display of all headers

**togglesign**

toggle sign status

**argument** which key id to use

**toggletags**

flip presence of tags on message

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**unattach**

remove attachments from current envelope

**argument** which attached file to remove

**unencrypt**

remove request to encrypt message before sending

**unset**

remove header field

**argument** header to refine

**unsign**

mark mail not to be signed before sending

**untag**

remove tags from message

**argument** comma separated list of tags

## 2.4.4 Commands in *namedqueries* mode

The following commands are available in namedqueries mode:

### **select**

search for messages with selected query

**argument** additional filter to apply to query

## 2.4.5 Commands in *search* mode

The following commands are available in search mode:

### **move**

move focus in search buffer

**argument** last

### **refine**

refine query

**argument** search string

### **optional arguments**

—**sort** sort order; valid choices are: ‘oldest\_first’, ‘newest\_first’, ‘message\_id’, ‘unsorted’

### **refineprompt**

prompt to change this buffers querystring

### **retag**

set tags of all messages in the thread that match the current query

**argument** comma separated list of tags

### **optional arguments**

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

—**all** retag all messages in search result

### **retagprompt**

prompt to retag selected thread’s or message’s tags

### **savequery**

store query string as a “named query” in the database. This falls back to the current search query in search buffers.

**positional arguments** 0: alias to use for query string 1: query string to store

### **optional arguments**

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

### **select**

open thread in a new buffer

### **sort**

set sort order

**argument** sort order; valid choices are: ‘oldest\_first’, ‘newest\_first’, ‘message\_id’, ‘unsorted’

### **tag**

add tags to all messages in the thread that match the current query

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**optional arguments**

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

—**all** retag all messages in search result

**toggletags**

flip presence of tags on this thread: a tag is considered present and will be removed if at least one message in this thread is tagged with it

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**optional arguments**

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

**untag**

remove tags from all messages in the thread that match the query

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**optional arguments**

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

—**all** retag all messages in search result

## 2.4.6 Commands in *taglist* mode

The following commands are available in taglist mode:

**select**

search for messages with selected tag

## 2.4.7 Commands in *thread* mode

The following commands are available in thread mode:

**bounce**

directly re-send selected message

**editnew**

edit message in as new

**optional arguments**

—**spawn** open editor in new window

**fold**

fold message(s)

**argument** query used to filter messages to affect

**forward**

forward message

**optional arguments**

—**attach** attach original mail

—**spawn** open editor in new window



**indent**

change message/reply indentation

**argument** None

**move**

move focus in current buffer

**argument** up, down, [half]page up, [half]page down, first, last, parent, first reply, last reply, next sibling, previous sibling, next, previous, next unfolded, previous unfolded, next NOTMUCH\_QUERY, previous NOTMUCH\_QUERY

**pipeto**

pipe message(s) to stdin of a shellcommand

**argument** shellcommand to pipe to

**optional arguments**

- all** pass all messages
- format** output format; valid choices are: ‘raw’, ‘decoded’, ‘id’, ‘filepath’ (defaults to: ‘raw’)
- separately** call command once for each message
- background** don’t stop the interface
- add\_tags** add ‘Tags’ header to the message
- shell** let the shell interpret the command
- notify\_stdout** display cmd’s stdout as notification
- field\_key** mailcap field key for decoding (defaults to: ‘copiousoutput’)

**print**

print message(s)

**optional arguments**

- all** print all messages
- raw** pass raw mail string
- separately** call print command once for each message
- add\_tags** add ‘Tags’ header to the message

**remove**

remove message(s) from the index

**optional arguments**

- all** remove whole thread

**reply**

reply to message

**optional arguments**

- all** reply to all
- list** reply to list
- spawn** open editor in new window

**retag**

set message(s) tags.

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**optional arguments**

—**all** tag all messages in thread

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

**retagprompt**

prompt to retag selected thread’s or message’s tags

**save**

save attachment(s)

**argument** path to save to

**optional arguments**

—**all** save all attachments

**select**

**select focussed element:**

- if it is a message summary, toggle visibility of the message;
- if it is an attachment line, open the attachment

**tag**

add tags to message(s)

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**optional arguments**

—**all** tag all messages in thread

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

**toggleheaders**

display all headers

**argument** query used to filter messages to affect

**togglesource**

display message source

**argument** query used to filter messages to affect

**toggletags**

flip presence of tags on message(s)

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**optional arguments**

—**all** tag all messages in thread

—**no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

**unfold**

unfold message(s)

**argument** query used to filter messages to affect

**untag**

remove tags from message(s)

**argument** comma separated list of tags

**optional arguments**

- all** tag all messages in thread
- no-flush** postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

## 2.5 Cryptography

Alot has built in support for constructing signed and/or encrypted mails according to PGP/MIME ([RFC 3156](#), [RFC 3156](#)) via gnupg. It does however rely on a running *gpg-agent* to handle password entries.

---

**Note:** You need to have *gpg-agent* running to use GPG with alot!

*gpg-agent* will handle passphrase entry in a secure and configurable way, and it will cache your passphrase for some time so you don’t have to enter it over and over again. For details on how to set this up we refer to [gnupg’s manual](#).

---

### Signing outgoing emails

You can use the commands *sign*, *unsign* and *toggle**sign* in envelope mode to determine if you want this mail signed and if so, which key to use. To specify the key to use you may pass a hint string as argument to the *sign* or *toggle**sign* command. This hint would typically be a fingerprint or an email address associated (by gnupg) with a key.

Signing (and hence passwd entry) will be done at most once shortly before a mail is sent.

In case no key is specified, alot will leave the selection of a suitable key to gnupg so you can influence that by setting the *default-key* option in `~/ .gnupg/gpg.conf` accordingly.

You can set the default to-sign bit and the key to use for each *account* individually using the options *sign\_by\_default* and *gpg\_key*.

### Encrypt outgoing emails

You can use the commands *encrypt*, *unencrypt* and *toggle**encrypt* and in envelope mode to ask alot to encrypt the mail before sending. The *encrypt* command accepts an optional hint string as argument to determine the key of the recipient.

You can set the default to-encrypt bit for each *account* individually using the option *encrypt\_by\_default*.

---

**Note:** If you want to access encrypt mail later it is useful to add yourself to the list of recipients when encrypting with gpg (not the recipients whom mail is actually send to). The simplest way to do this is to use the *encrypt-to* option in the `~/ .gnupg/gpg.conf`. But you might have to specify the correct encryption subkey otherwise gpg seems to throw an error.

---

The arrow keys, *page-up/down*, *j*, *k* and *Space* can be used to move the focus. *Escape* cancels prompts and *Enter* selects. Hit `:` at any time and type in commands to the prompt.

The interface shows one buffer at a time, you can use *Tab* and *Shift-Tab* to switch between them, close the current buffer with *d* and list them all with `;`.

The buffer type or *mode* (displayed at the bottom left) determines which prompt commands are available. Usage information on any command can be listed by typing *help YOURCOMMAND* to the prompt. The keybindings for the current mode are listed upon pressing `?`.

alot [options ...] [subcommand]

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You can set the default to-encrypt bit for each *account* individually using the option *encrypt\_by\_default*.

---

**Note:** If you want to access encrypt mail later it is useful to add yourself to the list of recipients when encrypting with gpg (not the recipients whom mail is actually send to). The simplest way to do this is to use the *encrypt-to* option in the `~/ .gnupg/gpg.conf`. But you might have to specify the correct encryption subkey otherwise gpg seems to throw an error.

---

Alot reads a config file in “INI” syntax: It consists of key-value pairs that use “=” as separator and ‘#’ is comment-prefixes. Sections and subsections are defined using square brackets.

The default location for the config file is `~/ .config/alot/config`.

All configs are optional, but if you want to send mails you need to specify at least one *account* in your config.

### 3.1 Configuration Options

The following lists all available config options with their type and default values. The type of an option is used to validate a given value. For instance, if the type says “boolean” you may only provide “True” or “False” as values in your config file, otherwise alot will complain on startup. Strings *may* be quoted but do not need to be.

#### **ask\_subject**

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

#### **attachment\_prefix**

directory prefix for downloading attachments

**Type** string

**Default** “~”

#### **auto\_remove\_unread**

automatically remove ‘unread’ tag when focussing messages in thread mode

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

**auto\_replyto\_mailinglist**

Automatically switch to list reply mode if appropriate

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**bounce\_force\_address**

Always use the accounts main address when constructing “Resent-From” headers for bounces. Set this to False to use the address string as received in the original message.

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**bounce\_force\_realname**

Always use the proper realname when constructing “Resent-From” headers for bounces. Set this to False to use the realname string as received in the original message.

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

**bufferclose\_focus\_offset**

offset of next focused buffer if the current one gets closed

**Type** integer

**Default** -1

**bufferlist\_statusbar**

Format of the status-bar in bufferlist mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar that may contain variables:

- *{buffer\_no}*: index of this buffer in the global buffer list
- *{total\_messages}*: total number of messages indexed by notmuch
- *{pending\_writes}*: number of pending write operations to the index

**Type** mixed\_list

**Default** [{buffer\_no}: bufferlist], {input\_queue} total messages: {total\_messages}

**bug\_on\_exit**

confirm exit

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**colourmode**

number of colours to use on the terminal

**Type** option, one of ['1', '16', '256']

**Default** 256

**complete\_matching\_abook\_only**

in case more than one account has an address book: Set this to True to make tab completion for recipients during compose only look in the abook of the account matching the sender address

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**compose\_ask\_tags**

prompt for initial tags when compose

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**displayed\_headers**

headers that get displayed by default

**Type** string list

**Default** From, To, Cc, Bcc, Subject

**edit\_headers\_blacklist**

see *edit\_headers\_whitelist*

**Type** string list

**Default** Content-Type, MIME-Version, References, In-Reply-To

**edit\_headers\_whitelist**

Which header fields should be editable in your editor used are those that match the whitelist and don't match the blacklist. in both cases '\*' may be used to indicate all fields.

**Type** string list

**Default** \*,

**editor\_cmd**

editor command if unset, alot will first try the EDITOR env variable, then /usr/bin/editor

**Type** string

**Default** None

**editor\_in\_thread**

call editor in separate thread. In case your editor doesn't run in the same window as alot, setting true here will make alot non-blocking during edits

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

### **editor\_spawn**

use *terminal\_cmd* to spawn a new terminal for the editor? equivalent to always providing the *-spawn=yes* parameter to compose/edit commands

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

### **editor\_writes\_encoding**

file encoding used by your editor

**Type** string

**Default** "UTF-8"

### **envelope\_headers\_blacklist**

headers that are hidden in envelope buffers by default

**Type** string list

**Default** In-Reply-To, References

### **envelope\_statusbar**

Format of the status-bar in envelope mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. Apart from the global variables listed at *bufferlist\_statusbar* these strings may contain variables:

- *{to}*: To-header of the envelope

**Type** mixed\_list

**Default** [{buffer\_no}: envelope], {input\_queue} total messages: {total\_messages}

### **exclude\_tags**

A list of tags that will be excluded from search results by default. Using an excluded tag in a query will override that exclusion. .. note:: this config setting is equivalent to, but independent of, the 'search.exclude\_tags' in the notmuch config.

**Type** string list

**Default** ,

### **flush\_retry\_timeout**

timeout in seconds after a failed attempt to writeout the database is repeated. Set to 0 for no retry.

**Type** integer

**Default** 5

### **followup\_to**

When one of the recipients of an email is a subscribed mailing list, set the "Mail-Followup-To" header to the list of recipients without yourself

**Type** boolean



**Default** False

#### **forward\_force\_address**

Always use the accounts main address when constructing “From” headers for forwards. Set this to False to use the address string as received in the original message.

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

#### **forward\_force\_realname**

Always use the proper realname when constructing “From” headers for forwards. Set this to False to use the realname string as received in the original message.

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

#### **forward\_subject\_prefix**

String prepended to subject header on forward only if original subject doesn’t start with ‘Fwd:’ or this prefix

**Type** string

**Default** “Fwd: “

#### **handle\_mouse**

enable mouse support - mouse tracking will be handled by urwid

---

**Note:** If this is set to True mouse events are passed from the terminal to urwid/alot. This means that normal text selection in alot will not be possible. Most terminal emulators will still allow you to select text when shift is pressed.

---

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

#### **history\_size**

The number of command line history entries to save

---

**Note:** You can set this to -1 to save *all* entries to disk but the history file might get *very* long.

---

**Type** integer

**Default** 50

#### **honor\_followup\_to**

When group-reply-ing to an email that has the “Mail-Followup-To” header set, use the content of this header as the new “To” header and leave the “Cc” header empty

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

#### **hooksfile**

where to look up hooks

**Type** string

**Default** “~/config/alot/hooks.py”

#### **initial\_command**

initial command when none is given as argument:

**Type** string

**Default** “search tag:inbox AND NOT tag:killed”

#### **input\_timeout**

timeout in (floating point) seconds until partial input is cleared

**Type** float

**Default** 1.0

#### **mailinglists**

The list of addresses associated to the mailinglists you are subscribed to

**Type** string list

**Default** ,

#### **msg\_summary\_hides\_threadwide\_tags**

In a thread buffer, hide from messages summaries tags that are common to all messages in that thread.

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

#### **namedqueries\_statusbar**

Format of the status-bar in named query list mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. These strings may contain variables listed at *bufferlist\_statusbar* that will be substituted accordingly.

**Type** mixed\_list

**Default** [{buffer\_no}: namedqueries], {query\_count} named queries

#### **notify\_timeout**

time in secs to display status messages

**Type** integer

**Default** 2

**periodic\_hook\_frequency**

The number of seconds to wait between calls to the loop\_hook

**Type** integer

**Default** 300

**prefer\_plaintext**

prefer plaintext alternatives over html content in multipart/alternative

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**print\_cmd**

how to print messages: this specifies a shell command used for printing. threads/messages are piped to this command as plain text. muttprint/a2ps works nicely

**Type** string

**Default** None

**prompt\_suffix**

Suffix of the prompt used when waiting for user input

**Type** string

**Default** “.”

**quit\_on\_last\_bclose**

shut down when the last buffer gets closed

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**quote\_prefix**

String prepended to line when quoting

**Type** string

**Default** “> “

**reply\_account\_header\_priority**

The list of headers to match to determine sending account for a reply. Headers are searched in the order in which they are specified here, and the first header containing a match is used. If multiple accounts match in that header, the one defined first in the account block is used.

**Type** string list

**Default** From, To, Cc, Envelope-To, X-Envelope-To, Delivered-To

### **reply\_force\_address**

Always use the accounts main address when constructing “From” headers for replies. Set this to False to use the address string as received in the original message.

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

### **reply\_force\_realname**

Always use the proper realname when constructing “From” headers for replies. Set this to False to use the realname string as received in the original message.

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

### **reply\_subject\_prefix**

String prepended to subject header on reply only if original subject doesn’t start with ‘Re:’ or this prefix

**Type** string

**Default** “Re: “

### **search\_statusbar**

Format of the status-bar in search mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. Apart from the global variables listed at [bufferlist\\_statusbar](#) these strings may contain variables:

- *{querystring}*: search string
- *{result\_count}*: number of matching messages
- *{result\_count\_positive}*: ‘s’ if result count is greater than 0.

**Type** mixed\_list

**Default** [{buffer\_no}: search] for “{querystring}”, {input\_queue} {result\_count} of {total\_messages} messages

### **search\_threads\_sort\_order**

default sort order of results in a search

**Type** option, one of [‘oldest\_first’, ‘newest\_first’, ‘message\_id’, ‘unsorted’]

**Default** newest\_first

### **show\_statusbar**

display status-bar at the bottom of the screen?

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

### **tabwidth**

number of spaces used to replace tab characters

**Type** integer

**Default** 8

#### **taglist\_statusbar**

Format of the status-bar in taglist mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. These strings may contain variables listed at *bufferlist\_statusbar* that will be substituted accordingly.

**Type** mixed\_list

**Default** [{buffer\_no}: taglist], {input\_queue} total messages: {total\_messages}

#### **template\_dir**

templates directory that contains your message templates. It will be used if you give *compose -template* a filename without a path prefix.

**Type** string

**Default** "\$XDG\_CONFIG\_HOME/alot/templates"

#### **terminal\_cmd**

set terminal command used for spawning shell commands

**Type** string

**Default** "x-terminal-emulator -e"

#### **theme**

name of the theme to use

**Type** string

**Default** None

#### **themes\_dir**

directory containing theme files.

**Type** string

**Default** "\$XDG\_CONFIG\_HOME/alot/themes"

#### **thread\_authors\_me**

Word to replace own addresses with. Works in combination with *thread\_authors\_replace\_me*

**Type** string

**Default** "Me"

#### **thread\_authors\_order\_by**

When constructing the unique list of thread authors, order by date of author's first or latest message in thread

**Type** option, one of ['first\_message', 'latest\_message']

**Default** first\_message

#### **thread\_authors\_replace\_me**

Replace own email addresses with “me” in author lists Uses own addresses and aliases in all configured accounts.

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

#### **thread\_focus\_linewise**

Split message body linewise and allows to (move) the focus to each individual line. Setting this to False will result in one potentially big text widget for the whole message body.

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

#### **thread\_indent\_replies**

number of characters used to indent replies relative to original messages in thread mode

**Type** integer

**Default** 2

#### **thread\_statusbar**

Format of the status-bar in thread mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. Apart from the global variables listed at *bufferlist\_statusbar* these strings may contain variables:

- *{tid}*: thread id
- *{subject}*: subject line of the thread
- *{authors}*: abbreviated authors string for this thread
- *{message\_count}*: number of contained messages

**Type** mixed\_list

**Default** [{buffer\_no}: thread] {subject}, {input\_queue} total messages: {total\_messages}

#### **thread\_subject**

What should be considered to be “the thread subject”. Valid values are:

- ‘notmuch’ (the default), will use the thread subject from notmuch, which depends on the selected sorting method
- ‘oldest’ will always use the subject of the oldest message in the thread as the thread subject

**Type** option, one of ['oldest', 'notmuch']

**Default** notmuch

#### **timestamp\_format**

timestamp format in `strftime` format syntax

**Type** string

**Default** None

### `user_agent`

value of the User-Agent header used for outgoing mails. setting this to the empty string will cause alot to omit the header all together. The string ‘{version}’ will be replaced by the version string of the running instance.

**Type** string

**Default** “alot/{version}”

## 3.1.1 Notmuch options

The following lists the notmuch options that alot reads.

### `search.exclude_tags`

A list of tags that will be excluded from search results by default. Using an excluded tag in a query will override that exclusion.

**Type** semicolon separated list

**Default** empty list

## 3.2 Accounts

In order to be able to send mails, you have to define at least one account subsection in your config: There needs to be a section “accounts”, and each subsection, indicated by double square brackets defines an account.

Here is an example configuration

```
[accounts]
  [[work]]
    realname = Bruce Wayne
    address = b.wayne@wayneenterprises.com
    alias_regexp = b.wayne\+.\+@wayneenterprises.com
    gpg_key = D7D6C5AA
    sendmail_command = msmtplib --account=wayne -t
    sent_box = maildir:///home/bruce/mail/work/Sent
    draft_box = maildir:///home/bruce/mail/work/Drafts

  [[secret]]
    realname = Batman
    address = batman@batcave.org
    aliases = batman@batmobile.org,
    sendmail_command = msmtplib --account=batman -t
    signature = ~/.batman.vcf
    signature_as_attachment = True
```

**Warning:** Sending mails is only supported via a sendmail shell command for now. If you want to use a sendmail command different from *sendmail -t*, specify it as *sendmail\_command*.

The following entries are interpreted at the moment:

**address**

your main email address

**Type** string

**alias\_regexp**

a regexp for catching further aliases (like + extensions).

**Type** string

**Default** None

**aliases**

used to clear your addresses/ match account when formatting replies

**Type** string list

**Default** ,

**case\_sensitive\_username**

Whether the server treats the address as case-sensitive or case-insensitive (True for the former, False for the latter)

---

**Note:** The vast majority (if not all) SMTP servers in modern use treat usernames as case insensitive, you should only set this if you know that you need it.

---

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**draft\_box**

where to store draft mails, e.g. *maildir:///home/you/mail/Drafts*. You can use mbox, maildir, mh, babyl and mmdf in the protocol part of the URL.

---

**Note:** You will most likely want drafts indexed by notmuch to be able to later access them within alot. This currently only works for maildir containers in a path below your notmuch database path.

---

**Type** mail\_container

**Default** None

**draft\_tags**

list of tags to automatically add to draft messages



**Type** string list

**Default** draft

### **encrypt\_by\_default**

Alot will try to GPG encrypt outgoing messages by default when this is set to *all* or *trusted*. If set to *all* the message will be encrypted for all recipients for who a key is available in the key ring. If set to *trusted* it will be encrypted to all recipients if a trusted key is available for all recipients (one where the user id for the key is signed with a trusted signature).

---

**Note:** If the message will not be encrypted by default you can still use the *toggleencrypt*, *encrypt* and *unencrypt* commands to encrypt it.

---

Deprecated since version 0.4: The values *True* and *False* are interpreted as *all* and *none* respectively. *0*, *1*, *true*, *True*, *false*, *False*, *yes*, *Yes*, *no*, *No*, will be removed before 1.0, please move to *all*, *none*, or *trusted*.

**Type** option, one of ['all', 'none', 'trusted', 'True', 'False', 'true', 'false', 'Yes', 'No', 'yes', 'no', '1', '0']

**Default** none

### **encrypt\_to\_self**

If this is true when encrypting a message it will also be encrypted with the key defined for this account.

**Warning:** Before 0.6 this was controlled via *gpg.conf*.

**Type** boolean

**Default** True

### **gpg\_key**

The GPG key ID you want to use with this account.

**Type** string

**Default** None

### **passed\_tags**

list of tags to automatically add to passed messages

**Type** string list

**Default** passed

### **realname**

used to format the (proposed) From-header in outgoing mails

**Type** string

**replied\_tags**

list of tags to automatically add to replied messages

**Type** string list

**Default** replied

**sendmail\_command**

sendmail command. This is the shell command used to send out mails via the sendmail protocol

**Type** string

**Default** “sendmail -t”

**sent\_box**

where to store outgoing mails, e.g. *maildir:///home/you/mail/Sent*. You can use mbox, maildir, mh, babyl and mmdf in the protocol part of the URL.

---

**Note:** If you want to add outgoing mails automatically to the notmuch index you must use maildir in a path within your notmuch database path.

---

**Type** mail\_container

**Default** None

**sent\_tags**

list of tags to automatically add to outgoing messages

**Type** string list

**Default** sent

**sign\_by\_default**

Outgoing messages will be GPG signed by default if this is set to True.

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**signature**

path to signature file that gets attached to all outgoing mails from this account, optionally renamed to *signature\_filename*.

**Type** string

**Default** None

**signature\_as\_attachment**

attach signature file if set to True, append its content (mimetype text) to the body text if set to False.

**Type** boolean

**Default** False

**signature\_filename**

signature file's name as it appears in outgoing mails if *signature\_as\_attachment* is set to True

**Type** string

**Default** None

### 3.3 Contacts Completion

For each *account* you can define an address book by providing a subsection named *abook*. Crucially, this section needs an option *type* that specifies the type of the address book. The only types supported at the moment are “shellcommand” and “abook”. Both respect the *ignorecase* option which defaults to *True* and results in case insensitive lookups.

**shellcommand**

Address books of this type use a shell command in combination with a regular expression to look up contacts.

The value of *command* will be called with the search prefix as only argument for lookups. Its output is searched for email-name pairs using the regular expression given as *regexp*, which must include named groups “email” and “name” to match the email address and realname parts respectively. See below for an example that uses *abook*

```
[accounts]
  [[youraccount]]
    # ...
    [[abook]]
      type = shellcommand
      command = abook --mutt-query
      regexp = '^(?P<email>[^@]+@[^\t]+\t+(?P<name>[^\t]+)'
```

See [here](#) for alternative lookup commands. The few others I have tested so far are:

**goobook** for cached google contacts lookups. Works with the above default regexp

```
command = goobook query
regexp = '^(?P<email>[^@]+@[^\t]+\t+(?P<name>[^\t]+)'
```

**nottoomuch-addresses** completes contacts found in the notmuch index:

```
command = nottoomuch-addresses.sh
regexp = \"(?P<name>.+)\s*(?P<email>.*+?@.+?)>
```

**notmuch-abook** completes contacts found in database of notmuch-abook:

```
command = notmuch_abook.py lookup
regexp = ^((?P<name>[^\s\<]*)\s+)?(?P<email>[^@]+?@[^>]+)?>?$
```

**notmuch address** Since version *0.19*, notmuch itself offers a subcommand *address*, that returns email addresses found in the notmuch index. Combined with the *date:* syntax to query for mails within a certain timeframe, this allows to search contacts that you've sent emails to (output all addresses from the *To*, *Cc* and *Bcc* headers):

```
command = 'notmuch address --format=json --output=recipients date:1Y.. AND_
↳from:my@address.org'
regexp = '\[?{"name": "(?P<name>.*)", "address": "(?P<email>.+)", "name-addr
↳": ".*"}[,\]}?]'
shellcommand_external_filtering = False
```

If you want to search for senders in the *From* header (which should be must faster according to `notmuch address docs`), then use the following command:

```
command = 'notmuch address --format=json date:1Y..'
```

Don't hesitate to send me your custom *regexp* values to list them here.

### abook

Address books of this type directly parse `abooks` contact files. You may specify a path using the “`abook_contacts_file`” option, which defaults to `~/ .abook/addressbook`. To use the default path, simply do this:

```
[accounts]
[[youraccount]]
# ...
[[[abook]]]
    type = abook
```

## 3.4 Key Bindings

If you want to bind a command to a key you can do so by adding the pair to the *[bindings]* section. This will introduce a *global* binding, that works in all modes. To make a binding specific to a mode you have to add the pair under the subsection named like the mode. For instance, if you want to bind *T* to open a new search for threads tagged with ‘todo’, and be able to toggle this tag in search mode, you'd add this to your config

```
[bindings]
T = search tag:todo

[[search]]
t = toggletags todo
```

Known modes are:

- bufferlist
- envelope
- namedqueries
- search
- taglist
- thread

Have a look at the [urwid User Input documentation](#) on how key strings are formatted.

### 3.4.1 Default bindings

User-defined bindings are combined with the default bindings listed below.

```

up = move up
down = move down
page up = move page up
page down = move page down
mouse press 4 = move up
mouse press 5 = move down
j = move down
k = move up
'g g' = move first
G = move last
' ' = move page down
'ctrl d' = move halfpage down
'ctrl u' = move halfpage up
@ = refresh
? = help bindings
I = search tag:inbox AND NOT tag:killed
'#' = taglist
shift tab = bprevious
U = search tag:unread
tab = bnext
\ = prompt 'search '
d = bclose
$ = flush
m = compose
o = prompt 'search '
q = exit
';' = bufferlist
':' = prompt
. = repeat

```

**[bufferlist]**

```

x = close
enter = open

```

**[search]**

```

enter = select
a = toggletags inbox
& = toggletags killed
! = toggletags flagged
s = toggletags unread
l = retagprompt
O = refineprompt
| = refineprompt

```

**[envelope]**

```

a = prompt 'attach ~/ '
y = send
P = save
s = 'refine Subject'
f = prompt 'set From '
t = 'refine To'
b = 'refine Bcc'
c = 'refine Cc'
S = togglesign
enter = edit
'g f' = togglesource

```

(continues on next page)

```

[taglist]
    enter = select

[namedqueries]
    enter = select

[thread]
    enter = select
    C = fold *
    E = unfold *
    c = fold
    e = unfold
    < = fold
    > = unfold
    [ = indent -
    ] = indent +
    'g f' = togglesource
    H = toggleheaders
    P = print --all --separately --add_tags
    S = save --all
    g = reply --all
    f = forward
    p = print --add_tags
    n = editnew
    b= bounce
    s = save
    r = reply
    | = prompt 'pipeto '

    'g j' = move next sibling
    'g k' = move previous sibling
    'g h' = move parent
    'g l' = move first reply
    ' ' = move next

```

In prompts the following hardcoded bindings are available.

Key	Function
Ctrl-f/b	Moves the cursor one character to the right/left
Alt-f/b Shift-right/left	Moves the cursor one word to the right/left
Ctrl-a/e	Moves the cursor to the beginning/end of the line
Ctrl-d	Deletes the character under the cursor
Alt-d	Deletes everything from the cursor to the end of the current or next word
Alt-Delete/Backspace Ctrl-w	Deletes everything from the cursor to the beginning of the current or previous word
Ctrl-k	Deletes everything from the cursor to the end of the line
Ctrl-u	Deletes everything from the cursor to the beginning of the line

### 3.4.2 Overwriting defaults

To disable a global binding you can redefine it in your config to point to an empty command string. For example, to add a new global binding for key *a*, which is bound to *toggletags inbox* in search mode by default, you can remap it as follows.

```
[bindings]
a = NEW GLOBAL COMMAND

[[search]]
a =
```

If you omit the last two lines, *a* will still be bound to the default binding in search mode.

## 3.5 Hooks

Hooks are python callables that live in a module specified by *hooksfile* in the config. Per default this points to `~/ .config/alot/hooks.py`.

### 3.5.1 Pre/Post Command Hooks

For every *COMMAND* in mode *MODE*, the callables `pre_MODE_COMMAND()` and `post_MODE_COMMAND()` – if defined – will be called before and after the command is applied respectively. In addition callables `pre_global_COMMAND()` and `post_global_COMMAND()` can be used. They will be called if no specific hook function for a mode is defined. The signature for the pre-send hook in envelope mode for example looks like this:

```
pre_envelope_send(ui=None, dbm=None, cmd=None)
```

#### Parameters

- **ui** (*alot.ui.UI*) – the main user interface
- **dbm** (*alot.db.manager.DBManager*) – a database manager
- **cmd** (*alot.commands.Command*) – the Command instance that is being called

Consider this pre-hook for the exit command, that logs a personalized goodbye message:

```
import logging
from alot.settings.const import settings
def pre_global_exit(**kwargs):
    accounts = settings.get_accounts()
    if accounts:
        logging.info('goodbye, %s!' % accounts[0].realname)
    else:
        logging.info('goodbye!')
```

### 3.5.2 Other Hooks

Apart from command pre- and posthooks, the following hooks will be interpreted:

```
reply_prefix(realname, address, timestamp[, ui=None, dbm=None])
```

Is used to reformat the first indented line in a reply message. This defaults to ‘Quoting %s (%s)n’ % (realname, timestamp)’ unless this hook is defined

#### Parameters

- **realname** (*str*) – name or the original sender
- **address** (*str*) – address of the sender

- **timestamp** (*datetime.datetime*) – value of the Date header of the replied message

**Return type** string

**forward\_prefix** (*realname, address, timestamp* [, *ui=None, dbm=None* ])

Is used to reformat the first indented line in a inline forwarded message. This defaults to ‘Forwarded message from %s (%s)n’ % (realname, timestamp)’ if this hook is undefined

**Parameters**

- **realname** (*str*) – name or the original sender
- **address** (*str*) – address of the sender
- **timestamp** (*datetime.datetime*) – value of the Date header of the replied message

**Return type** string

**pre\_edit\_translate** (*text* [, *ui=None, dbm=None* ])

Used to manipulate a message’s text *before* the editor is called. The text might also contain some header lines, depending on the settings *edit\_headers\_whitelist* and *edit\_header\_blacklist*.

**Parameters** **text** (*str*) – text representation of mail as displayed in the interface and as sent to the editor

**Return type** str

**post\_edit\_translate** (*text* [, *ui=None, dbm=None* ])

used to manipulate a message’s text *after* the editor is called, also see *pre\_edit\_translate*

**Parameters** **text** (*str*) – text representation of mail as displayed in the interface and as sent to the editor

**Return type** str

**text\_quote** (*message*)

used to transform a message into a quoted one

**Parameters** **message** (*str*) – message to be quoted

**Return type** str

**timestamp\_format** (*timestamp*)

represents given timestamp as string

**Parameters** **timestamp** (*datetime*) – timestamp to represent

**Return type** str

**touch\_external\_cmdlist** (*cmd, shell=shell, spawn=spawn, thread=thread*)

used to change external commands according to given flags shortly before they are called.

**Parameters**

- **cmd** (*list of str*) – command to be called
- **shell** (*bool*) – is this to be interpreted by the shell?
- **spawn** (*bool*) – should be spawned in new terminal/environment
- **threads** – should be called in new thread

**Returns** triple of amended command list, shell and thread flags

**Return type** list of str, bool, bool

**reply\_subject** (*subject*)

used to reformat the subject header on reply



**Parameters** **subject** (*str*) – subject to reformat

**Return type** *str*

**forward\_subject** (*subject*)

used to reformat the subject header on forward

**Parameters** **subject** (*str*) – subject to reformat

**Return type** *str*

**pre\_buffer\_open** (*ui=None, dbm=None, buf=buf*)

run before a new buffer is opened

**Parameters** **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open

**post\_buffer\_open** (*ui=None, dbm=None, buf=buf*)

run after a new buffer is opened

**Parameters** **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open

**pre\_buffer\_close** (*ui=None, dbm=None, buf=buf*)

run before a buffer is closed

**Parameters** **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open

**post\_buffer\_close** (*ui=None, dbm=None, buf=buf, success=success*)

run after a buffer is closed

**Parameters**

- **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open
- **success** (*boolean*) – true if successfully closed buffer

**pre\_buffer\_focus** (*ui=None, dbm=None, buf=buf*)

run before a buffer is focused

**Parameters** **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open

**post\_buffer\_focus** (*ui=None, dbm=None, buf=buf, success=success*)

run after a buffer is focused

**Parameters**

- **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open
- **success** (*boolean*) – true if successfully focused buffer

**exit** ()

run just before the program exits

**sanitize\_attachment\_filename** (*filename=None, prefix="", suffix=""*)

returns *prefix* and *suffix* for a sanitized filename to use while opening an attachment. The *prefix* and *suffix* are used to open a file named *prefix* + *XXXXXX* + *suffix* in a temporary directory.

**Parameters**

- **filename** (*str or None*) – filename provided in the email (can be None)
- **prefix** (*str*) – prefix string as found on mailcap
- **suffix** (*str*) – suffix string as found on mailcap

**Returns** tuple of *prefix* and *suffix*

**Return type** (*str, str*)

`loop_hook` (*ui=None*)

Run on a period controlled by `_periodic_hook_frequency`

**Parameters** `ui` (*alot.ui.UI*) – the main user interface

## 3.6 Theming

Alot can be run in 1, 16 or 256 colour mode. The requested mode is determined by the command-line parameter `-C` or read from option `colourmode` config value. The default is 256, which scales down depending on how many colours your terminal supports.

Most parts of the user interface can be individually coloured to your liking. To make it easier to switch between or share different such themes, they are defined in separate files (see below for the exact format). To specify the theme to use, set the `theme` config option to the name of a theme-file. A file by that name will be looked up in the path given by the `themes_dir` config setting which defaults to `$XDG_CONFIG_HOME/alot/themes`, and `~/.config/alot/themes/`, if `XDG_CONFIG_HOME` is empty or not set. If the `themes_dir` is not present then the contents of `$XDG_DATA_DIRS/alot/themes` will be tried in order. This defaults to `/usr/local/share/alot/themes` and `/usr/share/alot/themes`, in that order. These locations are meant to be used by distro packages to put themes in.

### 3.6.1 Theme Files

contain a section for each `MODE` plus “help” for the bindings-help overlay and “global” for globally used themables like footer, prompt etc. Each such section defines colour *attributes* for the parts that can be themed. The names of the themables should be self-explanatory. Have a look at the default theme file at `alot/defaults/default.theme` and the config spec `alot/defaults/default.theme` for the exact format.

### 3.6.2 Colour Attributes

Attributes are *sextuples* of `urwid Attribute strings` that specify foreground and background for mono, 16 and 256-colour modes respectively. For mono-mode only the flags `blink`, `standup`, `underline` and `bold` are available, 16c mode supports these in combination with the colour names:

brown	dark red	dark magenta	dark blue	dark cyan	dark green
yellow	light red	light magenta	light blue	light cyan	light green
black	dark gray	light gray	white		

In high-colour mode, you may use the above plus grayscales `g0` to `g100` and colour codes given as `#` followed by three hex values. See [here](#) and [here](#) for more details on the interpreted values. A colour picker that makes choosing colours easy can be found in `alot/extra/colour_picker.py`.

As an example, check the setting below that makes the footer line appear as underlined bold red text on a bright green background:

```
[[global]]
#name      mono fg      mono bg      16c fg      16c bg      256c fg
↪          256c bg
#          /          /          /          /          /
↪          /          /          /          /          /
#          v          v          v          v          v
↪          v          v          v          v          v
footer = 'bold,underline', '', 'light red, bold, underline', 'light green', 'light
↪red, bold, underline', '#8f6'
```

### 3.6.3 Search mode thread lines

The subsection ‘[[threadline]]’ of the ‘[search]’ section in *Theme Files* determines how to present a thread: here, *attributes* ‘normal’ and ‘focus’ provide fallback/spacer themes and ‘parts’ is a (string) list of displayed subwidgets. Possible part strings are:

- authors
- content
- date
- mailcount
- subject
- tags

For every listed part there must be a subsection with the same name, defining

**normal** *attribute* used for this part if unfocussed

**focus** *attribute* used for this part if focussed

**width** tuple indicating the width of the part. This is either (*‘fit’*, *min*, *max*) to force the widget to be at least *min* and at most *max* characters wide, or (*‘weight’*, *n*) which makes it share remaining space with other ‘weight’ parts.

**alignment** how to place the content string if the widget space is larger. This must be one of ‘right’, ‘left’ or ‘center’.

#### Dynamic theming of thread lines based on query matching

To highlight some thread lines (use different attributes than the defaults found in the ‘[[threadline]]’ section), one can define sections with prefix ‘threadline’. Each one of those can redefine any part of the structure outlined above, the rest defaults to values defined in ‘[[threadline]]’.

The section used to theme a particular thread is the first one (in file-order) that matches the criteria defined by its ‘query’ and ‘tagged\_with’ values:

- If ‘query’ is defined, the thread must match that querystring.
- If ‘tagged\_with’ is defined, its value (string list) must be a subset of the accumulated tags of all messages in the thread.

---

**Note:** that ‘tagged\_with = A,B’ is different from ‘query = “is:A AND is:B”’: the latter will match only if the thread contains a single message that is both tagged with A and B.

Moreover, note that if both query and tagged\_with is undefined, this section will always match and thus overwrite the defaults.

---

The example below shows how to highlight unread threads: The date-part will be bold red if the thread has unread messages and flagged messages and just bold if the thread has unread but no flagged messages:

```
[search]
# default threadline
[[threadline]]
  normal = 'default', 'default', 'default', 'default', '#6d6', 'default'
  focus = 'standout', 'default', 'light gray', 'dark gray', 'white', '#68a'
  parts = date, mailcount, tags, authors, subject
```

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(continued from previous page)

```

[[[date]]]
    normal = 'default','default','light gray','default','g58','default'
    focus = 'standout','default','light gray','dark gray','g89','#68a'
    width = 'fit',10,10
# ...

# highlight threads containing unread and flagged messages
[[[threadline-flagged-unread]]]
    tagged_with = 'unread','flagged'
    [[[date]]]
        normal = 'default','default','light red,bold','default','light red,bold',
↪ 'default'

# highlight threads containing unread messages
[[[threadline-unread]]]
    query = 'is:unread'
    [[[date]]]
        normal = 'default','default','light gray,bold','default','g58,bold',
↪ 'default'

```

### 3.6.4 Tagstring Formatting

One can specify how a particular tagstring is displayed throughout the interface. To use this feature, add a section *[tags]* to you alot config (not the theme file) and for each tag you want to customize, add a subsection named after the tag. Such a subsection may define

**normal** *attribute* used if unfocussed

**focus** *attribute* used if focussed

**translated** fixed string representation for this tag. The tag can be hidden from view, if the key *translated* is set to ‘’, the empty string.

**translation** a pair of strings that define a regular substitution to compute the string representation on the fly using *re.sub*. This only really makes sense if one uses a regular expression to match more than one tagstring (see below).

The following will make alot display the “todo” tag as “TODO” in white on red.

```

[tags]
  [[todo]]
    normal = '',', 'white','light red', 'white','#d66'
    translated = TODO

```

Utf-8 symbols are welcome here, see e.g. <http://panmental.de/symbols/info.htm> for some fancy symbols. I personally display my maildir flags like this:

```

[tags]

[[flagged]]
    translated =
    normal = '',', 'light red',',', 'light red',',',
    focus = '',', 'light red',',', 'light red',',',

[[unread]]
    translated =

```

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```
[[replied]]
  translated =

[[encrypted]]
  translated =
```

You may use regular expressions in the tagstring subsections to theme multiple tagstrings at once (first match wins). If you do so, you can use the *translation* option to specify a string substitution that will rename a matching tagstring. *translation* takes a comma separated *pair* of strings that will be fed to `re.sub()`. For instance, to theme all your `nmbug` tagstrings and especially colour tag `notmuch::bug` red, do the following:

```
[[notmuch::bug]]
  translated = 'nm:bug'
  normal = "", "", "light red, bold", "light blue", "light red, bold", "#88d"

[[notmuch::.*]]
  translation = 'notmuch:.(*)','nm:\1'
  normal = "", "", "white", "light blue", "#fff", "#88d"
```



## 4.1 Overview

The main component is `alot.ui.UI`, which provides methods for user input and notifications, sets up the widget tree and maintains the list of active buffers. When you start up `alot`, `init.py` initializes logging, parses settings and commandline args and instantiates the `UI` instance of that gets passed around later. From its constructor this instance starts the `urwidmainloop` that takes over.

Apart from the central `UI`, there are two other “managers” responsible for core functionalities, also set up in `init.py`:

- `ui.dbman`: a `DBManager` to access the email database and
- `alot.settings.settings`: a `SettingsManager` to access user settings

Every user action, triggered either by key bindings or via the command prompt, is given as commandline string that gets *translated* to a `Command` object which is then *applied*. Different actions are defined as subclasses of `Command`, which live in `alot/commands/MODE.py`, where `MODE` is the name of the mode (`Buffer` type) they are used in.

## 4.2 Email Database

The python bindings to `libnotmuch` define `notmuch.Thread` and `notmuch.Message`, which unfortunately are very fragile. `Alot` defines the wrapper classes `alot.db.Thread` and `alot.db.Message` that use an `manager.DBManager` instance to transparently provide persistent objects.

`alot.db.Message` moreover contains convenience methods to extract information about the message like reformatted header values, a summary, decoded and interpreted body text and a list of `Attachments`.

The central `UI` instance carries around a `DBManager` object that is used for any lookups or modifications of the email base. `DBManager` can directly look up `Thread` and `Message` objects and is able to postpone/cache/retry writing operations in case the Xapian index is locked by another process.

### 4.2.1 Database Manager

**class** `alot.db.manager.DBManager` (*path=None, ro=False*)

Keeps track of your index parameters, maintains a write-queue and lets you look up threads and messages directly to the persistent wrapper classes.

#### Parameters

- **path** (*str*) – absolute path to the notmuch index
- **ro** (*bool*) – open the index in read-only mode

**add\_message** (*path, tags=None, afterwards=None*)

Adds a file to the notmuch index.

#### Parameters

- **path** (*str*) – path to the file
- **tags** (*list of str*) – tagstrings to add
- **afterwards** (*callable or None*) – callback to trigger after adding

**async\_** (*cbl, fun*)

return a pair (pipe, process) so that the process writes *fun(a)* to the pipe for each element *a* in the iterable returned by the callable *cbl*.

#### Parameters

- **cbl** (*callable*) – a function returning something iterable
- **fun** (*callable*) – an unary translation function

**Return type** (`multiprocessing.Pipe, multiprocessing.Process`)

**count\_messages** (*querystring*)

returns number of messages that match *querystring*

**count\_threads** (*querystring*)

returns number of threads that match *querystring*

**flush** ()

write out all queued write-commands in order, each one in a separate `atomic` transaction.

If this fails the current action is rolled back, stays in the write queue and an exception is raised. You are responsible to retry flushing at a later time if you want to ensure that the cached changes are applied to the database.

**Exception** `DatabaseROError` if db is opened read-only

**Exception** `DatabaseLockedError` if db is locked

**get\_all\_tags** ()

returns all tagstrings used in the database :rtype: list of str

**get\_message** (*mid*)

returns `Message` with given message id (str)

**get\_named\_queries** ()

returns the named queries stored in the database. :rtype: dict (str -> str) mapping alias to full query string

**get\_thread** (*tid*)

returns `Thread` with given thread id (str)

**get\_threads** (*querystring, sort='newest\_first', exclude\_tags=None*)

asynchronously look up thread ids matching *querystring*.



**Parameters**

- **querystring** (*str.*) – The query string to use for the lookup
- **sort** – Sort order. one of ['oldest\_first', 'newest\_first', 'message\_id', 'unsorted']
- **exclude\_tags** (*list of str*) – Tags to exclude by default unless included in the search

**Returns** a pipe together with the process that asynchronously writes to it.

**Return type** (`multiprocessing.Pipe`, `multiprocessing.Process`)

**kill\_search\_processes** ()

terminate all search processes that originate from this managers `get_threads()`.

**query** (*querystring*)

creates `notmuch.Query` objects on demand

**Parameters** **querystring** – The query string to use for the lookup

**Returns** `notmuch.Query` – the query object.

**remove\_message** (*message*, *afterwards=None*)

Remove a message from the notmuch index

**Parameters**

- **message** (`Message`) – message to remove
- **afterwards** (*callable or None*) – callback to trigger after removing

**remove\_named\_query** (*alias*, *afterwards=None*)

remove a named query from the notmuch database.

**Parameters**

- **alias** (*str*) – name of shortcut
- **afterwards** (*callable or None*) – callback to trigger after adding the alias

**save\_named\_query** (*alias*, *querystring*, *afterwards=None*)

add an alias for a query string.

These are stored in the notmuch database and can be used as part of more complex queries using the syntax “query:alias”. See `notmuch-search-terms(7)` for more info.

**Parameters**

- **alias** (*str*) – name of shortcut
- **querystring** (*str*) – value, i.e., the full query string
- **afterwards** (*callable or None*) – callback to trigger after adding the alias

**tag** (*querystring*, *tags*, *afterwards=None*, *remove\_rest=False*)

add tags to messages matching *querystring*. This appends a tag operation to the write queue and raises `DatabaseROError` if in read only mode.

**Parameters**

- **querystring** (*str*) – notmuch search string
- **tags** (*list of str*) – a list of tags to be added
- **afterwards** (*callable*) – callback that gets called after successful application of this tagging operation

- **remove\_rest** (*bool*) – remove tags from matching messages before tagging

**Exception** DatabaseROError

---

**Note:** This only adds the requested operation to the write queue. You need to call `DBManager.flush()` to actually write out.

---

**untag** (*querystring, tags, afterwards=None*)

removes tags from messages that match *querystring*. This appends an untag operation to the write queue and raises DatabaseROError if in read only mode.

**Parameters**

- **querystring** (*str*) – notmuch search string
- **tags** (*list of str*) – a list of tags to be added
- **afterwards** (*callable*) – callback that gets called after successful application of this tagging operation

**Exception** DatabaseROError

---

**Note:** This only adds the requested operation to the write queue. You need to call `DBManager.flush()` to actually write out.

---

## 4.2.2 Errors

**class** `alot.db.errors.DatabaseError`

**class** `alot.db.errors.DatabaseROError`  
cannot write to read-only database

**class** `alot.db.errors.DatabaseLockedError`  
cannot write to locked index

**class** `alot.db.errors.NonexistentObjectError`  
requested thread or message does not exist in the index

## 4.2.3 Wrapper

**class** `alot.db.Thread` (*dbman, thread*)

A wrapper around a notmuch mailthread (`notmuch.database.Thread`) that ensures persistence of the thread: It can be safely read multiple times, its manipulation is done via a `alot.db.DBManager` and it can directly provide contained messages as `Message`.

**Parameters**

- **dbman** (`DBManager`) – db manager that is used for further lookups
- **thread** (`notmuch.database.Thread`) – the wrapped thread

**add\_tags** (*tags, afterwards=None, remove\_rest=False*)  
add *tags* to all messages in this thread

---

**Note:** This only adds the requested operation to this objects `DBManager`'s write queue. You need to call `DBManager.flush` to actually write out.

---

### Parameters

- **tags** (*list of str*) – a list of tags to be added
- **afterwards** (*callable*) – callback that gets called after successful application of this tagging operation
- **remove\_rest** (*bool*) – remove all other tags

### `get_authors()`

returns a list of authors (name, addr) of the messages. The authors are ordered by msg date and unique (by name/addr).

**Return type** list of (str, str)

### `get_authors_string(own_accts=None, replace_own=None)`

returns a string of comma-separated authors Depending on settings, it will substitute “me” for author name if address is user’s own.

### Parameters

- **own\_accts** (list of `Account`) – list of own accounts to replace
- **replace\_own** (*bool*) – whether or not to actually do replacement

**Return type** str

### `get_messages()`

returns all messages in this thread as dict mapping all contained messages to their direct responses.

**Return type** dict mapping `Message` to a list of `Message`.

### `get_newest_date()`

returns date header of newest message in this thread as `datetime`

### `get_oldest_date()`

returns date header of oldest message in this thread as `datetime`

### `get_replies_to(msg)`

returns all replies to the given message contained in this thread.

**Parameters** `msg` (`Message`) – parent message to look up

**Returns** list of `Message` or `None`

### `get_subject()`

returns subject string

### `get_tags(intersection=False)`

returns tagsstrings attached to this thread

**Parameters** **intersection** (*bool*) – return tags present in all contained messages instead of in at least one (union)

**Return type** set of str

### `get_thread_id()`

returns id of this thread

**get\_toplevel\_messages** ()

returns all toplevel messages contained in this thread. This are all the messages without a parent message (identified by 'in-reply-to' or 'references' header).

**Return type** list of Message

**get\_total\_messages** ()

returns number of contained messages

**matches** (*query*)

Check if this thread matches the given notmuch query.

**Parameters** **query** (*string*) – The query to check against

**Returns** True if this thread matches the given query, False otherwise

**Return type** bool

**refresh** (*thread=None*)

refresh thread metadata from the index

**remove\_tags** (*tags, afterwards=None*)

remove *tags* (list of str) from all messages in this thread

---

**Note:** This only adds the requested operation to this objects DBManager's write queue. You need to call `DBManager.flush` to actually write out.

---

#### Parameters

- **tags** (*list of str*) – a list of tags to be added
- **afterwards** (*callable*) – callback that gets called after successful application of this tagging operation

**class** `alot.db.Message` (*dbman, msg, thread=None*)

a persistent notmuch message object. It it uses a DBManager for cached manipulation and lazy lookups.

#### Parameters

- **dbman** (*alot.db.DBManager*) – db manager that is used for further lookups
- **msg** (*notmuch.database.Message*) – the wrapped message
- **thread** (*Thread* or *None*) – this messages thread (will be looked up later if *None*)

**accumulate\_body** ()

returns bodystring extracted from this mail

**add\_tags** (*tags, afterwards=None, remove\_rest=False*)

adds tags to message

---

**Note:** This only adds the requested operation to this objects DBManager's write queue. You need to call `flush()` to write out.

---

#### Parameters

- **tags** (*list of str*) – a list of tags to be added
- **afterwards** (*callable*) – callback that gets called after successful application of this tagging operation

- **remove\_rest** (*bool*) – remove all other tags

**get\_attachments** ()

returns messages attachments

Derived from the leaves of the email mime tree that and are not part of **RFC 2015** syntax for encrypted/signed mails and either have *Content-Disposition attachment* or have *Content-Disposition inline* but specify a filename (as parameter to *Content-Disposition*).

**Return type** list of Attachment

**get\_author** ()

returns realname and address of this messages author

**Return type** (str,str)

**get\_date** ()

returns Date header value as *datetime*

**get\_datestring** ()

returns reformated datestring for this message.

It uses `SettingsManager.represent_datetime ()` to represent this messages *Date* header

**Return type** str

**get\_email** ()

returns `email.Message` for this message

**get\_filename** ()

returns absolute path of message files location

**get\_message\_id** ()

returns messages id (str)

**get\_message\_parts** ()

yield all body parts of this message

**get\_replies** ()

returns replies to this message as list of *Message*

**get\_tags** ()

returns tags attached to this message as list of strings

**get\_thread** ()

returns the *Thread* this msg belongs to

**get\_thread\_id** ()

returns id (str) of the thread this message belongs to

**has\_replies** ()

returns true if this message has at least one reply

**matches** (*querystring*)

tests if this messages is in the resultset for *querystring*

**remove\_tags** (*tags, afterwards=None*)

remove tags from message

---

**Note:** This only adds the requested operation to this objects `DBManager`'s write queue. You need to call `flush ()` to actually out.

---

**Parameters**

- **tags** (*list of str*) – a list of tags to be added
- **afterwards** (*callable*) – callback that gets called after successful application of this tagging operation

## 4.2.4 Other Structures

**class** `alot.db.attachment.Attachment` (*emailpart*)  
represents a mail attachment

**Parameters** **emailpart** (*email.message.Message*) – a non-multipart email that is the attachment

**get\_content\_type** ()  
mime type of the attachment part

**get\_data** ()  
return data blob from wrapped file

**get\_filename** ()  
return name of attached file. If the content-disposition header contains no file name, this returns *None*

**get\_mime\_representation** ()  
returns mime part that constitutes this attachment

**get\_size** ()  
returns attachments size in bytes

**save** (*path*)  
save the attachment to disk. Uses `get_filename()` in case path is a directory

**write** (*fhandle*)  
writes content to a given filehandle

**class** `alot.db.envelope.Envelope` (*template=None, bodytext=None, headers=None, attachments=None, sign=False, sign\_key=None, encrypt=False, tags=None, replied=None, passed=None, account=None*)  
a message that is not yet sent and still editable. It holds references to unencoded! body text and mail headers among other things. Envelope implements the python container API for easy access of header values. So `e['To']`, `e['To'] = 'foo@bar.baz'` and `e.get_all('To')` would work for an envelope *e*..

**Parameters**

- **template** (*str*) – if not *None*, the envelope will be initialised by *parsing* this string before setting any other values given to this constructor.
- **bodytext** (*str*) – text used as body part
- **headers** (*dict (str -> [unicode])*) – unencoded header values
- **attachments** (list of *Attachment*) – file attachments to include
- **tags** (*list of str*) – tags to add after successful sendout and saving this msg
- **replied** (*Message*) – message being replied to
- **passed** – message being passed on
- **account** (*Account*) – account to send from

**add** (*key, value*)  
add header value

**attach** (*attachment*, *filename=None*, *ctype=None*)  
attach a file

#### Parameters

- **attachment** (*Attachment* or *str*) – File to attach, given as *Attachment* object or path to a file.
- **filename** – filename to use in content-disposition. Will be ignored if *path* matches multiple files
- **ctype** (*str*) – force content-type to be used for this attachment

**construct\_mail** ()  
compiles the information contained in this envelope into a `email.Message`.

**get** (*key*, *fallback=None*)  
secure getter for header values that allows specifying a *fallback* return string (defaults to None). This returns the first matching value and doesn't raise `KeyErrors`

**get\_all** (*key*, *fallback=None*)  
returns all header values for given key

**parse\_template** (*tmp*, *reset=False*, *only\_body=False*)  
parses a template or user edited string to fills this envelope.

#### Parameters

- **tmp** (*str*) – the string to parse.
- **reset** (*bool*) – remove previous envelope content

**account = None**  
account to send from

**attachments = None**  
list of *Attachments*

**body = None**  
mail body as unicode string

**headers = None**  
dict containing the mail headers (a list of strings for each header key)

**tags = []**  
tags to add after successful sendout

**tmpfile = None**  
template text for initial content

## 4.2.5 Utilities

`alot.db.utils.add_signature_headers` (*mail*, *sig*s, *error\_msg*)  
Add pseudo headers to the mail indicating whether the signature verification was successful.

#### Parameters

- **mail** – `email.message.Message` the message to entitle
- **sig**s – list of `gpg.results.Signature`
- **error\_msg** (*str* or *None*) – An error message if there is one, or None

`alot.db.utils.decode_header` (*header*, *normalize=False*)  
decode a header value to a unicode string

values are usually a mixture of different substrings encoded in quoted printable using different encodings. This turns it into a single unicode string

#### Parameters

- **header** (*str*) – the header value
- **normalize** (*bool*) – replace trailing spaces after newlines

**Return type** `str`

`alot.db.utils.decrypted_message_from_bytes` (*bytestring*, *session\_keys=None*)  
Create a Message from bytes.

#### Parameters

- **bytestring** (*bytes*) – an email message as raw bytes
- **session\_keys** – a list OpenPGP session keys

`alot.db.utils.decrypted_message_from_file` (*handle*, *session\_keys=None*)

Reads a mail from the given file-like object and returns an email object, very much like `email.message_from_file`. In addition to that OpenPGP encrypted data is detected and decrypted. If this succeeds, any mime messages found in the recovered plaintext message are added to the returned message object.

#### Parameters

- **handle** – a file-like object
- **session\_keys** – a list OpenPGP session keys

**Returns** `email.message.Message` possibly augmented with decrypted data

`alot.db.utils.decrypted_message_from_message` (*m*, *session\_keys=None*)

Detect and decrypt OpenPGP encrypted data in an email object. If this succeeds, any mime messages found in the recovered plaintext message are added to the returned message object.

#### Parameters

- **m** – an email object
- **session\_keys** – a list OpenPGP session keys

**Returns** `email.message.Message` possibly augmented with decrypted data

`alot.db.utils.decrypted_message_from_string` (*s*, *session\_keys=None*)

Reads a mail from the given string. This is the equivalent of `email.message_from_string()` which does nothing but to wrap the given string in a StringIO object and to call `email.message_from_file()`.

Please refer to the documentation of `message_from_file()` for details.

`alot.db.utils.extract_body` (*mail*, *types=None*, *field\_key='copiousoutput'*)

Returns a string view of a Message.

If the *types* argument is set then any encoding types there will be used as the preferred encoding to extract. If *types* is `None` then *prefer\_plaintext* will be consulted; if it is `True` then text/plain parts will be returned, if it is `false` then text/html will be returned if present or text/plain if there are no text/html parts.

#### Parameters

- **mail** (`email.Message`) – the mail to use
- **types** (`list[str]`) – mime content types to use for body string



**Returns** The combined text of any parts to be used

**Return type** `str`

`alot.db.utils.extract_headers` (*mail*, *headers=None*)

returns subset of this messages headers as human-readable format: all header values are decoded, the resulting string has one line “KEY: VALUE” for each requested header present in the mail.

**Parameters**

- **mail** (`email.Message`) – the mail to use
- **headers** (*list of str*) – headers to extract

`alot.db.utils.get_params` (*mail*, *failobj=None*, *header='content-type'*, *unquote=True*)

Get Content-Type parameters as dict.

RFC 2045 specifies that parameter names are case-insensitive, so we normalize them here.

**Parameters**

- **mail** – `email.message.Message`
- **failobj** – object to return if no such header is found
- **header** – the header to search for parameters, default
- **unquote** – unquote the values

**Returns** a *dict* containing the parameters

`alot.db.utils.remove_cte` (*part*, *as\_string=False*)

Interpret MIME-part according to it’s Content-Transfer-Encodings.

This returns the payload of *part* as string or bytestring for display, or to be passed to an external program. In the raw file the payload may be encoded, e.g. in base64, quoted-printable, 7bit, or 8bit. This method will look for one of the above Content-Transfer-Encoding header and interpret the payload accordingly.

Incorrect header values (common in spam messages) will be interpreted as lenient as possible and will result in INFO-level debug messages.

**..Note:: All this may be deprecated in favour of `email.contentmanager.raw_data_manager` (v3.6+)**

**Parameters**

- **part** (`email.Message`) – The part to decode
- **as\_string** (`bool`) – If true return a str, otherwise return bytes

**Returns** The mail with any Content-Transfer-Encoding removed

**Return type** `Union[str, bytes]`

`alot.db.utils.render_part` (*part*, *field\_key='copiousoutput'*)

renders a non-multipart email part into displayable plaintext by piping its payload through an external script. The handler itself is determined by the mailcap entry for this part’s ctype.

## 4.3 User Interface

Alot sets up a widget tree and a `mainloop` in the constructor of `alot.ui.UI`. The visible area is a `urwid.Frame`, where the footer is used as a status line and the body part displays the currently active `alot.buffer.Buffer`.

To be able to bind keystrokes and translate them to *Commands*, keypresses are *not* propagated down the widget tree as is customary in urwid. Instead, the root widget given to urwid's mainloop is a custom wrapper (`alot.ui.Inputwrap`) that interprets key presses. A dedicated `SendKeypressCommand` can be used to trigger key presses to the wrapped root widget and thereby accessing standard urwid behaviour.

In order to keep the interface non-blocking and react to events like terminal size changes, alot makes use of `asyncio` - which allows asynchronous calls without the use of callbacks. Alot makes use of the python 3.5 `async/await` syntax

```
async def greet(ui): # ui is instance of alot.ui.UI
    name = await ui.prompt('pls enter your name')
    ui.notify('your name is: ' + name)
```

### 4.3.1 UI - the main component

**class** `alot.ui.UI` (*dbman*, *initialcmdline*)

This class integrates all components of alot and offers methods for user interaction like `prompt()`, `notify()` etc. It handles the urwid widget tree and mainloop (we use `asyncio`) and is responsible for opening, closing and focussing buffers.

#### Parameters

- **dbman** – DBManager
- **initialcmdline** (*str*) – commandline applied after setting up interface
- **colourmode** (*int in [1, 16, 256]*) – determines which theme to chose

**apply\_command** (*cmd*)

applies a command

This calls the pre and post hooks attached to the command, as well as `cmd.apply()`.

**Parameters** *cmd* (*Command*) – an applicable command

**apply\_commandline** (*cmdline*)

interprets a command line string

i.e., splits it into separate command strings, instantiates *Commands* accordingly and applies then in sequence.

**Parameters** *cmdline* (*str*) – command line to interpret

**buffer\_close** (*buf*, *redraw=True*)

closes given *Buffer*.

This it removes it from the bufferlist and calls its `cleanup()` method.

**buffer\_focus** (*buf*, *redraw=True*)

focus given *Buffer*.

**buffer\_open** (*buf*)

register and focus new *Buffer*.

**build\_statusbar** ()

construct and return statusbar widget

**choice** (*message*, *choices=None*, *select=None*, *cancel=None*, *msg\_position='above'*,

*choices\_to\_return=None*)

prompt user to make a choice.

#### Parameters

- **message** (*unicode*) – string to display before list of choices

- **choices** (*dict: keymap->choice key is str and value is any obj*) – dict of possible choices
- **choices\_to\_return** – dict of possible choices to return for the choices of the choices of paramter
- **select** (*str*) – choice to return if enter/return is hit. Ignored if set to *None*.
- **cancel** (*str*) – choice to return if escape is hit. Ignored if set to *None*.
- **msg\_position** (*str*) – determines if *message* is above or left of the prompt. Must be *above* or *left*.

**Return type** `asyncio.Future`

**cleanup** ()

Do the final clean up before shutting down.

**clear\_notify** (*messages*)

Clears notification popups. Call this to get rid of messages that don't time out.

**Parameters** *messages* – The popups to remove. This should be exactly what *notify()* returned when creating the popup

**static exit** ()

shuts down user interface without cleaning up. Use a `alot.commands.globals.ExitCommand` for a clean shutdown.

**get\_buffers\_of\_type** (*t*)

returns currently open buffers for a given subclass of `Buffer`.

**Parameters** *t* (`alot.buffers.Buffer`) – Buffer class

**Return type** `list`

**get\_deep\_focus** (*startfrom=None*)

return the bottom most focussed widget of the widget tree

**handle\_signal** (*signum, frame*)

handles UNIX signals

This function currently just handles SIGUSR1. It could be extended to handle more

**Parameters**

- **signum** – The signal number (see man 7 signal)
- **frame** – The execution frame (<https://docs.python.org/2/reference/datamodel.html#frame-objects>)

**notify** (*message, priority='normal', timeout=0, block=False*)

opens notification popup.

**Parameters**

- **message** (*str*) – message to print
- **priority** (*str*) – priority string, used to format the popup: currently, 'normal' and 'error' are defined. If you use 'X' here, the attribute 'global\_notify\_X' is used to format the popup.
- **timeout** (*int*) – seconds until message disappears. Defaults to the value of 'notify\_timeout' in the general config section. A negative value means never time out.
- **block** (*bool*) – this notification blocks until a keypress is made

**Returns** an urwid widget (this notification) that can be handed to `clear_notify()` for removal

**paused()**

context manager that pauses the UI to allow running external commands.

If an exception occurs, the UI will be started before the exception is re-raised.

**prompt** (*prefix*, *text=""*, *completer=None*, *tab=0*, *history=None*)

prompt for text input. This returns a `asyncio.Future`, which will have a string value

#### Parameters

- **prefix** (*str*) – text to print before the input field
- **text** (*str*) – initial content of the input field
- **completer** (*alot.completion.Completer()*) – completion object to use
- **tab** (*int*) – number of tabs to press initially (to select completion results)
- **history** (*list of str*) – history to be used for up/down keys

**Return type** `asyncio.Future`

**show\_as\_root\_until\_keypress** (*w*, *key*, *afterwards=None*)

Replaces root widget by given `urwid.Widget` and makes the UI ignore all further commands apart from cursor movement. If later on *key* is pressed, the old root widget is reset, callable *afterwards* is called and normal behaviour is resumed.

**update** (*redraw=True*)

redraw interface

**buffers = None**

list of active buffers

**commandprompthistory = None**

history of the command line prompt

**current\_buffer = None**

points to currently active *Buffer*

**db\_was\_locked = None**

flag used to prevent multiple ‘index locked’ notifications

**dbman = None**

Database Manager (*DBManager*)

**input\_queue = None**

stores partial keyboard input

**last\_commandline = None**

saves the last executed commandline

**mode = None**

interface mode identifier - type of current buffer

**recipienthistory = None**

history of the recipients prompt

**senderhistory = None**

history of the sender prompt

### 4.3.2 Buffers

A buffer defines a view to your data. It knows how to render itself, to interpret keypresses and is visible in the “body” part of the widget frame. Different modes are defined by subclasses of the following base class.

**class** `alot.buffer.Buffer` (*ui, widget*)

Abstract base class for buffers.

**cleanup** ()

called before buffer is closed

**get\_info** ()

return dict of meta infos about this buffer. This can be requested to be displayed in the statusbar.

**rebuild** ()

tells the buffer to (re)construct its visible content.

Available modes are:

Mode	Buffer Subclass
search	<i>SearchBuffer</i>
thread	<i>ThreadBuffer</i>
bufferlist	<i>BufferlistBuffer</i>
taglist	<i>TagListBuffer</i>
namedqueries	<i>NamedQueriesBuffer</i>
envelope	<i>EnvelopeBuffer</i>

**class** `alot.buffer.BufferlistBuffer` (*ui, filtfun=<function BufferlistBuffer.<lambda>>*)

lists all active buffers

**focus\_first** ()

Focus the first line in the buffer list.

**get\_selected\_buffer** ()

returns currently selected *Buffer* element from list

**index\_of** (*b*)

returns the index of *Buffer b* in the global list of active buffers.

**rebuild** ()

tells the buffer to (re)construct its visible content.

**class** `alot.buffer.EnvelopeBuffer` (*ui, envelope*)

message composition mode

**cleanup** ()

called before buffer is closed

**get\_info** ()

return dict of meta infos about this buffer. This can be requested to be displayed in the statusbar.

**rebuild** ()

tells the buffer to (re)construct its visible content.

**toggle\_all\_headers** ()

toggles visibility of all envelope headers

**class** `alot.buffer.NamedQueriesBuffer` (*ui, filtfun*)

lists named queries present in the notmuch database

**focus\_first ()**  
Focus the first line in the query list.

**get\_info ()**  
return dict of meta infos about this buffer. This can be requested to be displayed in the statusbar.

**get\_selected\_query ()**  
returns selected query

**rebuild ()**  
tells the buffer to (re)construct its visible content.

**class** `alot.buffer.SearchBuffer (ui, initialquery="", sort_order=None)`  
shows a result list of threads for a query

**cleanup ()**  
called before buffer is closed

**get\_info ()**  
return dict of meta infos about this buffer. This can be requested to be displayed in the statusbar.

**get\_selected\_thread ()**  
returns currently selected *Thread*

**get\_selected\_threadline ()**  
returns curently focussed `alot.widgets.ThreadlineWidget` from the result list.

**kill\_filler\_process ()**  
terminates the process that fills this buffers `PipeWalker`.

**rebuild (reverse=False)**  
tells the buffer to (re)construct its visible content.

**class** `alot.buffer.ThreadBuffer (ui, thread)`  
displays a thread as a tree of messages

**Parameters**

- **ui** (*UI*) – main UI
- **thread** (*Thread*) – thread to display

**collapse (msgpos)**  
collapse message at given position

**collapse\_all ()**  
collapse all messages in thread

**expand (msgpos)**  
expand message at given position

**expand\_all ()**  
expand all messages in thread

**focus\_first ()**  
set focus to first message of thread

**focus\_first\_reply ()**  
move focus to first reply to currently focussed message

**focus\_last\_reply ()**  
move focus to last reply to currently focussed message

**focus\_next ()**  
focus next message in depth first order

**focus\_next\_matching** (*querystring*)  
focus next matching message in depth first order

**focus\_next\_sibling** ()  
focus next sibling of currently focussed message in thread tree

**focus\_next\_unfolded** ()  
focus next unfolded message in depth first order

**focus\_parent** ()  
move focus to parent of currently focussed message

**focus\_prev** ()  
focus previous message in depth first order

**focus\_prev\_matching** (*querystring*)  
focus previous matching message in depth first order

**focus\_prev\_sibling** ()  
focus previous sibling of currently focussed message in thread tree

**focus\_prev\_unfolded** ()  
focus previous unfolded message in depth first order

**focus\_property** (*prop, direction*)  
does a walk in the given direction and focuses the first message tree that matches the given property

**focus\_selected\_message** ()  
focus the summary line of currently focussed message

**get\_focus** ()  
Get the focus from the underlying body widget.

**get\_info** ()  
return dict of meta infos about this buffer. This can be requested to be displayed in the statusbar.

**get\_message\_tree\_positions** ()  
returns a Generator to walk through all positions of `MessageTree` in the `ThreadTree` of this buffer.

**get\_selected\_message** ()  
returns focussed `Message`

**get\_selected\_message\_position** ()  
returns position of focussed message in the thread tree

**get\_selected\_message\_tree** ()  
returns currently focussed `MessageTree`

**get\_selected\_mid** ()  
returns `Message` ID of focussed message

**get\_selected\_thread** ()  
returns the displayed `Thread`

**message\_tree\_at\_position** (*pos*)  
get `MessageTree` for given position

**message\_trees** ()  
returns a Generator of all `MessageTree` in the `ThreadTree` of this buffer.

**rebuild** ()  
tells the buffer to (re)construct its visible content.

**refresh()**  
refresh and flush caches of Thread tree

**set\_focus(*pos*)**  
Set the focus in the underlying body widget.

**unfold\_matching(*querystring*, *focus\_first=True*)**  
expand all messages that match a given querystring.

#### Parameters

- **querystring** (*str*) – query to match
- **focus\_first** (*bool*) – set the focus to the first matching message

**class** `alot.buffering.TagListBuffer` (*ui*, *alltags=None*, *filterfun=<function TagListBuffer.<lambda>>*)  
lists all tagstrings present in the notmuch database

**focus\_first()**  
Focus the first line in the tag list.

**get\_selected\_tag()**  
returns selected tagstring

**rebuild()**  
tells the buffer to (re)construct its visible content.

### 4.3.3 Widgets

What follows is a list of the non-standard urwid widgets used in alot. Some of them respect *user settings*, themes in particular.

#### utils

Utility Widgets not specific to alot

**class** `alot.widgets.utils.AttrFlipWidget` (*w*, *maps*, *init\_map='normal'*)  
An AttrMap that can remember attributes to set

**class** `alot.widgets.utils.DialogBox` (*body*, *title*, *bodyattr=None*, *titleattr=None*)

#### globals

This contains alot-specific `urwid.Widget` used in more than one mode.

**class** `alot.widgets.globals.AttachmentWidget` (*attachment*, *selectable=True*)  
one-line summary of an *Attachment*.

**class** `alot.widgets.globals.ChoiceWidget` (*choices*, *callback*, *cancel=None*, *select=None*, *separator=' '*, *choices\_to\_return=None*)

**class** `alot.widgets.globals.CompleteEdit` (*completer*, *on\_exit*, *on\_error=None*, *edit\_text=""*, *history=None*, *\*\*kwargs*)

This is a vamped-up `urwid.Edit` widget that allows for tab-completion using *Completer* objects

These widgets are meant to be used as user input prompts and hence react to ‘return’ key presses by calling a ‘on\_exit’ callback that processes the current text value.

**The interpretation of some keypresses is hard-wired:**



**enter** calls ‘on\_exit’ callback with current value

**esc/ctrl g** calls ‘on\_exit’ with value *None*, which can be interpreted as cancellation

**tab** calls the completer and tabs forward in the result list

**shift tab** tabs backward in the result list

**up/down** move in the local input history

**ctrl f/b** moves cursor one character to the right/left

**meta f/b shift right/left** moves the cursor one word to the right/left

**ctrl a/e** moves cursor to the beginning/end of the input

**ctrl d** deletes the character under the cursor

**meta d** deletes everything from the cursor to the end of the next word

**meta delete/backspace ctrl w** deletes everything from the cursor to the beginning of the current word

**ctrl k** deletes everything from the cursor to the end of the input

**ctrl u** deletes everything from the cursor to the beginning of the input

#### Parameters

- **completer** (`alot.completion.Completer`) – completer to use
- **on\_exit** (*callable*) – “enter”-callback that interprets the input (str)
- **on\_error** (*callback*) – callback that handles `alot.errors.CompletionErrors`
- **edit\_text** (*str*) – initial text
- **history** (*list or str*) – initial command history

**class** `alot.widgets.globals.HeadersList` (*headerslist, key\_attr, value\_attr, gaps\_attr=None*)  
renders a pile of header values as key/value list

#### Parameters

- **headerslist** (*list of (str, str)*) – list of key/value pairs to display
- **key\_attr** (`urwid.AttrSpec`) – theming attribute to use for keys
- **value\_attr** (`urwid.AttrSpec`) – theming attribute to use for values
- **gaps\_attr** (`urwid.AttrSpec`) – theming attribute to wrap lines in

**class** `alot.widgets.globals.TagWidget` (*tag, fallback\_normal=None, fallback\_focus=None*)  
text widget that renders a tagstring.

It looks up the string it displays in the *tags* section of the config as well as custom theme settings for its tag.

#### Attributes that should be considered publicly readable:

**attr tag** the notmuch tag

**type tag** str

## bufferlist

Widgets specific to Bufferlist mode

**class** `alot.widgets.bufferlist.BufferlineWidget` (*buffer*)  
selectable text widget that represents a *Buffer* in the *BufferlistBuffer*.

## search

Widgets specific to search mode

**class** `alot.widgets.search.ThreadlineWidget` (*tid*, *dbman*)  
selectable line widget that represents a *Thread* in the *SearchBuffer*.

`alot.widgets.search.build_tags_part` (*tags*, *attr\_normal*, *attr\_focus*)  
create an `urwid.Columns` widget (wrapped in appropriate Attributes) to display a list of tag strings, as part of a threadline.

### Parameters

- **tags** (*list of str*) – list of tag strings to include
- **attr\_normal** – `urwid` attribute to use if unfocussed
- **attr\_focus** – `urwid` attribute to use if focussed

**Returns** overall width in characters and a `Columns` widget.

**Return type** `tuple[int, urwid.Columns]`

`alot.widgets.search.build_text_part` (*name*, *thread*, *struct*)  
create an `urwid.Text` widget (wrapped in appropriate Attributes) to display a plain text parts in a threadline.  
create an `urwid.Columns` widget (wrapped in appropriate Attributes) to display a list of tag strings, as part of a threadline.

### Parameters

- **name** (*str*) – id of part to build
- **thread** (`alot.db.thread.Thread`) – the thread to get local info for
- **struct** (*dict*) – theming attributes for this part, as provided by `alot.settings.theme.Theme.get_threadline_theming`

**Returns** overall width (in characters) and a widget.

**Return type** `tuple[int, AttrFliwWidget]`

`alot.widgets.search.prepare_string` (*partname*, *thread*, *maxw*)  
extract a content string for part ‘partname’ from ‘thread’ of maximal length ‘maxw’.

## thread

Widgets specific to thread mode

**class** `alot.widgets.thread.DictList` (*content*, *key\_attr*, *value\_attr*, *gaps\_attr=None*)  
`SimpleTree` that displays key-value pairs.

The structure will obey the `Tree` API but will not actually be a tree but a flat list: It contains one top-level node (displaying the k/v pair in `Columns`) per pair. That is, the root will be the first pair, its siblings will be the other pairs and `firstlast_child` will always be `None`.

**Parameters**

- **headerslist** (*list of (str, str)*) – list of key/value pairs to display
- **key\_attr** (*urwid.AttrSpec*) – theming attribute to use for keys
- **value\_attr** (*urwid.AttrSpec*) – theming attribute to use for values
- **gaps\_attr** (*urwid.AttrSpec*) – theming attribute to wrap lines in

**class** `alot.widgets.thread.FocusableText` (*txt, att, att\_focus*)  
 Selectable Text used for nodes in our example

**class** `alot.widgets.thread.MessageSummaryWidget` (*message, even=True*)  
 one line summary of a Message.

**Parameters**

- **message** (*alot.db.Message*) – a message
- **even** (*bool*) – even entry in a pile of messages? Used for theming.

**class** `alot.widgets.thread.MessageTree` (*message, odd=True*)  
 Tree that displays contents of a single *alot.db.Message*.

Its root node is a *MessageSummaryWidget*, and its child nodes reflect the messages content (parts for headers/attachments etc).

Collapsing this message corresponds to showing the summary only.

**Parameters**

- **message** (*alot.db.Message*) – Message to display
- **odd** (*bool*) – theme summary widget as if this is an odd line (in the message-pile)

**collapse\_if\_matches** (*querystring*)  
 collapse (and show summary only) if the *alot.db.Message* matches given *querystring*

**class** `alot.widgets.thread.TextlinesList` (*content, attr=None, attr\_focus=None*)  
 SimpleTree that contains a list of all-level-0 Text widgets for each line in content.

**class** `alot.widgets.thread.ThreadTree` (*thread*)  
 Tree that parses a given *alot.db.Thread* into a tree of *MessageTrees* that display this threads individual messages. As *MessageTrees* are *not* urwid widgets themselves this is to be used in combination with *NestedTree* only.

### 4.3.4 Completion

*alot.ui.UI.prompt()* allows tab completion using a *Completer* object handed as ‘completer’ parameter. *alot.completion* defines several subclasses for different occasions like completing email addresses from an AddressBook, notmuch tagstrings. Some of these actually build on top of each other; the *QueryCompleter* for example uses a *TagsCompleter* internally to allow tagstring completion after “is:” or “tag:” keywords when typing a notmuch querystring.

All these classes override the method *complete()*, which for a given string and cursor position in that string returns a list of tuples (*completed\_string, new\_cursor\_position*) that are taken to be the completed values. Note that *completed\_string* does not need to have the original string as prefix. *complete()* may raise *alot.errors.CompletionError* exceptions.

**class** `alot.completion.AbooksCompleter` (*abooks, addressesonly=False*)  
 completes a contact from given address books

**Parameters**

- **abooks** (list of `AddressBook`) – used to look up email addresses
- **addressesonly** (*bool*) – only insert address, not the realname of the contact

**complete** (*original*, *pos*)

returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string *original* from position *pos* on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (*str*, *int*)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**class** `alot.completion.AccountCompleter` (\*\**kwargs*)

completes users' own mailaddresses

**class** `alot.completion.ArgparseOptionCompleter` (*parser*)

completes option parameters for a given `argparse.Parser`

**Parameters** **parser** (*argparse.ArgumentParser*) – the option parser we look up parameter and choices from

**complete** (*original*, *pos*)

returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string *original* from position *pos* on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (*str*, *int*)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**class** `alot.completion.CommandCompleter` (*dbman*, *mode*, *currentbuffer=None*)

completes one command consisting of command name and parameters

**Parameters**

- **dbman** (`DBManager`) – used to look up available tagstrings
- **mode** (*str*) – mode identifier
- **currentbuffer** (`Buffer`) – currently active buffer. If defined, this will be used to dynamically extract possible completion strings

**complete** (*line*, *pos*)

returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string *original* from position *pos* on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (*str*, *int*)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**class** `alot.completion.CommandLineCompleter` (*dbman, mode, currentbuffer=None*)  
 completes command lines: semicolon separated command strings

**Parameters**

- **dbman** (`DBManager`) – used to look up available tagstrings
- **mode** (*str*) – mode identifier
- **currentbuffer** (`Buffer`) – currently active buffer. If defined, this will be used to dynamically extract possible completion strings

**complete** (*line, pos*)

returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string original from position pos on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (`str, int`)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**static get\_context** (*line, pos*)

computes start and end position of substring of line that is the command string under given position

**class** `alot.completion.CommandNameCompleter` (*mode*)  
 completes command names

**Parameters** **mode** (*str*) – mode identifier

**complete** (*original, pos*)

returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string original from position pos on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (`str, int`)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**class** `alot.completion.Completer`  
 base class for completers

**complete** (*original, pos*)

returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string original from position pos on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (`str, int`)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**relevant\_part** (*original, pos, sep=' '*)  
calculates the subword in a *sep*-splitted list of substrings of *original* that *pos* is in.

**class** `alot.completion.ContactsCompleter` (*abooks, addressesonly=False*)  
completes contacts from given address books

**Parameters**

- **abooks** (list of `AddressBook`) – used to look up email addresses
- **addressesonly** (*bool*) – only insert address, not the realname of the contact

**class** `alot.completion.CryptoKeyCompleter` (*private=False*)  
completion for gpg keys

**Parameters** **private** (*bool*) – return private keys

**class** `alot.completion.MultipleSelectionCompleter` (*completer, separator=', '*)  
Meta-Completer that turns any Completer into one that deals with a list of completion strings using the wrapped Completer. This allows for example to easily construct a completer for comma separated recipient-lists using a `ContactsCompleter`.

**Parameters**

- **completer** (`Completer`) – completer to use for individual substrings
- **separator** (*str*) – separator used to split the completion string into substrings to be fed to *completer*.

**complete** (*original, pos*)  
returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string *original* from position *pos* on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (*str, int*)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**relevant\_part** (*original, pos*)  
calculates the subword of *original* that *pos* is in

**class** `alot.completion.NamedQueryCompleter` (*dbman*)  
complete the name of a named query string

**Parameters** **dbman** (`DBManager`) – used to look up named query strings in the DB

**class** `alot.completion.PathCompleter`  
completion for paths

**complete** (*original, pos*)  
returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string *original* from position *pos* on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (*str, int*)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**class** `alot.completion.QueryCompleter` (*dbman*)  
completion for a notmuch query string

**Parameters** `dbman` (`DBManager`) – used to look up available tagstrings

**complete** (*original*, *pos*)

returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string *original* from position *pos* on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (`str`, `int`)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**class** `alot.completion.StringlistCompleter` (*resultlist*, *ignorecase=True*,  
*match\_anywhere=False*)

completer for a fixed list of strings

**Parameters**

- **resultlist** (*list of str*) – strings used for completion
- **liberal** (*bool*) – match case insensitive and not prefix-only

**complete** (*original*, *pos*)

returns a list of completions and cursor positions for the string *original* from position *pos* on.

**Parameters**

- **original** (*str*) – the string to complete
- **pos** (*int*) – starting position to complete from

**Returns** pairs of completed string and cursor position in the new string

**Return type** list of (`str`, `int`)

**Raises** `CompletionError`

**class** `alot.completion.TagCompleter` (*dbman*)  
complete a tagstring

**Parameters** `dbman` (`DBManager`) – used to look up available tagstrings

**class** `alot.completion.TagsCompleter` (*dbman*)  
completion for a comma separated list of tagstrings

**Parameters** `dbman` (`DBManager`) – used to look up available tagstrings

## 4.4 User Settings

Alot sets up a `SettingsManager` to access user settings defined in different places uniformly. There are four types of user settings:

what?	location	accessible via
alot config	~/.config/alot/config or given by command option <i>-c</i> .	<code>SettingsManager.get()</code>
hooks – user provided python code	~/.config/alot/hooks.py or as given by the <i>hooksfile</i> config value	<code>SettingsManager.get_hook()</code>
notmuch config	~/.notmuch-config or given by <i>\$NOTMUCH_CONFIG</i> or given by command option <i>-n</i>	<code>SettingsManager.get_notmuch_setting()</code>
mailcap – defines shellcommands to handle mime types	~/.mailcap (/etc/mailcap)	<code>SettingsManager.mailcap_find_match()</code>

#### 4.4.1 Settings Manager

**class** `alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager`

Organizes user settings

**account\_matching\_address** (*address*, *return\_default=False*)

returns `Account` for a given email address (*str*)

**Parameters**

- **address** (*str*) – address to look up. A realname part will be ignored.
- **return\_default** (*bool*) – If True and no address can be found, then the default account will be returned.

**Return type** `Account`

**Raises** `NoMatchingAccount` – If no account can be found. This includes if *return\_default* is True and there are no accounts defined.

**get** (*key*, *fallback=None*)

look up global config values from alot’s config

**Parameters**

- **key** (*str*) – key to look up
- **fallback** (*str*) – fallback returned if key is not present

**Returns** config value with type as specified in the spec-file

**get\_accounts** ()

returns known accounts

**Return type** list of `Account`

**get\_addressbooks** (*order=None*, *append\_remaining=True*)

returns list of all defined `AddressBook` objects

**get\_hook** (*key*)

return hook (*callable*) identified by *key*

**get\_keybinding** (*mode*, *key*)

look up keybinding from *MODE-maps* sections

**Parameters**

- **mode** (*str*) – mode identifier
- **key** (*str*) – urwid-style key identifier

**Returns** a command line to be applied upon keypress



**Return type** `str`

**get\_keybindings** (*mode*)

look up keybindings from *MODE-maps* sections

**Parameters** *mode* (*str*) – mode identifier

**Returns** dictionaries of key-cmd for global and specific mode

**Return type** 2-tuple of dicts

**get\_main\_addresses** ()

returns addresses of known accounts without its aliases

**get\_notmuch\_setting** (*section*, *key*, *fallback=None*)

look up config values from notmuch's config

**Parameters**

- **section** (*str*) – key is in
- **key** (*str*) – key to look up
- **fallback** (*str*) – fallback returned if key is not present

**Returns** config value with type as specified in the spec-file

**get\_tagstring\_representation** (*tag*, *onebelow\_normal=None*, *onebelow\_focus=None*)

looks up user's preferred way to represent a given tagstring.

**Parameters**

- **tag** (*str*) – tagstring
- **onebelow\_normal** (*urwid.AttrSpec*) – attribute that shines through if unfocussed
- **onebelow\_focus** (*urwid.AttrSpec*) – attribute that shines through if focussed

If *onebelow\_normal* or *onebelow\_focus* is given these attributes will be used as fallbacks for fg/bg values '' and 'default'.

**This returns a dictionary mapping**

**normal** to *urwid.AttrSpec* used if unfocussed

**focussed** to *urwid.AttrSpec* used if focussed

**translated** to an alternative string representation

**get\_theming\_attribute** (*mode*, *name*, *part=None*)

looks up theming attribute

**Parameters**

- **mode** (*str*) – ui-mode (e.g. *search*, 'thread'...)
- **name** (*str*) – identifier of the attribute

**Return type** *urwid.AttrSpec*

**get\_threadline\_theming** (*thread*)

looks up theming info a threadline displaying a given thread. This wraps around *get\_threadline\_theming()*, filling in the current colour mode.

**Parameters** *thread* (*alot.db.thread.Thread*) – thread to theme

**mailcap\_find\_match** (*\*args*, *\*\*kwargs*)

Propagates *mailcap.find\_match()* but caches the mailcap (first argument)

**read\_config** (*path*)

parse alot's config file :param path: path to alot's config file :type path: str

**read\_notmuch\_config** (*path*)

parse notmuch's config file :param path: path to notmuch's config file :type path: str

**reload** ()

Reload notmuch and alot config files

**represent\_datetime** (*d*)

turns a given datetime obj into a string representation. This will:

1. look if a fixed 'timestamp\_format' is given in the config
2. check if a 'timestamp\_format' hook is defined
3. use `pretty_datetime()` as fallback

**set** (*key*, *value*)

setter for global config values

#### Parameters

- **key** (*str*) – config option identifies
- **value** (depends on the specfile `alot.rc.spec`) – option to set

## 4.4.2 Errors

**exception** `alot.settings.errors.ConfigError`

could not parse user config

**exception** `alot.settings.errors.NoMatchingAccount`

No account matching requirements found.

## 4.4.3 Utils

`alot.settings.utils.read_config` (*configpath=None*, *specpath=None*, *checks=None*, *report\_extra=False*)

get a (validated) config object for given config file path.

#### Parameters

- **configpath** (*str* or *list(str)*) – path to config-file or a list of lines as its content
- **specpath** (*str*) – path to spec-file
- **checks** (*dict str->callable,*) – custom checks to use for validator. see [validate docs](#)
- **report\_extra** (*boolean*) – log if a setting is not present in the spec file

**Raises** `ConfigError`

**Return type** `configobj.ConfigObj`

`alot.settings.utils.resolve_att` (*a*, *fallback*)

replace “ and ‘default’ by fallback values

#### 4.4.4 Themes

**class** `alot.settings.theme.Theme` (*path*)

Colour theme

**Parameters** `path` (*str*) – path to theme file

**Raises** `ConfigError`

**get\_attribute** (*colourmode, mode, name, part=None*)

returns requested attribute

**Parameters**

- **mode** (*str*) – ui-mode (e.g. *search*, *'thread'...*)
- **name** (*str*) – of the attribute
- **colourmode** (*int*) – colour mode; in [1, 16, 256]

**Return type** `urwid.AttrSpec`

**get\_threadline\_theming** (*thread, colourmode*)

look up how to display a Threadline widget in search mode for a given thread.

**Parameters**

- **thread** (`alot.db.thread.Thread`) – Thread to theme Threadline for
- **colourmode** (*int*) – colourmode to use, one of 1,16,256.

**This will return a dict mapping**

**normal** to `urwid.AttrSpec`,

**focus** to `urwid.AttrSpec`,

**parts** to a list of strings indentifying subwidgets to be displayed in this order.

**Moreover, for every part listed this will map 'part' to a dict mapping**

**normal** to `urwid.AttrSpec`,

**focus** to `urwid.AttrSpec`,

**width** to a tuple indicating the width of the subpart. This is either (*'fit', min, max*) to force the widget to be at least *min* and at most *max* characters wide, or (*'weight', n*) which makes it share remaining space with other 'weight' parts.

**alignment** where to place the content if shorter than the widget. This is either *'right'*, *'left'* or *'center'*.

#### 4.4.5 Accounts

**class** `alot.account.Address` (*user, domain, case\_sensitive=False*)

A class that represents an email address.

This class implements a number of RFC requirements (as explained in detail below) specifically in the comparison of email addresses to each other.

This class abstracts the requirements of RFC 5321 § 2.4 on the user name portion of the email:

local-part of a mailbox MUST BE treated as case sensitive. Therefore, SMTP implementations MUST take care to preserve the case of mailbox local-parts. In particular, for some hosts, the user “smith” is different from the user “Smith”. However, exploiting the case sensitivity of mailbox local-parts impedes interoperability and is discouraged. Mailbox domains follow normal DNS rules and are hence not case sensitive.

This is complicated by § 2.3.11 of the same RFC:

The standard mailbox naming convention is defined to be “local-part@domain”; contemporary usage permits a much broader set of applications than simple “user names”. Consequently, and due to a long history of problems when intermediate hosts have attempted to optimize transport by modifying them, the local-part MUST be interpreted and assigned semantics only by the host specified in the domain part of the address.

And also the restrictions that RFC 1035 § 3.1 places on the domain name:

Name servers and resolvers must compare [domains] in a case-insensitive manner

Because of RFC 6531 § 3.2, we take special care to ensure that unicode names will work correctly:

An SMTP server that announces the SMTPUTF8 extension MUST be prepared to accept a UTF-8 string [RFC3629] in any position in which RFC 5321 specifies that a <mailbox> can appear. Although the characters in the <local-part> are permitted to contain non-ASCII characters, the actual parsing of the <local-part> and the delimiters used are unchanged from the base email specification [RFC5321]

What this means is that the username can be either case-insensitive or not, but only the receiving SMTP server can know what it’s own rules are. The consensus is that the vast majority (all?) of the SMTP servers in modern usage treat user names as case-insensitive. Therefore we also, by default, treat the user name as case insensitive.

#### Parameters

- **user** (*str*) – The “user name” portion of the address.
- **domain** (*str*) – The domain name portion of the address.
- **case\_sensitive** (*bool*) – If False (the default) the user name portion of the address will be compared to the other user name portion without regard to case. If True then it will.

**classmethod** `from_string` (*address*, *case\_sensitive=False*)

Alternate constructor for building from a string.

#### Parameters

- **address** (*str*) – An email address in <user>@<domain> form
- **case\_sensitive** (*bool*) – passed directly to the constructor argument of the same name.

**Returns** An account from the given arguments

**Return type** *Account*

```
class alot.account.Account (address=None, aliases=None, alias_regexp=None, re-  
alname=None, gpg_key=None, signature=None, sig-  
nature_filename=None, signature_as_attachment=False,  
sent_box=None, sent_tags=None, draft_box=None, draft_tags=None,  
replied_tags=None, passed_tags=None, abook=None,  
sign_by_default=False, encrypt_by_default='none', en-  
crypt_to_self=None, case_sensitive_username=False, **_)
```

Datastructure that represents an email account. It manages this account’s settings, can send and store mails to maildirs (drafts/send).

---

**Note:** This is an abstract class that leaves `send_mail()` unspecified. See `SendmailAccount` for a subclass that uses a sendmail command to send out mails.

---

**matches\_address** (*address*)

returns whether this account knows about an email address

**Parameters** **address** (*str*) – address to look up

**Return type** `bool`

**send\_mail** (*mail*)

sends given mail

**Parameters** **mail** (`email.message.Message` or `string`) – the mail to send

**Raises** `SendingMailFailed` – if sending fails

**store\_draft\_mail** (*mail*)

stores mail (`email.message.Message` or `str`) as draft if `draft_box` is set.

**static store\_mail** (*mbx*, *mail*)

stores given mail in mailbox. If mailbox is maildir, set the S-flag and return path to newly added mail. Otherwise this will return `None`.

**Parameters**

- **mbx** (`mailbox.Mailbox`) – mailbox to use
- **mail** (`email.message.Message` or `str`) – the mail to store

**Returns** absolute path of mail-file for Maildir or `None` if mail was successfully stored

**Return type** `str` or `None`

**Raises** `StoreMailError`

**store\_sent\_mail** (*mail*)

stores mail (`email.message.Message` or `str`) in send-store if `sent_box` is set.

**abook = None**

addressbook (`addressbook.AddressBook`) managing this accounts contacts

**address = None**

this accounts main email address

**alias\_regexp = ''**

regex matching alternative addresses

**aliases = []**

list of alternative addresses

**encrypt\_to\_self = None**

encrypt outgoing encrypted emails to this account's private key

**gpg\_key = None**

gpg fingerprint for this account's private key

**realname = None**

real name used to format from-headers

**signature = None**

signature to append to outgoing mails

**signature\_as\_attachment = None**  
attach signature file instead of appending its content to body text

**signature\_filename = None**  
filename of signature file in attachment

**class** `alot.account.SendmailAccount` (*cmd*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
*Account* that pipes a message to a *sendmail* shell command for sending

**Parameters** *cmd* (*str*) – sendmail command to use for this account

**send\_mail** (*mail*)  
Pipe the given mail to the configured sendmail command. Display a short message on success or a notification on error. :param mail: the mail to send out :type mail: `email.message.Message` or string :raises: class:*SendingMailFailed* if sending failes

## 4.4.6 Addressbooks

**class** `alot.addressbook.AddressBook` (*ignorecase=True*)  
can look up email addresses and realnames for contacts.

---

**Note:** This is an abstract class that leaves `get_contacts()` unspecified. See `AbookAddressBook` and `ExternalAddressbook` for implementations.

---

**get\_contacts** ()  
list all contacts tuples in this abook as (name, email) tuples

**lookup** (*query=""*)  
looks up all contacts where name or address match query

**class** `alot.addressbook.abook.AbookAddressBook` (*path='~/abook/addressbook'*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
*AddressBook* that parses abook's config/database files

**Parameters** *path* (*str*) – path to abook addressbook file

**get\_contacts** ()  
list all contacts tuples in this abook as (name, email) tuples

**class** `alot.addressbook.external.ExternalAddressbook` (*commandline*, *regex*, *re-flags=0*, *external\_filtering=True*, *\*\*kwargs*)

*AddressBook* that parses a shell command's output

**Parameters**

- **commandline** (*str*) – commandline
- **regex** (*str*) – regular expression used to match contacts in *commands* output to stdout. Must define subparts named “email” and “name”.
- **reflags** (*str*) – flags to use with regular expression. Use the constants defined in `re` here (*re.IGNORECASE* etc.)
- **external\_filtering** (*bool*) – if True the command is fired with the given search string as parameter and the result is not filtered further. If set to False, the command is fired without additional parameters and the result list is filtered according to the search string.

## 4.5 Utils

`alot.helper.RFC3156_canonicalize` (*text*)

Canonicalizes plain text (MIME-encoded usually) according to RFC3156.

This function works as follows (in that order):

1. Convert all line endings to `\r\n` (DOS line endings).
2. Encode all occurrences of “From ” at the beginning of a line to “From=20” in order to prevent other mail programs to replace this with “> From” (to avoid MBox conflicts) and thus invalidate the signature.

**Parameters** `text` – text to canonicalize (already encoded as quoted-printable)

**Return type** `str`

`alot.helper.call_cmd` (*cmdlist*, *stdin=None*)

get a shell commands output, error message and return value and immediately return.

**Warning:** This returns with the first screen content for interactive commands.

**Parameters**

- `cmdlist` (*list of str*) – shellcommand to call, already splitted into a list accepted by `subprocess.Popen()`
- `stdin` (*str, bytes, or None*) – string to pipe to the process

**Returns** triple of stdout, stderr, return value of the shell command

**Return type** `str, str, int`

`alot.helper.call_cmd_async` (*cmdlist*, *stdin=None*, *env=None*)

Given a command, call that command asynchronously and return the output.

This function only handles `OSError` when creating the subprocess, any other exceptions raised either durring subprocess creation or while exchanging data with the subprocess are the caller’s responsibility to handle.

If such an `OSError` is caught, then `returncode` will be set to 1, and the error value will be set to the `str()` method fo the exception.

**Parameters** `stdin` (*str*) – string to pipe to the process

**Returns** Tuple of stdout, stderr, `returncode`

**Return type** `tuple[str, str, int]`

`alot.helper.get_xdg_env` (*env\_name*, *fallback*)

Used for `XDG_*` env variables to return fallback if unset *or* empty

`alot.helper.guess_encoding` (*blob*)

uses file magic to determine the encoding of the given data blob.

**Parameters** `blob` (*data*) – file content as read by `file.read()`

**Returns** encoding

**Return type** `str`

`alot.helper.guess_mimetype` (*blob*)

uses file magic to determine the mime-type of the given data blob.

**Parameters** `blob` (*data*) – file content as read by `file.read()`

**Returns** mime-type, falls back to ‘application/octet-stream’

**Return type** `str`

`alot.helper.humanize_size` (*size*)

Create a nice human readable representation of the given number (understood as bytes) using the “KiB” and “MiB” suffixes to indicate kibibytes and mebibytes. A kibibyte is defined as 1024 bytes (as opposed to a kilobyte which is 1000 bytes) and a mebibyte is 1024\*\*2 bytes (as opposed to a megabyte which is 1000\*\*2 bytes).

**Parameters** `size` (*int*) – the number to convert

**Returns** the human readable representation of size

**Return type** `str`

`alot.helper.libmagic_version_at_least` (*version*)

checks if the libmagic library installed is more recent than a given version.

**Parameters** `version` – minimum version expected in the form XYY (i.e. 5.14 -> 514) with XYY >= 513

`alot.helper.mailto_to_envelope` (*mailto\_str*)

Interpret mailto-string into a `alot.db.envelope.Envelope`

`alot.helper.mimewrap` (*path*, *filename=None*, *ctype=None*)

Take the contents of the given path and wrap them into an email MIME part according to the content type. The content type is auto detected from the actual file contents and the file name if it is not given.

**Parameters**

- **path** (*str*) – the path to the file contents
- **filename** (*str* or *None*) – the file name to use in the generated MIME part
- **ctype** (*str* or *None*) – the content type of the file contents in path

**Returns** the message MIME part storing the data from path

**Return type** subclasses of `email.mime.base.MIMEBase`

`alot.helper.parse_mailcap_nametemplate` (*template='%s'*)

this returns a prefix and suffix to be used in the tempfile module for a given mailcap nametemplate string

`alot.helper.parse_mailto` (*mailto\_str*)

Interpret mailto-string

**Parameters** `mailto_str` (*str*) – the string to interpret. Must conform to :rfc:2368.

**Returns** the header fields and the body found in the mailto link as a tuple of length two

**Return type** `tuple(dict(str->list(str)), str)`

`alot.helper.pretty_datetime` (*d*)

translates datetime *d* to a “sup-style” human readable string.

```
>>> now = datetime.now()
>>> now.strftime('%c')
'Sat 31 Mar 2012 14:47:26 '
>>> pretty_datetime(now)
u'just now'
>>> pretty_datetime(now - timedelta(minutes=1))
u'1min ago'
```

(continues on next page)



(continued from previous page)

```

>>> pretty_datetime(now - timedelta(hours=5))
u'5h ago'
>>> pretty_datetime(now - timedelta(hours=12))
u'02:54am'
>>> pretty_datetime(now - timedelta(days=1))
u'yest 02pm'
>>> pretty_datetime(now - timedelta(days=2))
u'Thu 02pm'
>>> pretty_datetime(now - timedelta(days=7))
u'Mar 24'
>>> pretty_datetime(now - timedelta(days=356))
u'Apr 2011'

```

`alot.helper.shell_quote` (*text*)

Escape the given text for passing it to the shell for interpretation. The resulting string will be parsed into one “word” (in the sense used in the shell documentation, see `sh(1)`) by the shell.

**Parameters** `text` (*str*) – the text to quote

**Returns** the quoted text

**Return type** `str`

`alot.helper.shorten` (*string*, *maxlen*)

shortens string if longer than `maxlen`, appending ellipsis

`alot.helper.shorten_author_string` (*authors\_string*, *maxlength*)

Parse a list of authors concatenated as a text string (comma separated) and smartly adjust them to `maxlength`.

1) If the complete list of sender names does not fit in `maxlength`, it tries to shorten names by using only the first part of each.

2) If the list is still too long, hide authors according to the following priority:

- First author is always shown (if too long is shorten with ellipsis)
- If possible, last author is also shown (if too long, uses ellipsis)
- If there are more than 2 authors in the thread, show the maximum of them. More recent senders have higher priority.
- If it is finally necessary to hide any author, an ellipsis between first and next authors is added.

`alot.helper.split_commandline` (*s*, *comments=False*, *posix=True*)

splits semi-colon separated commandlines

`alot.helper.split_commandstring` (*cmdstring*)

split command string into a list of strings to pass on to `subprocess.Popen` and the like. This simply calls `shlex.split` but works also with unicode bytestrings.

`alot.helper.string_decode` (*string*, *enc='ascii'*)

safely decodes string to unicode bytestring, respecting *enc* as a hint.

**Parameters**

- **string** (*str* or *unicode*) – the string to decode
- **enc** (*str*) – a hint what encoding is used in string (`'ascii'`, `'utf-8'`, ...)

**Returns** the unicode decoded input string

**Return type** `unicode`

`alot.helper.string_sanitize` (*string*, *tab\_width=8*)  
strips, and replaces non-printable characters

**Parameters** `tab_width` (int or *None*) – number of spaces to replace tabs with. Read from *globals.tabwidth* setting if *None*

```
>>> string_sanitize(' foo\rbar ', 8)
' foobar '
>>> string_sanitize('foo\tbar', 8)
'foo   bar'
>>> string_sanitize('foo\t\tbar', 8)
'foo           bar'
```

`alot.helper.try_decode` (*blob*)  
Guess the encoding of blob and try to decode it into a str.

**Parameters** `blob` (*bytes*) – The bytes to decode

**Returns** the decoded blob

**Return type** `str`

## 4.6 Commands

User actions are represented by *Command* objects that can then be triggered by *alot.ui.UI.apply\_command()*. Command-line strings given by the user via the prompt or key bindings can be translated to *Command* objects using *alot.commands.commandfactory()*. Specific actions are defined as subclasses of *Command* and can be registered to a global command pool using the *registerCommand* decorator.

---

**Note:** that the return value of *commandfactory()* depends on the current *mode* the user interface is in. The mode identifier is a string that is uniquely defined by the currently focuses *Buffer*.

---

**Note:** The names of the commands available to the user in any given mode do not correspond one-to-one to these subclasses. You can register a *Command* multiple times under different names, with different forced constructor parameters and so on. See for instance the definition of *BufferFocusCommand* in ‘*commands/globals.py*’:

```
@registerCommand(MODE, 'bprevious', forced={'offset': -1},
                 help='focus previous buffer')
@registerCommand(MODE, 'bnext', forced={'offset': +1},
                 help='focus next buffer')
class BufferFocusCommand(Command):
    def __init__(self, buffer=None, offset=0, **kwargs):
        ...
```

---

**class** `alot.commands.Command`  
base class for commands

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.CommandParseError`  
could not parse commandline string

```
class alot.commands.CommandArgumentParser (prog=None,      usage=None,      descrip-
                                         tion=None,      epilog=None,      par-
                                         ents=[],      formatter_class=<class      'arg-
                                         parse.HelpFormatter'>,      prefix_chars='-
                                         ',      fromfile_prefix_chars=None,      argu-
                                         ment_default=None,      conflict_handler='error',
                                         add_help=True, allow_abbrev=True)
ArgumentParser that raises CommandParseError instead of printing to sys.stderr
```

`alot.commands.commandfactory (cmdline, mode='global')`  
 parses *cmdline* and constructs a *Command*.

#### Parameters

- **cmdline** (*str*) – command line to interpret
- **mode** (*str*) – mode identifier

`alot.commands.lookup_command (cmdname, mode)`  
 returns commandclass, argparser and forced parameters used to construct a command for *cmdname* when called in *mode*.

#### Parameters

- **cmdname** (*str*) – name of the command to look up
- **mode** (*str*) – mode identifier

**Return type** (*Command*, *ArgumentParser*, dict(*str*->dict))

`alot.commands.lookup_parser (cmdname, mode)`  
 returns the *CommandArgumentParser* used to construct a command for *cmdname* when called in *mode*.

```
class alot.commands.registerCommand (mode, name, help=None, usage=None, forced=None, ar-
                                     guments=None)
Decorator used to register a Command as handler for command name in mode so that it can be looked up later
using lookup_command().
```

Consider this example that shows how a *Command* class definition is decorated to register it as handler for 'save' in mode 'thread' and add boolean and string arguments:

```
.. code-block::
```

```
@registerCommand("thread", "save", arguments=[ (['-all'], {'action': 'store_true', 'help': 'save
all'}), (['path'], {'nargs': '?', 'help': 'path to save to'})], help='save attachment(s)')
```

```
class SaveAttachmentCommand(Command): pass
```

#### Parameters

- **mode** (*str*) – mode identifier
- **name** (*str*) – command name to register as
- **help** (*str*) – help string summarizing what this command does
- **usage** (*str*) – overrides the auto generated usage string
- **forced** (*dict (str->str)*) – keyword parameter used for commands constructor
- **arguments** (*list of (list of str, dict (str->str))*) – list of arguments given as pairs (args, kwargs) accepted by *argparse.ArgumentParser.add\_argument()*.

### 4.6.1 Globals

**class** `alot.commands.globals.BufferCloseCommand` (*buffer=None*, *force=False*, *re-draw=True*, *\*\*kwargs*)

close a buffer

**Parameters**

- **buffer** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – the buffer to close or None for current
- **force** (*bool*) – force buffer close

**apply** (*ui*)

code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.BufferFocusCommand` (*buffer=None*, *index=None*, *offset=0*, *\*\*kwargs*)

focus a *Buffer*

**Parameters**

- **buffer** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – the buffer to focus or None
- **index** (*int*) – index (in bufferlist) of the buffer to focus.
- **offset** (*int*) – position of the buffer to focus relative to the currently focussed one. This is used only if *buffer* is set to *None*

**apply** (*ui*)

code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.CallCommand` (*command*, *\*\*kwargs*)

execute python code

**Parameters** **command** (*str*) – python command string to call

**apply** (*ui*)

code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.ComposeCommand` (*envelope=None*, *headers=None*, *template=None*, *sender=""*, *tags=None*, *subject=""*, *to=None*, *cc=None*, *bcc=None*, *attach=None*, *omit\_signature=False*, *spawn=None*, *rest=None*, *encrypt=False*, *\*\*kwargs*)

compose a new email

**Parameters**

- **envelope** (*Envelope*) – use existing envelope
- **headers** (*dict (str->str)*) – forced header values
- **template** (*str*) – name of template to parse into the envelope after creation. This should be the name of a file in your `template_dir`
- **sender** (*str*) – From-header value
- **tags** (*list (str)*) – Comma-separated list of tags to apply to message
- **subject** (*str*) – Subject-header value
- **to** (*str*) – To-header value
- **cc** (*str*) – Cc-header value

- **bcc** (*str*) – Bcc-header value
- **attach** (*str*) – Path to files to be attached (globable)
- **omit\_signature** (*bool*) – do not attach/append signature
- **spawn** (*bool*) – force spawning of editor in a new terminal
- **rest** (*list* (*str*)) – remaining parameters. These can start with ‘mailto’ in which case it is interpreted as mailto string. Otherwise it will be interpreted as recipients (to) header
- **encrypt** (*bool*) – if the email should be encrypted

**apply** (*ui*)

code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.EditCommand` (*path*, *spawn=None*, *thread=None*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
edit a file

**Parameters**

- **path** (*str*) – path to the file to be edited
- **spawn** (*bool*) – force running editor in a new terminal
- **thread** (*bool*) – run asynchronously, don’t block alot

**apply** (*ui*)

code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.ExitCommand` (*\_prompt=True*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
Shut down cleanly.

**Parameters** **\_prompt** (*bool*) – For internal use only, used to control prompting to close without sending, and is used by the BufferCloseCommand if settings change after yielding to the UI.

**apply** (*ui*)

code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.ExternalCommand` (*cmd*, *stdin=None*, *shell=False*,  
*spawn=False*, *refocus=True*, *thread=False*,  
*on\_success=None*, *\*\*kwargs*)

run external command

**Parameters**

- **cmd** (*list* or *str*) – the command to call
- **stdin** (*file* or *str*) – input to pipe to the process
- **spawn** (*bool*) – run command in a new terminal
- **shell** (*bool*) – let shell interpret command string
- **thread** (*bool*) – run asynchronously, don’t block alot
- **refocus** (*bool*) – refocus calling buffer after cmd termination
- **on\_success** (*callable*) – code to execute after command successfully exited

**apply** (*ui*)

code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.FlushCommand` (*callback=None*, *silent=False*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
flush write operations or retry until committed

**Parameters** **callback** (*callable*) – function to call after successful writeout

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.HelpCommand` (*commandname=""*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
display help for a command (use 'bindings' to display all keybindings interpreted in current mode)

**Parameters** **commandname** (*str*) – command to document

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.MoveCommand` (*movement=None*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
move in widget

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.NamedQueriesCommand` (*filtfun=<class 'bool'>*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
opens named queries buffer

**Parameters** **filtfun** (*callable (str->bool)*) – filter to apply to displayed list

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.OpenBufferlistCommand` (*filtfun=<function OpenBufferlistCommand.<lambda>>*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
open a list of active buffers

**Parameters** **filtfun** (*callable (str->bool)*) – filter to apply to displayed list

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.PromptCommand` (*startwith=""*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
prompts for commandline and interprets it upon select

**Parameters** **startwith** (*str*) – initial content of the prompt widget

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.PythonShellCommand`  
open an interactive python shell for introspection

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.RefreshCommand`  
refresh the current buffer

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.ReloadCommand`  
Reload configuration.

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.RemoveQueryCommand` (*alias, flush=True*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
remove named query string for given alias

**Parameters**

- **alias** (*str*) – name to use for query string

- **flush** (*bool*) – immediately write out to the index

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.RepeatCommand` (*\*\*kwargs*)  
repeat the command executed last time

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.SaveQueryCommand` (*alias, query=None, flush=True, \*\*kwargs*)  
save alias for query string

#### Parameters

- **alias** (*str*) – name to use for query string
- **query** (*str or None*) – query string to save
- **flush** (*bool*) – immediately write out to the index

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.SearchCommand` (*query, sort=None, \*\*kwargs*)  
open a new search buffer. Search obeys the notmuch *search.exclude\_tags* setting.

#### Parameters

- **query** (*str*) – notmuch querystring
- **sort** (*str*) – how to order results. Must be one of ‘oldest\_first’, ‘newest\_first’, ‘message\_id’ or ‘unsorted’.

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.globals.TagListCommand` (*filtfun=<function TagListCommand.<lambda>>, tags=None, \*\*kwargs*)  
opens taglist buffer

**Parameters** **filtfun** (*callable (str->bool)*) – filter to apply to displayed list

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

## 4.6.2 Envelope

**class** `alot.commands.envelope.AttachCommand` (*path, \*\*kwargs*)  
attach files to the mail

**Parameters** **path** (*str*) – files to attach (globable string)

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.envelope.EditCommand` (*envelope=None, spawn=None, refocus=True, \*\*kwargs*)  
edit mail

#### Parameters

- **envelope** (*Envelope*) – email to edit

- **spawn** (*bool*) – force spawning of editor in a new terminal
- **refocus** – m

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

```
class alot.commands.envelope.EncryptCommand (action=None, keyids=None, trusted=False,  
                                             **kwargs)
```

#### Parameters

- **action** (*str*) – whether to encrypt/unencrypt/toggleencrypt
- **keyid** (*str*) – the id of the key to encrypt
- **trusted** (*bool*) – whether to filter keys and only use trusted ones

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

```
class alot.commands.envelope.RefineCommand (key="", **kwargs)  
prompt to change the value of a header
```

**Parameters** **key** (*str*) – key of the header to change

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

```
class alot.commands.envelope.SaveCommand  
save draft
```

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

```
class alot.commands.envelope.SendCommand (mail=None, envelope=None, **kwargs)  
send mail
```

#### Parameters

- **mail** – email to send
- **envelope** (*alot.db.envelope.envelope*) – envelope to use to construct the outgoing mail. This will be ignored in case the mail parameter is set.

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

```
class alot.commands.envelope.SetCommand (key, value, append=False, **kwargs)  
set header value
```

#### Parameters

- **key** (*str*) – key of the header to change
- **value** (*str*) – new value

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

```
class alot.commands.envelope.SignCommand (action=None, keyid=None, **kwargs)  
toggle signing this email
```

#### Parameters

- **action** (*str*) – whether to sign/unsig/toggle
- **keyid** (*str*) – which key id to use



**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.envelope.TagCommand` (*tags=""*, *action='add'*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
manipulate message tags

**Parameters**

- **tags** (*str*) – comma separated list of tagstrings to set
- **action** (*str*) – adds tags if ‘add’, removes them if ‘remove’, adds tags and removes all other if ‘set’ or toggle individually if ‘toggle’

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.envelope.ToggleHeaderCommand`  
toggle display of all headers

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.envelope.UnattachCommand` (*hint=None*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
remove attachments from current envelope

**Parameters** **hint** (*str*) – which attached file to remove

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.envelope.UnsetCommand` (*key*, *\*\*kwargs*)  
remove header field

**Parameters** **key** (*str*) – key of the header to remove

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

### 4.6.3 Bufferlist

**class** `alot.commands.bufferlist.BufferCloseCommand`  
close focussed buffer

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.bufferlist.BufferFocusCommand`  
focus selected buffer

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

### 4.6.4 Search

**class** `alot.commands.search.MoveFocusCommand` (*movement=None*, *\*\*kwargs*)

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.search.OpenThreadCommand` (*thread=None, \*\*kwargs*)  
open thread in a new buffer

**Parameters** `thread` (*Thread*) – thread to open (Uses focussed thread if unset)

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.search.RefineCommand` (*query=None, sort=None, \*\*kwargs*)  
refine the querystring of this buffer

**Parameters** `query` (*list of str*) – new querystring given as list of strings as returned by `argparse`

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.search.RefinePromptCommand`  
prompt to change this buffers querystring

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.search.SaveQueryCommand` (*alias, query=None, flush=True, \*\*kwargs*)

**Parameters**

- **alias** (*str*) – name to use for query string
- **query** (*str or None*) – query string to save
- **flush** (*bool*) – immediately write out to the index

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.search.TagCommand` (*tags=", action='add', allmessages=False, flush=True, \*\*kwargs*)

manipulate message tags

**Parameters**

- **tags** (*str*) – comma separated list of tagstrings to set
- **action** (*str*) – adds tags if ‘add’, removes them if ‘remove’, adds tags and removes all other if ‘set’ or toggle individually if ‘toggle’
- **allmessages** (*bool*) – tag all messages in search result
- **flush** (*bool*) – immediately write out to the index

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

## 4.6.5 Taglist

**class** `alot.commands.taglist.TaglistSelectCommand`  
search for messages with selected tag

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

### 4.6.6 Namedqueries

**class** `alot.commands.namedqueries.NamedqueriesSelectCommand` (*filt=None, \*\*kwargs*)  
search for messages with selected query

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

### 4.6.7 Thread

**class** `alot.commands.thread.BounceMailCommand` (*message=None, \*\*kwargs*)  
directly re-send selected message

**Parameters** *message* (`alot.db.message.Message`) – message to bounce (defaults to selected message)

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.ChangeDisplaymodeCommand` (*query=None, visible=None, raw=None, all\_headers=None, indent=None, \*\*kwargs*)

fold or unfold messages

#### Parameters

- **query** (*str*) – notmuch query string used to filter messages to affect
- **visible** (*True, False, 'toggle' or None*) – unfold if *True*, fold if *False*, ignore if *None*
- **raw** (*True, False, 'toggle' or None*) – display raw message text.
- **all\_headers** (*True, False, 'toggle' or None*) – show all headers (only visible if not in raw mode)
- **indent** (*'+', '-', or int*) – message/reply indentation

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.EditNewCommand` (*message=None, spawn=None, \*\*kwargs*)  
edit message in as new

#### Parameters

- **message** (`alot.db.message.Message`) – message to reply to (defaults to selected message)
- **spawn** (*bool*) – force spawning of editor in a new terminal

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.ForwardCommand` (*message=None, attach=True, spawn=None, \*\*kwargs*)

forward message

#### Parameters

- **message** (`alot.db.message.Message`) – message to forward (defaults to selected message)
- **attach** (*bool*) – attach original mail instead of inline quoting its body
- **spawn** (*bool*) – force spawning of editor in a new terminal

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.MoveFocusCommand` (*movement=None, \*\*kwargs*)

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.OpenAttachmentCommand` (*attachment, \*\*kwargs*)  
displays an attachment according to mailcap

**Parameters** **attachment** (*Attachment*) – attachment to open

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.PipeCommand` (*cmd, all=False, separately=False, background=False, shell=False, notify\_stdout=False, format='raw', add\_tags=False, noop\_msg='no command specified', confirm\_msg='', done\_msg=None, field\_key='copiousoutput', \*\*kwargs*)

pipe message(s) to stdin of a shellcommand

#### Parameters

- **cmd** (*str or list of str*) – shellcommand to open
- **all** (*bool*) – pipe all, not only selected message
- **separately** (*bool*) – call command once per message
- **background** (*bool*) – do not suspend the interface
- **notify\_stdout** (*bool*) – display command's stdout as notification message
- **shell** – let the shell interpret the command
- **add\_tags** (*bool*) – add 'Tags' header to the message
- **noop\_msg** (*str*) – error notification to show if *cmd* is empty
- **confirm\_msg** (*str*) – confirmation question to ask (continues directly if unset)
- **done\_msg** (*str*) – notification message to show upon success
- **field\_key** (*str*) – malcap field key for decoding

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.PrintCommand` (*all=False, separately=False, raw=False, add\_tags=False, \*\*kwargs*)

print message(s)

#### Parameters

- **all** (*bool*) – print all, not only selected messages
- **separately** (*bool*) – call print command once per message
- **raw** (*bool*) – pipe raw message string to print command
- **add\_tags** (*bool*) – add 'Tags' header to the message

**class** `alot.commands.thread.RemoveCommand` (*all=False, \*\*kwargs*)  
 remove message(s) from the index

**Parameters** `all` (*bool*) – remove all messages from thread, not just selected one

**apply** (*ui*)  
 code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.ReplyCommand` (*message=None, all=False, listreply=None, spawn=None, \*\*kwargs*)  
 reply to message

**Parameters**

- **message** (*alot.db.message.Message*) – message to reply to (defaults to selected message)
- **all** (*bool*) – group reply; copies recipients from Bcc/Cc/To to the reply
- **listreply** (*bool*) – reply to list; autodetect if unset and enabled in config
- **spawn** (*bool*) – force spawning of editor in a new terminal

**apply** (*ui*)  
 code that gets executed when this command is applied

**static** `clear_my_address` (*my\_account, value*)  
 return recipient header without the addresses in `my_account`

**Parameters**

- **my\_account** (*Account*) – my account
- **value** (*list(str)*) – a list of recipient or sender strings (with or without real names as taken from email headers)

**Returns** a new, potentially shortend list

**Return type** `list(str)`

**static** `ensure_unique_address` (*recipients*)  
 clean up a list of name,address pairs so that no address appears multiple times.

**class** `alot.commands.thread.SaveAttachmentCommand` (*all=False, path=None, \*\*kwargs*)  
 save attachment(s)

**Parameters**

- **all** (*bool*) – save all, not only selected attachment
- **path** (*str*) – path to write to. if `all` is set, this must be a directory.

**apply** (*ui*)  
 code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.TagCommand` (*tags="", action='add', all=False, flush=True, \*\*kwargs*)  
 manipulate message tags

**Parameters**

- **tags** (*str*) – comma separated list of tagstrings to set
- **action** (*str*) – adds tags if 'add', removes them if 'remove', adds tags and removes all other if 'set' or toggle individually if 'toggle'
- **all** (*bool*) – tag all messages in thread
- **flush** (*bool*) – immediately write out to the index

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

**class** `alot.commands.thread.ThreadSelectCommand`  
select focussed element: - if it is a message summary, toggle visibility of the message; - if it is an attachment line, open the attachment

**apply** (*ui*)  
code that gets executed when this command is applied

`alot.commands.thread.determine_sender` (*mail*, *action='reply'*)  
Inspect a given mail to reply/forward/bounce and find the most appropriate account to act from and construct a suitable From-Header to use.

**Parameters**

- **mail** (*email.message.Message*) – the email to inspect
- **action** (*str*) – intended use case: one of “reply”, “forward” or “bounce”

## 4.7 Crypto

`alot.crypto.RFC3156_micalg_from_algo` (*hash\_algo*)  
Converts a GPGME hash algorithm name to one conforming to RFC3156.

GPGME returns hash algorithm names such as “SHA256”, but RFC3156 says that programs need to use names such as “pgp-sha256” instead.

**Parameters** **hash\_algo** (*str*) – GPGME hash\_algo

**Returns** the lowercase name of of the algorithm with “pgp-” prepended

**Return type** *str*

`alot.crypto.bad_signatures_to_str` (*error*)  
Convert a bad signature exception to a text message. This is a workaround for gpg not handling non-ascii data correctly.

**Parameters** **error** (*BadSignatures*) – BadSignatures exception

`alot.crypto.check_uid_validity` (*key*, *email*)  
Check that a the email belongs to the given key. Also check the trust level of this connection. Only if the trust level is high enough (>=4) the email is assumed to belong to the key.

**Parameters**

- **key** (*gpg.gpgme.\_gpgme\_key*) – the GPG key to which the email should belong
- **email** (*str*) – the email address that should belong to the key

**Returns** whether the key can be assumed to belong to the given email

**Return type** *bool*

`alot.crypto.decrypt_verify` (*encrypted*, *session\_keys=None*)  
Decrypts the given ciphertext string and returns both the signatures (if any) and the plaintext.

**Parameters**

- **encrypted** (*bytes*) – the mail to decrypt
- **session\_keys** (*list[str]*) – a list OpenPGP session keys

**Returns** the signatures and decrypted plaintext data

**Return type** `tuple[list[gpg.result.Signature], str]`

**Raises** `alot.errors.GPGProblem` – if the decryption fails

`alot.crypto.detached_signature_for` (*plaintext\_str*, *keys*)

Signs the given plaintext string and returns the detached signature.

A detached signature in GPG speak is a separate blob of data containing a signature for the specified plaintext.

**Parameters**

- **plaintext\_str** (*bytes*) – bytestring to sign
- **keys** (*list[gpg.gpgme.\_gpgme\_key]*) – list of one or more key to sign with.

**Returns** A list of signature and the signed blob of data

**Return type** `tuple[list[gpg.results.NewSignature], str]`

`alot.crypto.encrypt` (*plaintext\_str*, *keys*)

Encrypt data and return the encrypted form.

**Parameters**

- **plaintext\_str** (*bytes*) – the mail to encrypt
- **key** (*list[gpg.gpgme.gpgme\_key\_t]* or *None*) – optionally, a list of keys to encrypt with

**Returns** encrypted mail

**Return type** `str`

`alot.crypto.get_key` (*keyid*, *validate=False*, *encrypt=False*, *sign=False*, *signed\_only=False*)

Gets a key from the keyring by filtering for the specified keyid, but only if the given keyid is specific enough (if it matches multiple keys, an exception will be thrown).

If *validate* is *True* also make sure that returned key is not invalid, revoked or expired. In addition if *encrypt* or *sign* is *True* also validate that key is valid for that action. For example only keys with private key can sign. If *signed\_only* is *True* make sure that the user id can be trusted to belong to the key (is signed). This last check will only work if the keyid is part of the user id associated with the key, not if it is part of the key fingerprint.

**Parameters**

- **keyid** (*str*) – filter term for the keyring (usually a key ID)
- **validate** (*bool*) – validate that returned keyid is valid
- **encrypt** (*bool*) – when validating confirm that returned key can encrypt
- **sign** (*bool*) – when validating confirm that returned key can sign
- **signed\_only** (*bool*) – only return keys whose uid is signed (trusted to belong to the key)

**Returns** A gpg key matching the given parameters

**Return type** `gpg.gpgme._gpgme_key`

**Raises**

- **GPGProblem** – if the keyid is ambiguous
- **GPGProblem** – if there is no key that matches the parameters
- **GPGProblem** – if a key is found, but *signed\_only* is true and the key is unused

`alot.crypto.list_keys` (*hint=None, private=False*)

Returns a generator of all keys containing the fingerprint, or all keys if `hint` is `None`.

The generator may raise exceptions of `:class:gpg.errors.GPGMEError`, and it is the caller's responsibility to handle them.

**Parameters**

- **hint** (*str or None*) – Part of a fingerprint to use to search
- **private** (*bool*) – Whether to return public keys or secret keys

**Returns** A generator that yields keys.

**Return type** Generator[gpg.gpgme.gpgme\_key\_t, None, None]

`alot.crypto.validate_key` (*key, sign=False, encrypt=False*)

Assert that a key is valid and optionally that it can be used for signing or encrypting. Raise `GPGProblem` otherwise.

**Parameters**

- **key** (*gpg.gpgme.\_gpgme\_key*) – the GPG key to check
- **sign** (*bool*) – whether the key should be able to sign
- **encrypt** (*bool*) – whether the key should be able to encrypt

**Raises**

- **GPGProblem** – If the key is revoked, expired, or invalid
- **GPGProblem** – If `encrypt` is true and the key cannot be used to encrypt
- **GPGProblem** – If `sign` is true and the key cannot be used to sign

`alot.crypto.verify_detached` (*message, signature*)

Verifies whether the message is authentic by checking the signature.

**Parameters**

- **message** (*bytes*) – The message to be verified, in canonical form.
- **signature** (*bytes*) – the OpenPGP signature to verify

**Returns** a list of signatures

**Return type** list[gpg.results.Signature]

**Raises** `alot.errors.GPGProblem` – if the verification fails



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## Frequently Asked Questions

---

### 1. Help! I don't see *text/html* content!

You need to set up a mailcap entry to declare an external renderer for *text/html*. Try `w3m` and put the following into your `~/.mailcap`:

```
text/html; w3m -dump -o document_charset=%{charset} '%s'; nametemplate=%s.html; ↵  
↪copiousoutput
```

Most `text based browsers` have a dump mode that can be used here.

### 2. Why reinvent the wheel? Why not extend an existing MUA to work nicely with notmuch?

`alot` makes use of existing solutions where possible: It does not fetch, send or edit mails; it lets `notmuch` handle your mailindex and uses a `toolkit` to render its display. You are responsible for `automatic initial tagging`.

This said, there are few CLI MUAs that could be easily and naturally adapted to using `notmuch`. Rebuilding an interface from scratch using `friendly and extensible tools` seemed easier and more promising.

Update: see `mutt-kz` for a fork of `mutt`.

### 3. What's with the snotty name?

It's not meant to be presumptuous. I like the dichotomy; I like to picture the look on someone's face who reads the `User-Agent` header "notmuch/alot"; I like cookies; I like [this comic strip](#).

### 4. I want feature X!

Me too! Feel free to file a new or comment on existing `issues` if you don't want/have the time/know how to implement it yourself. Be verbose as to how it should look or work when it's finished and give it some thought how you think we should implement it. We'll discuss it from there.

## 5. Why are the default key bindings so counter-intuitive?

Be aware that the bindings for all modes are *fully configurable*. That said, I choose the bindings to be natural for me. I use `vim` and `pentadactyl` a lot. However, I'd be interested in discussing the defaults. If you think your bindings are more intuitive or better suited as defaults for some reason, don't hesitate to send me your config. The same holds for the theme settings you use. Tell me. Let's improve the defaults.

## 6. Why are you doing \$THIS not \$THAT way?

Lazyness and Ignorance: In most cases I simply did not or still don't know a better solution. I try to outsource as much as I can to well established libraries and be it only to avoid having to read rfc's. But there are lots of tasks I implemented myself, possibly overlooking a ready made and available solution. Twisted is such a feature-rich but gray area in my mind for example. If you think you know how to improve the current implementation let me know!

The few exceptions to above stated rule are the following:

- The modules `cmd` and `cmd2`, that handle all sorts of convenience around command objects hate `urwid`: They are painfully strongly coupled to user in/output via `stdin` and `out`.
- `notmuch reply` is not used to format reply messages because 1. it is not offered by `notmuch`'s library but is a feature of the CLI. This means we would have to call the `notmuch` binary, something that is avoided where possible. 2. As there is no `notmuch forward` equivalent, this (very similar) functionality would have to be re-implemented anyway.

## 7. I thought alot ran on Python 2?

It used to. When we made the transition to Python 3 we didn't maintain Python 2 support. If you still need Python 2 support the 0.7 release is your best bet.

## 8. I thought alot used twisted?

It used to. After we switched to python 3 we decided to switch to `asyncio`, which reduced the number of dependencies we have. Twisted is an especially heavy dependency, when we only used their `async` mechanisms, and not any of the other goodness that twisted has to offer.

## 9. How do I search within the content of a mail?

Alot does not yet have this feature built-in. However, you can pipe a mail to your preferred pager and do it from there. This can be done using the `pipeto` command (the default shortcut is `'l'`) in thread buffers:

```
pipeto --format=decoded less
```

Using `less`, you search with `'/'` and save with `'s'`. See [here](#) or `help pipeto` for help on this command.

## 6.1 Synopsis

alot [options ...] [subcommand]

## 6.2 Description

Alot is a terminal-based mail user agent for the notmuch mail system. It features a modular and command prompt driven interface to provide a full MUA experience as an alternative to the Emacs mode shipped with notmuch.

## 6.3 Options

- r, --read-only** open notmuch database in read-only mode
- c FILENAME, --config=FILENAME** configuration file (default: `~/config/alot/config`)
- n FILENAME, --notmuch-config=FILENAME** notmuch configuration file (default: `$NOTMUCH_CONFIG` or `~/notmuch-config`)
- C COLOURS, --colour-mode=COLOURS** number of colours to use on the terminal; must be 1, 16 or 256 (default: configuration option *colourmode* or 256)
- p PATH, --mailindex-path=PATH** path to notmuch index
- d LEVEL, --debug-level=LEVEL** debug level; must be one of debug, info, warning or error (default: info)
- l FILENAME, --logfile=FILENAME** log file (default: `/dev/null`)
- h, --help** display help and exit
- v, --version** output version information and exit

## 6.4 Commands

**search** start in a search buffer using the query string provided as parameter (see *notmuch-search-terms* (7))

**compose** compose a new message

**bufferlist** start with only a bufferlist buffer open

**taglist** start with only a taglist buffer open

**namedqueries** start with list of named queries

**pyshell** start the interactive python shell inside alot

## 6.5 Usage

The arrow keys, *page-up/down*, *j*, *k* and *Space* can be used to move the focus. *Escape* cancels prompts and *Enter* selects. Hit `:` at any time and type in commands to the prompt.

The interface shows one buffer at a time, you can use *Tab* and *Shift-Tab* to switch between them, close the current buffer with *d* and list them all with `;`.

The buffer type or *mode* (displayed at the bottom left) determines which prompt commands are available. Usage information on any command can be listed by typing *help YOURCOMMAND* to the prompt. The keybindings for the current mode are listed upon pressing `?`.

## 6.6 UNIX Signals

**SIGUSR1** Refreshes the current buffer.

**SIGINT** Shuts down the user interface.

## 6.7 See Also

*notmuch* (1)

Alot is a terminal-based mail user agent for the notmuch mail system. It features a modular and command prompt driven interface to provide a full MUA experience as an alternative to the Emacs mode shipped with notmuch.

**a**

- alot, 43
- alot.account, 71
- alot.addressbook, 74
- alot.addressbook.abook, 74
- alot.addressbook.external, 74
- alot.buffers, 57
- alot.commands, 78
- alot.commands.bufferlist, 85
- alot.commands.envelope, 83
- alot.commands.globals, 80
- alot.commands.namedqueries, 87
- alot.commands.search, 85
- alot.commands.taglist, 86
- alot.commands.thread, 87
- alot.completion, 63
- alot.crypto, 90
- alot.db, 43
- alot.db.errors, 46
- alot.db.utils, 51
- alot.helper, 75
- alot.settings.errors, 70
- alot.settings.manager, 67
- alot.settings.utils, 70
- alot.ui, 54
- alot.utils, 78
- alot.widgets.bufferlist, 62
- alot.widgets.globals, 60
- alot.widgets.search, 62
- alot.widgets.thread, 62
- alot.widgets.utils, 60



## A

- abook (alot.account.Account attribute), 73
- AbookAddressBook (class in alot.addressbook.abook), 74
- AbooksCompleter (class in alot.completion), 63
- account (alot.db.envelope.Envelope attribute), 51
- Account (class in alot.account), 72
- account\_matching\_address() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 68
- AccountCompleter (class in alot.completion), 64
- accumulate\_body() (alot.db.Message method), 48
- add() (alot.db.envelope.Envelope method), 50
- add\_message() (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 44
- add\_signature\_headers() (in module alot.db.utils), 51
- add\_tags() (alot.db.Message method), 48
- add\_tags() (alot.db.Thread method), 46
- address (alot.account.Account attribute), 73
- Address (class in alot.account), 71
- AddressBook (class in alot.addressbook), 74
- alias\_regexp (alot.account.Account attribute), 73
- aliases (alot.account.Account attribute), 73
- alot (module), 43
- alot.account (module), 71
- alot.addressbook (module), 74
- alot.addressbook.abook (module), 74
- alot.addressbook.external (module), 74
- alot.buffers (module), 57
- alot.commands (module), 78
- alot.commands.bufferlist (module), 85
- alot.commands.envelope (module), 83
- alot.commands.globals (module), 80
- alot.commands.namedqueries (module), 87
- alot.commands.search (module), 85
- alot.commands.taglist (module), 86
- alot.commands.thread (module), 87
- alot.completion (module), 63
- alot.crypto (module), 90
- alot.db (module), 43
- alot.db.errors (module), 46
- alot.db.utils (module), 51
- alot.helper (module), 75
- alot.settings.errors (module), 70
- alot.settings.manager (module), 67
- alot.settings.utils (module), 70
- alot.ui (module), 54
- alot.utils (module), 78
- alot.widgets.bufferlist (module), 62
- alot.widgets.globals (module), 60
- alot.widgets.search (module), 62
- alot.widgets.thread (module), 62
- alot.widgets.utils (module), 60
- apply() (alot.commands.bufferlist.BufferCloseCommand method), 85
- apply() (alot.commands.bufferlist.BufferFocusCommand method), 85
- apply() (alot.commands.Command method), 78
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.AttachCommand method), 83
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.EditCommand method), 84
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.EncryptCommand method), 84
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.RefineCommand method), 84
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.SaveCommand method), 84
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.SendCommand method), 84
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.SetCommand method), 84
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.SignCommand method), 85
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.TagCommand method), 85
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.ToggleHeaderCommand method), 85
- apply() (alot.commands.envelope.UnattachCommand

- method), 85
  - apply() (alot.commands.envelope.UnsetCommand method), 85
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.BufferCloseCommand method), 80
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.BufferFocusCommand method), 80
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.CallCommand method), 80
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.ComposeCommand method), 81
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.EditCommand method), 81
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.ExitCommand method), 81
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.ExternalCommand method), 81
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.FlushCommand method), 81
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.HelpCommand method), 82
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.MoveCommand method), 82
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.NamedQueriesCommand method), 82
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.OpenBufferlistCommand method), 82
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.PromptCommand method), 82
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.PythonShellCommand method), 82
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.RefreshCommand method), 82
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.ReloadCommand method), 82
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.RemoveQueryCommand method), 83
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.RepeatCommand method), 83
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.SaveQueryCommand method), 83
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.SearchCommand method), 83
  - apply() (alot.commands.globals.TagListCommand method), 83
  - apply() (alot.commands.namedqueries.NamedqueriesSelectCommand method), 87
  - apply() (alot.commands.search.MoveFocusCommand method), 85
  - apply() (alot.commands.search.OpenThreadCommand method), 86
  - apply() (alot.commands.search.RefineCommand method), 86
  - apply() (alot.commands.search.RefinePromptCommand method), 86
  - apply() (alot.commands.search.SaveQueryCommand method), 86
  - apply() (alot.commands.search.TagCommand method), 86
  - apply() (alot.commands.taglist.TaglistSelectCommand method), 86
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.BounceMailCommand method), 87
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.ChangeDisplaymodeCommand method), 87
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.EditNewCommand method), 87
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.ForwardCommand method), 87
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.MoveFocusCommand method), 88
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.OpenAttachmentCommand method), 88
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.PipeCommand method), 88
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.RemoveCommand method), 89
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.ReplyCommand method), 89
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.SaveAttachmentCommand method), 89
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.TagCommand method), 89
  - apply() (alot.commands.thread.ThreadSelectCommand method), 90
  - apply\_command() (alot.ui.UI method), 54
  - apply\_commandline() (alot.ui.UI method), 54
  - ArgparseOptionCompleter (class in alot.completion), 64
  - async\_() (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 44
  - attach() (alot.db.envelope.Envelope method), 50
  - AttachCommand (class in alot.commands.envelope), 83
  - Attachment (class in alot.db.attachment), 50
  - attachments (alot.db.envelope.Envelope attribute), 51
  - AttachmentWidget (class in alot.widgets.globals), 60
  - AttrFlipWidget (class in alot.widgets.utils), 60
- ## B
- bad\_signatures\_to\_str() (in module alot.crypto), 90
  - body (alot.db.envelope.Envelope attribute), 51
  - BounceMailCommand (class in alot.commands.thread), 87
  - Buffer (class in alot.buffers), 57
  - buffer\_close() (alot.ui.UI method), 54
  - buffer\_focus() (alot.ui.UI method), 54
  - buffer\_open() (alot.ui.UI method), 54
  - BufferCloseCommand (class in alot.commands.bufferlist), 85



- BufferCloseCommand (class in `alot.commands.globals`), 80
- BufferFocusCommand (class in `alot.commands.bufferlist`), 85
- BufferFocusCommand (class in `alot.commands.globals`), 80
- BufferlineWidget (class in `alot.widgets.bufferlist`), 62
- BufferlistBuffer (class in `alot.buffers`), 57
- buffers (`alot.ui.UI` attribute), 56
- build\_statusbar() (`alot.ui.UI` method), 54
- build\_tags\_part() (in module `alot.widgets.search`), 62
- build\_text\_part() (in module `alot.widgets.search`), 62
- ## C
- call\_cmd() (in module `alot.helper`), 75
- call\_cmd\_async() (in module `alot.helper`), 75
- CallCommand (class in `alot.commands.globals`), 80
- ChangeDisplaymodeCommand (class in `alot.commands.thread`), 87
- check\_uid\_validity() (in module `alot.crypto`), 90
- choice() (`alot.ui.UI` method), 54
- ChoiceWidget (class in `alot.widgets.globals`), 60
- cleanup() (`alot.buffers.Buffer` method), 57
- cleanup() (`alot.buffers.EnvelopeBuffer` method), 57
- cleanup() (`alot.buffers.SearchBuffer` method), 58
- cleanup() (`alot.ui.UI` method), 55
- clear\_my\_address() (`alot.commands.thread.ReplyCommand` static method), 89
- clear\_notify() (`alot.ui.UI` method), 55
- collapse() (`alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer` method), 58
- collapse\_all() (`alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer` method), 58
- collapse\_if\_matches() (`alot.widgets.thread.MessageTree` method), 63
- Command (class in `alot.commands`), 78
- CommandArgumentParser (class in `alot.commands`), 78
- CommandCompleter (class in `alot.completion`), 64
- commandfactory() (in module `alot.commands`), 79
- CommandLineCompleter (class in `alot.completion`), 64
- CommandNameCompleter (class in `alot.completion`), 65
- CommandParseError (class in `alot.commands`), 78
- commandprompthistory (`alot.ui.UI` attribute), 56
- complete() (`alot.completion.AbooksCompleter` method), 64
- complete() (`alot.completion.ArgparseOptionCompleter` method), 64
- complete() (`alot.completion.CommandCompleter` method), 64
- complete() (`alot.completion.CommandLineCompleter` method), 65
- complete() (`alot.completion.CommandNameCompleter` method), 65
- complete() (`alot.completion.Completer` method), 65
- complete() (`alot.completion.MultipleSelectionCompleter` method), 66
- complete() (`alot.completion.PathCompleter` method), 66
- complete() (`alot.completion.QueryCompleter` method), 67
- complete() (`alot.completion.StringlistCompleter` method), 67
- CompleteEdit (class in `alot.widgets.globals`), 60
- Completer (class in `alot.completion`), 65
- ComposeCommand (class in `alot.commands.globals`), 80
- ConfigError, 70
- construct\_mail() (`alot.db.envelope.Envelope` method), 51
- ContactsCompleter (class in `alot.completion`), 66
- count\_messages() (`alot.db.manager.DBManager` method), 44
- count\_threads() (`alot.db.manager.DBManager` method), 44
- CryptoKeyCompleter (class in `alot.completion`), 66
- current\_buffer (`alot.ui.UI` attribute), 56
- ## D
- DatabaseError (class in `alot.db.errors`), 46
- DatabaseLockedError (class in `alot.db.errors`), 46
- DatabaseROError (class in `alot.db.errors`), 46
- db\_was\_locked (`alot.ui.UI` attribute), 56
- dbman (`alot.ui.UI` attribute), 56
- DBManager (class in `alot.db.manager`), 44
- decode\_header() (in module `alot.db.utils`), 51
- decrypt\_verify() (in module `alot.crypto`), 90
- decrypted\_message\_from\_bytes() (in module `alot.db.utils`), 52
- decrypted\_message\_from\_file() (in module `alot.db.utils`), 52
- decrypted\_message\_from\_message() (in module `alot.db.utils`), 52
- decrypted\_message\_from\_string() (in module `alot.db.utils`), 52
- detached\_signature\_for() (in module `alot.crypto`), 91
- determine\_sender() (in module `alot.commands.thread`), 90
- DialogBox (class in `alot.widgets.utils`), 60
- DictList (class in `alot.widgets.thread`), 62
- ## E
- EditCommand (class in `alot.commands.envelope`), 83
- EditCommand (class in `alot.commands.globals`), 81
- EditNewCommand (class in `alot.commands.thread`), 87
- EDITOR, 19
- encrypt() (in module `alot.crypto`), 91
- encrypt\_to\_self (`alot.account.Account` attribute), 73
- EncryptCommand (class in `alot.commands.envelope`), 84
- ensure\_unique\_address() (`alot.commands.thread.ReplyCommand` static method), 89
- Envelope (class in `alot.db.envelope`), 50
- EnvelopeBuffer (class in `alot.buffers`), 57

environment variable

EDITOR, 19

PATH, 4

exit() (alot.ui.UI static method), 55

exit() (built-in function), 37

ExitCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 81

expand() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 58

expand\_all() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 58

ExternalAddressbook (class in  
alot.addressbook.external), 74

ExternalCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 81

extract\_body() (in module alot.db.utils), 52

extract\_headers() (in module alot.db.utils), 53

## F

flush() (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 44

FlushCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 81

focus\_first() (alot.buffers.BufferlistBuffer method), 57

focus\_first() (alot.buffers.NamedQueriesBuffer method),  
57

focus\_first() (alot.buffers.TagListBuffer method), 60

focus\_first() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 58

focus\_first\_reply() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method),  
58

focus\_last\_reply() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 58

focus\_next() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 58

focus\_next\_matching() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer  
method), 58

focus\_next\_sibling() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method),  
59

focus\_next\_unfolded() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer  
method), 59

focus\_parent() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59

focus\_prev() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59

focus\_prev\_matching() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer  
method), 59

focus\_prev\_sibling() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method),  
59

focus\_prev\_unfolded() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer  
method), 59

focus\_property() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59

focus\_selected\_message() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer  
method), 59

FocusableText (class in alot.widgets.thread), 63

forward\_prefix() (built-in function), 36

forward\_subject() (built-in function), 37

ForwardCommand (class in alot.commands.thread), 87

from\_string() (alot.account.Address class method), 72

## G

get() (alot.db.envelope.Envelope method), 51

get() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 68

get\_accounts() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager  
method), 68

get\_addressbooks() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager  
method), 68

get\_all() (alot.db.envelope.Envelope method), 51

get\_all\_tags() (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 44

get\_attachments() (alot.db.Message method), 49

get\_attribute() (alot.settings.theme.Theme method), 71

get\_author() (alot.db.Message method), 49

get\_authors() (alot.db.Thread method), 47

get\_authors\_string() (alot.db.Thread method), 47

get\_buffers\_of\_type() (alot.ui.UI method), 55

get\_contacts() (alot.addressbook.abook.AbookAddressBook  
method), 74

get\_contacts() (alot.addressbook.AddressBook method),  
74

get\_content\_type() (alot.db.attachment.Attachment  
method), 50

get\_context() (alot.completion.CommandLineCompleter  
static method), 65

get\_data() (alot.db.attachment.Attachment method), 50

get\_date() (alot.db.Message method), 49

get\_datestring() (alot.db.Message method), 49

get\_deep\_focus() (alot.ui.UI method), 55

get\_email() (alot.db.Message method), 49

get\_filename() (alot.db.attachment.Attachment method),  
50

get\_filename() (alot.db.Message method), 49

get\_focus() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59

get\_hook() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager  
method), 68

get\_info() (alot.buffers.Buffer method), 57

get\_info() (alot.buffers.EnvelopeBuffer method), 57

get\_info() (alot.buffers.NamedQueriesBuffer method), 58

get\_info() (alot.buffers.SearchBuffer method), 58

get\_info() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59

get\_key() (in module alot.crypto), 91

get\_keybinding() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager  
method), 68

get\_keybindings() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager  
method), 69

get\_main\_addresses() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager  
method), 69

get\_message() (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 44

get\_message\_id() (alot.db.Message method), 49

get\_message\_parts() (alot.db.Message method), 49

get\_messages() (alot.db.Thread method), 47

get\_messagetree\_positions() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer  
method), 59

get\_mime\_representation()  
(alot.db.attachment.Attachment method),  
50

get\_named\_queries() (alot.db.manager.DBManager  
method), 44

get\_newest\_date() (alot.db.Thread method), 47

- [get\\_notmuch\\_setting\(\)](#) (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 69  
[get\\_oldest\\_date\(\)](#) (alot.db.Thread method), 47  
[get\\_params\(\)](#) (in module alot.db.utils), 53  
[get\\_replies\(\)](#) (alot.db.Message method), 49  
[get\\_replies\\_to\(\)](#) (alot.db.Thread method), 47  
[get\\_selected\\_buffer\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.BufferlistBuffer method), 57  
[get\\_selected\\_message\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59  
[get\\_selected\\_message\\_position\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59  
[get\\_selected\\_messagetree\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59  
[get\\_selected\\_mid\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59  
[get\\_selected\\_query\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.NamedQueriesBuffer method), 58  
[get\\_selected\\_tag\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.TagListBuffer method), 60  
[get\\_selected\\_thread\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.SearchBuffer method), 58  
[get\\_selected\\_thread\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59  
[get\\_selected\\_threadline\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.SearchBuffer method), 58  
[get\\_size\(\)](#) (alot.db.attachment.Attachment method), 50  
[get\\_subject\(\)](#) (alot.db.Thread method), 47  
[get\\_tags\(\)](#) (alot.db.Message method), 49  
[get\\_tags\(\)](#) (alot.db.Thread method), 47  
[get\\_tagstring\\_representation\(\)](#) (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 69  
[get\\_theming\\_attribute\(\)](#) (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 69  
[get\\_thread\(\)](#) (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 44  
[get\\_thread\(\)](#) (alot.db.Message method), 49  
[get\\_thread\\_id\(\)](#) (alot.db.Message method), 49  
[get\\_thread\\_id\(\)](#) (alot.db.Thread method), 47  
[get\\_threadline\\_theming\(\)](#) (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 69  
[get\\_threadline\\_theming\(\)](#) (alot.settings.theme.Theme method), 71  
[get\\_threads\(\)](#) (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 44  
[get\\_toplevel\\_messages\(\)](#) (alot.db.Thread method), 47  
[get\\_total\\_messages\(\)](#) (alot.db.Thread method), 48  
[get\\_xdg\\_env\(\)](#) (in module alot.helper), 75  
[gpg\\_key](#) (alot.account.Account attribute), 73  
[guess\\_encoding\(\)](#) (in module alot.helper), 75  
[guess\\_mimetype\(\)](#) (in module alot.helper), 75
- H**
- [handle\\_signal\(\)](#) (alot.ui.UI method), 55
- [has\\_replies\(\)](#) (alot.db.Message method), 49  
[headers](#) (alot.db.envelope.Envelope attribute), 51  
[HeadersList](#) (class in alot.widgets.globals), 61  
[HelpCommand](#) (class in alot.commands.globals), 82  
[humanize\\_size\(\)](#) (in module alot.helper), 76
- I**
- [index\\_of\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.BufferlistBuffer method), 57  
[input\\_queue](#) (alot.ui.UI attribute), 56
- K**
- [kill\\_filler\\_process\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.SearchBuffer method), 58  
[kill\\_search\\_processes\(\)](#) (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 45
- L**
- [last\\_commandline](#) (alot.ui.UI attribute), 56  
[libmagic\\_version\\_at\\_least\(\)](#) (in module alot.helper), 76  
[list\\_keys\(\)](#) (in module alot.crypto), 91  
[lookup\(\)](#) (alot.addressbook.AddressBook method), 74  
[lookup\\_command\(\)](#) (in module alot.commands), 79  
[lookup\\_parser\(\)](#) (in module alot.commands), 79  
[loop\\_hook\(\)](#) (built-in function), 37
- M**
- [mailcap\\_find\\_match\(\)](#) (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 69  
[mailto\\_to\\_envelope\(\)](#) (in module alot.helper), 76  
[matches\(\)](#) (alot.db.Message method), 49  
[matches\(\)](#) (alot.db.Thread method), 48  
[matches\\_address\(\)](#) (alot.account.Account method), 73  
[Message](#) (class in alot.db), 48  
[MessageSummaryWidget](#) (class in alot.widgets.thread), 63  
[MessageTree](#) (class in alot.widgets.thread), 63  
[messagetree\\_at\\_position\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59  
[messagetrees\(\)](#) (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59  
[mimewrap\(\)](#) (in module alot.helper), 76  
[mode](#) (alot.ui.UI attribute), 56  
[MoveCommand](#) (class in alot.commands.globals), 82  
[MoveFocusCommand](#) (class in alot.commands.search), 85  
[MoveFocusCommand](#) (class in alot.commands.thread), 88  
[MultipleSelectionCompleter](#) (class in alot.completion), 66
- N**
- [NamedQueriesBuffer](#) (class in alot.buffers), 57  
[NamedQueriesCommand](#) (class in alot.commands.globals), 82

- NamedqueriesSelectCommand (class in alot.commands.namedqueries), 87
- NamedQueryCompleter (class in alot.completion), 66
- NoMatchingAccount, 70
- NonexistantObjectError (class in alot.db.errors), 46
- notify() (alot.ui.UI method), 55
- ## O
- OpenAttachmentCommand (class in alot.commands.thread), 88
- OpenBufferlistCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 82
- OpenThreadCommand (class in alot.commands.search), 85
- ## P
- parse\_mailcap\_nametemplate() (in module alot.helper), 76
- parse\_mailto() (in module alot.helper), 76
- parse\_template() (alot.db.envelope.Envelope method), 51
- PATH, 4
- PathCompleter (class in alot.completion), 66
- paused() (alot.ui.UI method), 56
- PipeCommand (class in alot.commands.thread), 88
- post\_buffer\_close() (built-in function), 37
- post\_buffer\_focus() (built-in function), 37
- post\_buffer\_open() (built-in function), 37
- post\_edit\_translate() (built-in function), 36
- pre\_buffer\_close() (built-in function), 37
- pre\_buffer\_focus() (built-in function), 37
- pre\_buffer\_open() (built-in function), 37
- pre\_edit\_translate() (built-in function), 36
- pre\_envelope\_send() (built-in function), 35
- prepare\_string() (in module alot.widgets.search), 62
- pretty\_datetime() (in module alot.helper), 76
- PrintCommand (class in alot.commands.thread), 88
- prompt() (alot.ui.UI method), 56
- PromptCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 82
- PythonShellCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 82
- ## Q
- query() (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 45
- QueryCompleter (class in alot.completion), 67
- ## R
- read\_config() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 69
- read\_config() (in module alot.settings.utils), 70
- read\_notmuch\_config() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 70
- realname (alot.account.Account attribute), 73
- rebuild() (alot.buffers.Buffer method), 57
- rebuild() (alot.buffers.BufferlistBuffer method), 57
- rebuild() (alot.buffers.EnvelopeBuffer method), 57
- rebuild() (alot.buffers.NamedQueriesBuffer method), 58
- rebuild() (alot.buffers.SearchBuffer method), 58
- rebuild() (alot.buffers.TagListBuffer method), 60
- rebuild() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59
- recipienthistory (alot.ui.UI attribute), 56
- RefineCommand (class in alot.commands.envelope), 84
- RefineCommand (class in alot.commands.search), 86
- RefinePromptCommand (class in alot.commands.search), 86
- refresh() (alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer method), 59
- refresh() (alot.db.Thread method), 48
- RefreshCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 82
- registerCommand (class in alot.commands), 79
- relevant\_part() (alot.completion.Completer method), 65
- relevant\_part() (alot.completion.MultipleSelectionCompleter method), 66
- reload() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 70
- ReloadCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 82
- remove\_cte() (in module alot.db.utils), 53
- remove\_message() (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 45
- remove\_named\_query() (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 45
- remove\_tags() (alot.db.Message method), 49
- remove\_tags() (alot.db.Thread method), 48
- RemoveCommand (class in alot.commands.thread), 88
- RemoveQueryCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 82
- render\_part() (in module alot.db.utils), 53
- RepeatCommand (class in alot.commands.globals), 83
- reply\_prefix() (built-in function), 35
- reply\_subject() (built-in function), 36
- ReplyCommand (class in alot.commands.thread), 89
- represent\_datetime() (alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager method), 70
- resolve\_att() (in module alot.settings.utils), 70
- RFC
- RFC 1524, 3
  - RFC 2015, 49
  - RFC 3156, 15, 16
- RFC3156\_canonicalize() (in module alot.helper), 75
- RFC3156\_micalg\_from\_algo() (in module alot.crypto), 90
- ## S
- sanitize\_attachment\_filename() (built-in function), 37
- save() (alot.db.attachment.Attachment method), 50
- save\_named\_query() (alot.db.manager.DBManager method), 45
- SaveAttachmentCommand (class in alot.commands.thread), 89
- SaveCommand (class in alot.commands.envelope), 84

- SaveQueryCommand (class in `alot.commands.globals`), 83
- SaveQueryCommand (class in `alot.commands.search`), 86
- SearchBuffer (class in `alot.buffers`), 58
- SearchCommand (class in `alot.commands.globals`), 83
- send\_mail() (`alot.account.Account` method), 73
- send\_mail() (`alot.account.SendmailAccount` method), 74
- SendCommand (class in `alot.commands.envelope`), 84
- senderhistory (`alot.ui.UI` attribute), 56
- SendmailAccount (class in `alot.account`), 74
- set() (`alot.settings.manager.SettingsManager` method), 70
- set\_focus() (`alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer` method), 60
- SetCommand (class in `alot.commands.envelope`), 84
- SettingsManager (class in `alot.settings.manager`), 68
- shell\_quote() (in module `alot.helper`), 77
- shorten() (in module `alot.helper`), 77
- shorten\_author\_string() (in module `alot.helper`), 77
- show\_as\_root\_until\_keypress() (`alot.ui.UI` method), 56
- SIGINT, 6, 96
- signature (`alot.account.Account` attribute), 73
- signature\_as\_attachment (`alot.account.Account` attribute), 73
- signature\_filename (`alot.account.Account` attribute), 74
- SignCommand (class in `alot.commands.envelope`), 84
- SIGUSR1, 6, 96
- split\_commandline() (in module `alot.helper`), 77
- split\_commandstring() (in module `alot.helper`), 77
- store\_draft\_mail() (`alot.account.Account` method), 73
- store\_mail() (`alot.account.Account` static method), 73
- store\_sent\_mail() (`alot.account.Account` method), 73
- string\_decode() (in module `alot.helper`), 77
- string\_sanitize() (in module `alot.helper`), 77
- StringlistCompleter (class in `alot.completion`), 67
- ## T
- tag() (`alot.db.manager.DBManager` method), 45
- TagCommand (class in `alot.commands.envelope`), 85
- TagCommand (class in `alot.commands.search`), 86
- TagCommand (class in `alot.commands.thread`), 89
- TagCompleter (class in `alot.completion`), 67
- TagListBuffer (class in `alot.buffers`), 60
- TagListCommand (class in `alot.commands.globals`), 83
- TaglistSelectCommand (class in `alot.commands.taglist`), 86
- tags (`alot.db.envelope.Envelope` attribute), 51
- TagsCompleter (class in `alot.completion`), 67
- TagWidget (class in `alot.widgets.globals`), 61
- text\_quote() (built-in function), 36
- TextlinesList (class in `alot.widgets.thread`), 63
- Theme (class in `alot.settings.theme`), 71
- Thread (class in `alot.db`), 46
- ThreadBuffer (class in `alot.buffers`), 58
- ThreadlineWidget (class in `alot.widgets.search`), 62
- ThreadSelectCommand (class in `alot.commands.thread`), 90
- ThreadTree (class in `alot.widgets.thread`), 63
- timestamp\_format() (built-in function), 36
- tmpfile (`alot.db.envelope.Envelope` attribute), 51
- toggle\_all\_headers() (`alot.buffers.EnvelopeBuffer` method), 57
- ToggleHeaderCommand (class in `alot.commands.envelope`), 85
- touch\_external\_cmdlist() (built-in function), 36
- try\_decode() (in module `alot.helper`), 78
- ## U
- UI (class in `alot.ui`), 54
- UnattachCommand (class in `alot.commands.envelope`), 85
- unfold\_matching() (`alot.buffers.ThreadBuffer` method), 60
- UnsetCommand (class in `alot.commands.envelope`), 85
- untag() (`alot.db.manager.DBManager` method), 46
- update() (`alot.ui.UI` method), 56
- ## V
- validate\_key() (in module `alot.crypto`), 92
- verify\_detached() (in module `alot.crypto`), 92
- ## W
- write() (`alot.db.attachment.Attachment` method), 50