

Stop renting your shortcuts.

Replace TextExpander with Espanso — free and offline.

Type `:sig` and get your signature; `:addr` and get your address. Same idea as TextExpander, but your snippets are plain files you own, it works offline, and it costs nothing.

Who this is for

Anyone who lived on TextExpander until it went subscription-only and wants their snippets back in a free, open format. Comfortable editing a simple text file; no server needed.

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Why move off TextExpander

TextExpander moved from a one-time purchase to a subscription and keeps your snippets in its cloud. **Espanso** is a free, open-source text expander (written in Rust) that runs on Windows, macOS and Linux. Your snippets live in plain YAML files on your disk — offline, yours, and easy to back up or sync with the tools you already use.

What you gain

Unlimited snippets at no cost · plain-file snippets you control · works fully offline · dynamic content from dates, shell commands and scripts · a public Hub of ready-made snippet packages.

1 · Install Espanso

Install via Homebrew on macOS, your package manager on Linux, or the standalone installer on Windows. Once installed it runs quietly in the background and expands text in any application.

2 · Where your snippets live

Espanso keeps its configuration in `~/.config/espanso`, split into two folders: `config` (how it behaves) and `match` (what it expands). You'll spend your time in the `match` folder. Run `espanso edit` to open it.

3 · Add your snippets

Snippets are YAML: a trigger you type and the replace text it becomes. Add them to `match/base.yml`:

```
matches:
- trigger: ":sig"
  replace: "Best regards,\nAlex"

- trigger: ":addr"
  replace: "123 Main Street, Springfield"
```

Espanso also has built-in dynamic snippets — insert today's date, run a shell command, or fill a form — documented on the project site. Save the file and run `espanso restart` to load changes.

Migrating from TextExpander

There's no official one-click importer. The honest path is to recreate your snippets in YAML — quick for most people, since the trigger/replace pairs map directly. Export your TextExpander snippets as a reference and copy them over. Or start fresh from the Espanso Hub's ready-made packages.

4 · Manage it

- `espanso edit` to change snippets, `espanso restart` to apply.
- Browse the Espanso Hub for community snippet packages you can install in one command.
- Back up or sync the `~/.config/espanso` folder to have your snippets on every machine.

5 · Verify, then cancel

- Type a trigger in any app and confirm it expands.
- Move over the snippets you use most; you don't need all of them on day one.
- Once your daily shortcuts work, cancel the TextExpander subscription.

Common snags

Symptom	Fix
Nothing expands	Check Espanso is running (espanso status) and you restarted after edits.
YAML error on start	Indentation matters — match the two-space spacing exactly.
Works in some apps only	On macOS grant Accessibility permission in System Settings.

Found this useful?

This guide is free — pay what you want if it saved you time. More offline & one-time-purchase alternatives to subscription apps, plus other migration guides, at payoncehq.com.

Sources: official Espanso documentation and project pages. Details current as of 2026; check the project for the latest. Independent guide, not affiliated with Espanso or TextExpander.