

O'REILLY™ *Learning the*  
**UNIX** *Operating System*



By Jerry Peek, Grace Todino & John Strang; ISBN 1-56592-390-1, 106 pages.  
Fourth Edition, January 1998.  
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## 2. Using Window Systems

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### 2.1 Introduction to Windowing

All versions of UNIX work with computer terminals that handle a single window or a single login session. Most modern UNIX versions support one or more *window systems*. A window system is a package of programs that let a terminal handle many sessions at once. Along with the keyboard, window systems use a *mouse* or another device (such as a trackball) to move a *pointer* across the screen. The pointer can select parts of the screen, move them, help you copy and paste text, work with menus of commands, and more. If you've used a Macintosh, any version of Microsoft Windows, or OS/2 and its Presentation Manager (among others), you've used a window system. [Figure 2.1](#) shows a typical display with windows.

Here's a special note for Linux users. Most Linux systems support window systems. But they also have a surprisingly handy substitute: *virtual consoles*. If you're using the terminal that's directly connected to a personal computer running Linux, you can access up to eight separate screens on the same display. To use virtual consoles, hold down the left [ALT] key and press one of the function keys [F1] through [F8]. Each of those function keys will bring up a separate UNIX session with its own shell prompt. Use each one for whatever you want - just remember to log out from each virtual console when you're done!



We won't mention Linux virtual consoles any more. This chapter introduces the X Window System (called X for short), the most common UNIX window system. This introduction should also help you use non-X window systems.

Like UNIX, X is very flexible. The appearance of windows, the way menus work, and other features are controlled by a program called the *window manager*. Three common window managers are **mwm**, **fvwm**, and **twm**. There are plenty of other window managers - including **fvwm95**, which simulates a Windows 95 desktop on UNIX. This chapter explains **mwm** and uses it in examples. The details of using other window managers, and the ways they appear on the display, are somewhat different - but this chapter should help you use them, too.

## Figure 2.1: An X display with the mwm window manager

Figure 2.1

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## 1.4 The Unresponsive Terminal

During your UNIX session (while you're logged in), your terminal may not respond when you type a command, or the display on your screen may stop at an unusual place. That's called a "hung" or "frozen" terminal or session.

A session can be hung for several reasons. One of the most common is that the connection between your terminal and the computer gets too busy and your terminal has to wait its turn. (Other users or computers are probably sharing the same connection.) In that case, your session will start by itself in a few moments. You should *not* try to "un-hang" the session by entering extra commands because those commands will all take effect after the connection resumes.

If the system doesn't respond for quite a while (and how long that is depends on your individual situation; ask your system administrator for advice), the following solutions will usually work. Try these in the order shown until the system responds.

1. Press the [RETURN] key.

You may have typed a command but forgotten to press [RETURN] to tell the shell that you're done typing and it should now interpret the command.

2. If you can type commands, but nothing happens when you press [RETURN], try pressing [LINE FEED] or typing [CTRL-J]. If this works, your terminal needs to be reset to fix the [RETURN] key. Some systems have a **reset** command that you can run by typing [CTRL-J] **reset** [CTRL-J]. If this doesn't work, you may need to log out and log back in or turn your terminal off and on again.
3. If your shell has job control (see [Chapter 6](#)), type [CTRL-Z].

This suspends a program that may be running and gives you another shell prompt. Now you can enter the **jobs** command to find the program's name, then restart the program with **fg** or terminate it with **kill**.

4. Use your interrupt key (found earlier in this chapter - typically [DELETE] or [CTRL-C]).

This interrupts a program that may be running. (Unless a program is run in the background, as described in [Chapter 6](#), the shell will wait for it to finish before giving a new prompt. A long-running program may thus appear to hang the terminal.) If this doesn't work the first time, try it once more; doing it more than twice usually won't help.

5. Type [ CTRL-Q ].

If output has been stopped with [ CTRL-S ], this will restart it. (Note that some systems will automatically issue [ CTRL-S ] if they need to pause output; this character may not have been typed from the keyboard.)

6. Check that the [ NO SCROLL ] key is not locked or toggled on.

This key stops the screen display from scrolling upward. If your keyboard has a [ NO SCROLL ] key that can be toggled on and off by pressing it over and over, keep track of how many times you've pressed it as you try to free yourself. If it doesn't seem to help, be sure you've pressed it an even number of times; this leaves the key in the same state it was when you started.

7. Check the physical connection from the terminal to the system.
8. Type [ CTRL-D ] at the beginning of a new line.

Some programs (like **mail**) expect text from the user. A program may be waiting for an end-of-input character from you to tell it that you've finished entering text. Typing [ CTRL-D ] may cause you to log out, so you should try this only as a last resort.

9. If you're using a window system, close (terminate) the window you're using and open a new one. Otherwise, turn your terminal off, wait ten seconds or so, then turn it on again (this may also log you out).

If none of these works, you should then ask a local system expert for help and watch carefully.

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## 1.3 Types of Commands

The previous section was about UNIX commands you enter at a shell prompt. Some UNIX commands have commands of their own. (For examples, look at the **more**, **mail**, and **pg** commands in [Chapter 3](#). Text editors like **vi** and **emacs** also have their own commands.) Once you start the command, it prints its own prompt and understands its own set of commands (not UNIX commands).

For instance, if you enter **mail**, you'll see a new prompt from the **mail** program. You'll enter mail commands to handle mail messages. When you enter the special command (**q**) to quit the **mail** program, **mail** will stop prompting you. Then you'll get another shell prompt; you can enter UNIX commands again.

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## 1.2 Syntax of UNIX Command Lines

UNIX command lines can be simple, one-word entries like the **date** command. They can also be more complex: you may need to type more than the command name.

A UNIX command may or may not have *arguments*. An argument can be an option or a filename. The general format for UNIX commands is:

**command** *option(s)* *filename(s)*

There isn't a single set of rules for writing UNIX commands and arguments, but you can use these general rules in most cases:

- Enter commands in lowercase.
- *Options* modify the way in which a command works. Options are often single letters prefixed with a dash (-) and set off by any number of spaces or tabs. Multiple options in one command line can be set off individually (like **-a -b**), or, in some cases, you can combine them after a single dash (like **-ab**).

Some commands, including those on Linux systems, also have options made from complete words or phrases, like **--delete** or **--confirm-delete**. When you enter a command, you can use this option style, the single-letter options (which all start with a single dash), or both.

- The argument *filename* is the name of a file that you want to use. If you don't enter a filename correctly, you may get the response "*filename*: no such file or directory" or "*filename*: cannot open."

Some commands, like **telnet** and **who** (shown earlier in this chapter), have arguments that aren't filenames.

- You must type spaces between commands, options, and filenames.
- Options come before filenames.
- Two or more commands can be written on the same command line, each separated by a semicolon

(`;`). Commands entered this way are executed one after another by the shell.

UNIX has a lot of commands! Don't try to memorize all of them. In fact, you'll probably need to know just a few commands and their options. As time goes on, you'll learn these commands and the best way to use them for your job. We cover some useful UNIX commands in later chapters.

Let's look at a sample UNIX command. The `ls` command displays a list of files. It can be used with or without options and arguments. If you enter:

```
% ls
```

a list of filenames will be displayed on the screen. But if you enter:

```
% ls -l
```

there will be an entire line of information for each file. The `-l` option (a dash and a lowercase letter "l") modifies the normal output of the `ls` command and lists files in the long format. You can also get information about a particular file by using its name as the second argument. For example, to find out about a file called *chap1*, enter:

```
% ls -l chap1
```

Many UNIX commands have more than one option. For instance, `ls` has the `-a` (*all*) option for listing hidden files. You can use multiple options in either of these ways:

```
% ls -a -l
```

```
% ls -al
```

You must type one space between the command name and the dash that introduces the options. If you enter `ls-al`, the shell will say "ls-al: command not found."

### 1.2.1 Exercise: Entering a few commands

The best way to get used to UNIX is to enter some commands. To run a command, type in the command and then press the [RETURN] key. Remember that almost all UNIX commands are typed in lowercase.

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Get today's date.                    | Enter <code>date</code>  |
| List logged-in users.                | Enter <code>who</code>   |
| Obtain more information about users. | Enter <code>who -u</code> or <code>finger</code> or <code>w</code> |
| Find out who is at your terminal.    | Enter <code>who am i</code>  |

Enter two commands in the same line. Enter **who am i;date**

Mistype a command.

Enter **woh**

In this session, you've tried several simple commands and seen the results on the screen.

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# 1. Getting Started

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## 1.1 Working in the UNIX Environment

Before you can start using UNIX, your system administrator has to set up a UNIX account for you. Think of this account as your office - it's your place in the UNIX environment. Other users may also be at work on the same system. At many sites, there will be a whole network of UNIX computers. So in addition to knowing your account name, you may also need to know the *hostname* (name) of the computer that has your account.

Each user communicates with the computer from a terminal or a window. To get into the UNIX environment, you first connect to the UNIX computer. (You may have a terminal that's already connected to the computer.) Next, you start a session by logging in to your UNIX account. Logging in does two things: it identifies which user is in a session, and it tells the computer that you're ready to start working. When you've finished working, you log out - and, if necessary, disconnect from the UNIX computer.

### 1.1.1 Connecting to the UNIX Computer

If you turn on your terminal and see a message from the UNIX computer that looks something like this:

```
login:
```



you can probably skip ahead to the section "Logging In" later in this chapter. Otherwise, browse through the next few sections and find the one that applies to you. (We can't cover every user's situation exactly. If none of these suggestions helps you enough, ask another UNIX user or your system administrator.)

### 1.1.1.1 Connecting from another operating system

If you're using a personal computer to connect to the UNIX system, you'll probably need to start a *terminal emulation* program. Some common programs are **procomm**, **qmodem**, **kermit**, **minicom**, and **telnet**. (There are lots of others.)

If you start the program and get a UNIX "login:" prompt, you're ready to log in. But if your screen stays blank or you get another message that you don't understand, check with another user or your system administrator for help.

### 1.1.1.2 Connecting with a data switch

Your office may have a data switch, a port contender, or another system that allows you to select which computer you will connect to. Like a telephone switchboard, this connects your terminal to one of a number of computers. Enter your computer's hostname or code number at the prompt - or choose from the menu of hosts.

### 1.1.1.3 Connecting from a window system

If you have an X terminal or a workstation, you should read the introductory sections of [Chapter 2, Using Window Systems](#) to help you find the right steps for logging in.

## 1.1.2 Logging In

The process of making yourself known to the UNIX computer system and getting to your UNIX account is called *logging in*. Before you can start work, you must connect your terminal or window to the UNIX computer (see the previous sections). Then log in to UNIX and identify yourself. To log in, enter your username (usually your name or initials) and a private password. The password does not appear on the screen as you enter it.

When you log in successfully, you will get some system messages and finally the UNIX shell prompt (where you can enter UNIX commands). A successful login to the system named *nutshell* would look something like this:

```
O'Reilly & Associates, Inc.  
nutshell.oreilly.com: Solaris UNIX version 2.5
```

```
login: john
Password:
Last login: Mon Nov  3 14:34:51 EST 1997 from joe_pc

----- NOTICE TO ALL USERS -----
The hosts nutshell, mongo and cruncher will be down
for maintenance from 6 to 9 PM tonight.
-----

My opinions may have changed, but not the fact that I am right.
Tue Nov  4 12:24:48 EST 1997
%
```

In this example, the system messages include a "fortune" and the date. Although this example doesn't show it, you may be asked for your *terminal type*, accounting or chargeback information, and so on. The last line to appear is the UNIX shell prompt. When you reach this point, you're logged in to your account and can start using UNIX commands.

Instead of a shell prompt, you may get a menu of choices ("email," "news," and so on). If one of the choices is something like "shell prompt" or "command prompt," select it. Then you'll be able to follow the descriptions and examples in this book.

The messages that appear when you log in differ from system to system and day to day. The shell prompt also differs. The examples in this book use the percentage sign as a prompt (%).

Let's summarize logging in, step by step:

1. If needed, connect your terminal or window to the UNIX system.
2. If you don't have a "login:" prompt, press the [RETURN] key a few times until you see that prompt on the screen.
3. Type in your username in *lowercase letters* at the prompt. For example, if your login name is "john," type:

```
login: john
```

Press the [RETURN] key.

The system should prompt you to enter your password. If passwords aren't used on your system, you can skip the next step.

4. If you were assigned a password, type it at the prompt. For security, your password is not displayed as you type it:

Password:

Press the [RETURN] key after you finish typing your password.

The system verifies your account name and password, and, if they're correct, logs you in to your account.

### 1.1.2.1 Problem checklist

*Nothing seemed to happen after I logged in.*

Wait a minute, since the system may just be slow. If you still don't get anything, ask other users if they're having the same problem.

*The system says "login incorrect".*

Try logging in again, taking care to enter the correct name and password. Be sure to type your username at the "login:" prompt and your password at the "password:" prompt. Backspacing may not work while entering either of these; if you make a mistake, use [RETURN] to get a new "login:" prompt and try again. Also make sure to use the exact combination of upper- and lowercase letters your password contains.

If you still fail after trying to log in a few more times, check with your system administrator to make sure you're using the right username and password for your account.

*All letters are in UPPERCASE and/or have backslashes (\) before them.*

You probably entered your username in uppercase letters. Type **exit** and log in again.

## 1.1.3 Remote Logins

The computer you log in to may not be the computer you need to use. For instance, you might have a workstation on your desk but need to do some work on the main computer in another building. Or you might be a professor doing research with a computer at another university.

Your UNIX system can probably connect to another computer to let you work as if you were sitting at the other computer. To do this, you first log in to your local computer. Then you start a program on your local computer that connects to the remote computer. Some typical programs are **telnet** and **rlogin** (for connecting over a computer network) as well as **cu** and **tip** (for connecting through telephone lines using a modem). You use the remote system until you're done; when you log off the remote computer, the remote-login program quits, and then returns you to your local computer.

The syntax for most remote-login programs is:

*program-name remote-hostname*

For example, if Dr. Nelson wanted to connect to the remote computer named *biolab.medu.edu*, she'd log in to her local computer (named *fuzzy*) first. Next, she'd use the **telnet** program to reach the remote computer. Her session might look something like this:

```
login: jennifer
Password:

NOTICE to all second-floor MDs: meeting in room 304 at 4 PM.

fuzzy% telnet biolab.medu.edu

Medical University Biology Laboratory

biolab.medu.edu login: jdnelson
Password:

biolab%
      .
      .
      .
biolab% exit
Connection closed by foreign host.
fuzzy%
```

Her accounts have shell prompts that include the hostname. This reminds her when she's logged in remotely. If you use more than one system but don't have the hostname in your prompt, references in [Appendix A, Reading List](#) (*UNIX Power Tools*, for example), will show you how to add it.

## 1.1.4 The UNIX Shell

Once you've logged in, you're working with a program called a *shell*. The shell interprets the commands you enter, runs the program you've asked for, and generally coordinates what happens between you and the UNIX operating system. Common shells include Bourne (**sh**), Korn (**ksh**), and C (**csh**) shells, as well as **bash** and **tcsh**.

For a beginner, the differences between most shells are slight. If you plan to do a lot of work with UNIX, though, ask your system administrator which shell your account uses; you should learn more about your shell and its set of special commands.

## 1.1.5 The Shell Prompt

When the system finishes running a command, the shell replies with a prompt to tell you that you can enter another command line.

Shell prompts usually contain \$ or %. The prompt can be customized, though, so your own shell prompt may be different.

## 1.1.6 Entering a Command Line

Entering a command line at the shell prompt tells the computer what to do. Each command line includes the name of a UNIX program. When you press [RETURN], the shell interprets your command line and executes the program.

The first word that you type at a shell prompt is always a UNIX command (program name). Like most things in UNIX, command names are case-sensitive; if the command name is lowercase (and most are), you must type it in lowercase. Some simple command lines have just one word: the command name.

### 1.1.6.1 date

An example single-word command line is **date**. Entering the command **date** displays the current date and time:

```
% date
Tue Nov  4 13:39:24 EST 1997
%
```

As you type a command line, the system simply collects your input from the keyboard. Pressing the [RETURN] key tells the shell that you have finished entering text and that it can start executing the command.

### 1.1.6.2 who

Another simple command is **who**. It lists each logged-on user's username, terminal number, and login time.

The **who** command can also tell you who is logged in at the terminal you're using. The command line is **who am i**. This command line consists of the command (**who**) and arguments (**am i**). (The section "Syntax of UNIX Command Lines," later in this chapter, explains arguments.)

```
% who am i
cactus!john      tty23    Nov  6 08:26      (rose)
```

The response shown in this example says that:

- "I am" John.
- I'm logged on to the computer named "cactus."
- I'm using terminal 23.
- I logged in at 8:26 on the morning of November 6.
- I started my login from another computer named "rose."

Not all versions of **who am i** give the same information.

## 1.1.7 Correcting a Mistake

What if you make a mistake in a command line? Suppose you typed **dare** instead of **date** and pressed the [RETURN] key before you realized your mistake. The shell will give you an error message:

```
% dare
dare: command not found
%
```

Don't be too concerned about getting error messages. Sometimes you'll get an error even if it appears that you typed the command correctly. This can be caused by typing control characters that are invisible on the screen. Once the prompt returns, reenter your command.

Most modern shells let you recall previous commands and edit command lines. If you'll be doing a lot of work at the shell prompt, it's worth learning these handy techniques. They take more time to learn than we can spend here, though. Ask other users for help or read a reference book for your shell (see [Appendix A](#)). We'll concentrate on simple methods that work with all shells.

If you see a mistake before you press [RETURN], you can use the [BACKSPACE] key to erase the mistake and put in the correction.

The *erase character* differs from system to system and from account to account, and can be customized. The most common erase characters are:

- [BACKSPACE]
- [DELETE], [DEL], or [RUBOUT] key
- [CTRL-H]

[CTRL-H] is called a *control character*. To type a control character (for example, [CTRL-H], hold down the [CTRL] key while pressing the letter "h". (This is like the way you make an uppercase letter: hold the [SHIFT] key while pressing a letter key.) In the text, we will write control characters as

[ CTRL-H ], but in the examples, we will use the standard notation: ^H. This is *not* the same as pressing the ^ (caret) key, letting go, and then typing an H!

The key labeled [ DEL ] may be used as the *interrupt character* instead of the erase character. (It's labeled [ DELETE ] or [ RUBOUT ] on some terminals.) This key is used to interrupt or cancel a command, and can be used in many (but not all) cases when you want to quit what you're doing. Another character often programmed to do the same thing is [ CTRL-C ].

Some other common control characters are:

[ CTRL-U ]

Erases the whole input line; you can start over.

[ CTRL-S ]

Pauses output from a program that is writing to the screen.

[ CTRL-Q ]

Restarts output after a pause by [ CTRL-S ].

[ CTRL-D ]

Used to signal end-of-input for some programs (like **cat** and **mail**; see [Chapter 3, Your UNIX Account](#)) and return you to a shell prompt. If you type [ CTRL-D ] at a shell prompt, it may also log you out of the UNIX system.

Find the erase and interrupt characters for your account and write them down:

\_\_\_\_\_ Backspace and erase a character

\_\_\_\_\_ Interrupt a command

In [Chapter 3](#), we'll tell you how to change these characters if you like.

## 1.1.8 Logging Out

To end a UNIX session, you must log out. You should *not* end a session by just turning off your terminal! To log out, enter the command **exit**. (In many cases, the command **logout** will also work.) Depending on your shell, you may also be able to log out by typing [ CTRL-D ].

What happens next depends on the place from which you've logged in:

- If your terminal is connected directly to the computer, the "login:" prompt should appear on the screen.
- If you're using a window system, the window will probably close. If you have additional windows open, you'll need to log out or close them, too. You may also need to terminate the window system itself. (See [Chapter 2](#).)
- If you were connected to a remote computer, the system prompt from your local computer should reappear on your screen. (That is, you're still logged in to your local computer.) Repeat the process if you want to log out from the local computer.

After you've logged out, you can turn off your terminal or leave it on for the next user.

### 1.1.8.1 Problem checklist

The first few times you use UNIX, you aren't likely to have any of the following problems. However, you may have these problems later, as you start doing more advanced work.

*You get another shell prompt or the system says ": not login shell."*

You've been using a subshell (a shell created by your original login shell). To end each subshell, type **exit** (or just type [CTRL-D] until you're logged out.

*The system says "There are stopped jobs."*

Many UNIX systems have a feature called *job control* that lets you suspend a program temporarily while it's running. One or more of the programs you ran during your session has not ended, but is stopped (paused). Enter **fg** to bring each stopped job into the foreground, then quit the program normally. (See [Chapter 6, Multitasking](#).)

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## Acknowledgments

Parts of [Chapter 2](#), were adapted from O'Reilly & Associates' *X Window System User's Guide, Volume 3, OSF/Motif Edition*, by Valerie Quercia and Tim O'Reilly. Valerie Quercia reviewed the revised [Chapter 2](#).

Gigi Estabrook was the update editor for the fourth edition, and Nancy Wolfe Kotary was the production editor and copyedited the new edition. Madeleine Newell proofread the fourth edition; Seth Maislin wrote the index; Sheryl Avruch, Nicole Gipson Arigo, and Mary Anne Mayo provided quality control checks; and Elissa Haney provided production assistance.

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## Format

The following sections describe the conventions used in this handbook.

### Commands

We introduce each main concept, then break it down into task-oriented sections. Each section shows the best command to use for a task, explains what it does, and the syntax (the way to put the command line together). The syntax is given like this:

```
rm filename
```

Commands appear in **boldface** type (in this example, **rm**). You should type the command exactly as it appears in the example. The variable parts (here, *filename*) will appear in *italic* type; you must supply your own value. To enter this command, you would type **rm** followed by a space and the name of the file that you want to remove, then press the [RETURN] key. (Your keyboard may have a key labeled [ENTER], or an arrow with a right-angle shaft, instead of a [RETURN] key.) Throughout this book, the term *enter* means to type a command and press [RETURN] to run it.

### Examples

Examples show what should happen as you enter a command. Some examples assume that you've created certain files. If you haven't, you may not get the results shown.

We use typewriter-style characters for examples. Items you type to try the example are **boldface**. System messages and responses are normal text.

Here's an example:

```
% date
```

```
Tue Nov 4 13:39:24 EST 1997
```

```
%
```

The character "%" is the shell (system) prompt. To do this example, you would type **date** and then press [RETURN]. The **date** command responds "Tue Nov 4 13:39:24 EST 1997" and then returns you to the prompt.

## Problem Checklist

We've included a problem checklist in some sections. You may skip these parts and go back to them if you have a problem.

## Exercises

Many sections have exercises to reinforce the text you've read. Follow the exercises, but don't be afraid to experiment on your own.

The exercises have two columns: the left-hand column tells you what to do and the right-hand column tells you how to do it. For example, a line in the exercise near the end of [Chapter 1, Getting Started](#), shows:

```
Get today's date Enter date
```

To follow the exercise, you type in the word **date** on your keyboard and then press the [RETURN] key. The left-hand column tells you what will happen.

After you try the commands, you'll have a better idea of the ones you want to learn more about. You can then look them up in your system's UNIX documentation or use one of the other references listed in [Appendix A](#).

## A Note to Our Readers

We update each book periodically. This allows us to incorporate changes suggested to us by our readers. We'd like new users to benefit from your experience as well as ours.

If you have a suggestion, or solve a significant problem that our handbook does not cover, please write to or call us at the following address and let us know about it (include information about your UNIX environment and the computer you use):

O'Reilly & Associates, Inc.  
101 Morris Street

Sebastopol, CA 95472  
1-800-998-9938 (in US or Canada)  
1-707-829-0515 (international/local)  
1-707-829-0104 (FAX)

If you have access to electronic mail ([Chapter 3, Your UNIX Account](#)), you may email your comments to:

*bookquestions@oreilly.com*

You'll have our thanks, along with thanks from future readers of this handbook.

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## What's New in the Fourth Edition

UNIX keeps evolving; this book changes with it. Although most of the tips in this book work on all UNIX systems - old and new - there have been changes since 1993 that justify a fourth edition. A major change is the emergence of Linux as a very popular version of UNIX. Linux has some unique features that even beginners will appreciate. We've also made changes suggested by our readers.

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## What This Handbook Covers

*Learning the UNIX Operating System* teaches the basic system utility commands to get you started with UNIX. Instead of overwhelming you with a lot of details, we want you to be comfortable in the UNIX environment as soon as possible. So we cover the most useful features of a command instead of describing all its options in detail. [Appendix A, Reading List](#), lists other references.

After reading this handbook, you should be able to:

- Log in and log out of your system
- Control the system with control characters
- Send messages to other users
- Manage UNIX files and directories, including listing, creating, copying, printing, and removing files, and moving in and out of directories
- Work more efficiently using UNIX pipes, filters, and multitasking

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## Versions of UNIX

There are many different versions of UNIX. Until a few years ago, there were two main versions: the line of UNIX releases that started at AT&T (the latest is System V Release 4), and another line from the University of California at Berkeley (the latest version is BSD 4.4). Some other major commercial versions include SunOS, Solaris, SCO UNIX, AIX, HP/UX, and ULTRIX. The freely available versions include Linux and FreeBSD.

Many versions of UNIX, including System V Release 4, merge earlier AT&T releases with BSD features. The recent POSIX standard for UNIX-like operating systems defines a single interface to UNIX. Although advanced features differ among systems, you should be able to use this introductory handbook on any type of system.

UNIX can be used the way it was originally designed, on typewriter-like terminals. Most versions of UNIX can also work with window systems, which allow each user to have more than one "terminal" on a single display. [Chapter 2, Using Window Systems](#), shows the basics of a window system. All other chapters are for every UNIX user - with or without a window system.

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## The UNIX Operating System

An *operating system* (or "OS") is a set of programs that controls a computer. It controls both the *hardware* (things you can touch - such as keyboards, displays, and disk drives) and the *software* (application programs that you run, such as a word processor).

Some computers have a *single-user* OS, which means only one person can use the computer at a time. Many older OSes (like DOS) can also do only one job at a time. But almost any computer can do a lot more if it has a *multiuser, multitasking* operating system like UNIX. These powerful OSes let many people use the computer at the same time and let each user run several jobs at once.

UNIX was invented almost 30 years ago for scientific and professional users who wanted a very powerful and flexible OS. It's been significantly developed since then. Because UNIX was designed for experts, it can be a bit overwhelming at first. But after you get the basics (from this book!) you'll start to appreciate some of the reasons to use UNIX:

- It comes with a huge number of powerful application programs. You can get many others for free on the Internet. (The GNU utilities, freely available from the Free Software Foundation, are very popular.) You can thus do much more at a much lower cost.
- Not only are the applications often free, but some versions of UNIX itself are also free. Linux is a



good example. Like the free applications, these free versions of UNIX are usually of excellent quality. They're maintained by volunteer programmers who want a powerful OS and are frustrated by the slow, bug-ridden development of OSEs at big companies.

- Much of the development of the Internet was done on UNIX systems. Many Internet web sites and Internet service providers use UNIX because it's so powerful, flexible, and inexpensive.
- UNIX runs on almost any kind of hardware. After you learn UNIX on one system, you'll know how to use it on any other system.

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## 6. Multitasking

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Suppose you are running a command that will take a long time to process. On a single-task system like MS-DOS, you would enter the command and wait for the system prompt to return, telling you that you could enter a new command. In UNIX, however, there is a way to enter new commands in the "foreground" while one or more commands are still running in the "background." This is called *background processing*.

When you enter a command as a background process, the shell prompt reappears immediately so that you can enter a new command. The original command will still be running in the background, but you can use the system to do other things during that time. Depending on your system and your shell, you may even be able to log off and let the background process run to completion.

### 6.1 Running a Command in the Background

Running a command as a background process is most often done to free a terminal when you know the command will take a long time to run.

To run a command in the background, add the "&" character at the end of the command line before you press the [RETURN] key. The shell will then assign and display a process ID number for the command:

```
% nroff -ms chap1 > chap1.out &  
[1] 29890  
%
```

(The **nroff** program formats documents. It's a good example because text formatting usually takes a while, so users often do it in the background. See your UNIX documentation for details on **nroff**.)

The process ID (PID) for this command is 29890. The PID is useful when you want to check the status of a background process or, if you need to, cancel it. You don't need to remember the PID, because there are UNIX commands (explained in later sections of this chapter) to check on the processes you have running. In some shells, a status line will be printed on your screen when the background process finishes.

In the C shell, you can put an entire sequence of commands separated by semicolons into the background by putting an ampersand at the end of the entire command line. In other shells, enclose the command sequence in parentheses before adding the ampersand:

```
(command1; command2) &
```

On many systems, the shells have another feature called *job control*. You can use the *suspend character* (usually [CTRL-Z]) to suspend a program running in the foreground. The program will pause and you'll get a new shell prompt. You can then do anything else you like, including putting the suspended program into the background using the **bg** command. The **fg** command will bring a background process to the foreground.

For example, you might start **sort** running on a big file, and, after a minute, want to send email. You stop **sort**, then put it in the background. The shell prints a message, then another shell prompt. You send mail while **sort** runs.

```
% sort hugefile1 hugefile2 > sorted
    ...time goes by...
[CTRL-Z] Stopped
% bg
[1]    sort hugefile1 hugefile2 > sorted &
% mail eduardo@nacional.cl
    ...
```

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## 3. Your UNIX Account

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Once you log in, you can use the many facilities UNIX provides. As an authorized system user, you have an account that gives you:

- A place in the UNIX filesystem where you can store your files.
- A username that identifies you and lets you control access to your files and receive messages from other users.
- A customizable environment that you can tailor to your preferences.

### 3.1 The UNIX Filesystem

A *file* is the unit of storage in UNIX, as in many other systems. A file can hold anything: text (a report you're writing, a to-do list), a program, digitally encoded pictures or sound, and so on. All of those are just sequences of raw data until they are interpreted by the right program.

In UNIX, files are organized into directories. A *directory* is actually a special kind of file where the system stores information about other files. A directory can be thought of as a place, so that files are said to be contained *in* directories and you are said to work *inside* a directory. (If you've used a Macintosh or Microsoft Windows computer, a UNIX directory is a lot like a folder. MS-DOS and UNIX directories are very similar.)

## 3.1.1 Your Home Directory

When you log in to UNIX, you're placed in a directory called your *home directory*. This home directory, a unique place in the UNIX filesystem, contains the files you use almost every time you log in. In your home directory, you can make your own files. As you'll see in a minute, you can also store your own directories within your home directory. Like folders in a file cabinet, this is a good way to organize your files.

## 3.1.2 Your Working Directory

Your *working directory* (sometimes called your current working directory) is the directory you're currently working in. At the start of every session, your home directory is your working directory. You may change to another directory, in which case the directory you move to becomes your working directory.

Unless you tell UNIX otherwise, all commands that you enter apply to the files in your working directory. In the same way, when you create files, they're created in your working directory.

## 3.1.3 The Directory Tree

All directories on a UNIX system are organized into a hierarchical structure that you can imagine as a family tree. The parent directory of the tree is known as the *root directory* and is written as a forward slash (/).

The root contains several directories. [Figure 3.1](#) shows the top of an imaginary UNIX filesystem tree - the root directory and some of the directories under the root.

### Figure 3.1: Example of a directory tree

#### Figure 3.1

*bin*, *etc*, *users*, *tmp*, and *usr* are some of the *subdirectories* (child directories) of *root*. These are fairly standard directories and usually contain specific kinds of system files. For instance, *bin* contains many UNIX commands. Not all systems have a directory named *users*; it may be called *u*, *home*, and/or be located in some other part of the filesystem.

In our example, the parent directory of *users* (one level above) is *root*. It also has two subdirectories (one level below), *john* and *carol*. On a UNIX system, each directory has one parent directory and may have one or more subdirectories. [1] A subdirectory (like *carol*) can have its own subdirectories (like *work* and *play*), to a limitless depth for practical purposes.

[1] **Q:** Which directory doesn't seem to have a parent directory? **A:** On most UNIX systems, the root directory, at the top of the tree, is *its own* parent. Some systems have another directory above the root.

To specify a file or directory location, you write its *pathname*. A pathname is like the address of the directory or file in the UNIX filesystem. We'll look at pathnames in a moment.

On a basic UNIX system, all files in the filesystem are stored on disks connected to your computer. It isn't always easy to use the files on someone else's computer or for someone on another computer to use your files. Your system may have an easier way: a *networked filesystem* (with a name like NFS or RFS). Networked filesystems make a remote computer's files appear as if they're part of your computer's directory tree. For instance, your computer in Los Angeles might have a directory named *boston*. When you look in that subdirectory, you'll see some (or all) of the directory tree from your company's computer in Boston. Your system administrator can tell you if your computer has any networked filesystems.

### 3.1.4 Absolute Pathnames

As you saw above, the UNIX filesystem organizes its files and directories in an inverted tree structure with the root directory at the top. An *absolute pathname* tells you the path of directories you must travel to get from the root to the directory or file you want. In a pathname, put slashes (/) between the directory names.

For example, */users/john* is an absolute pathname. It locates just one directory. Here's how:

- the root is the first "/"
- the directory *users* (a subdirectory of *root*)
- the directory *john* (a subdirectory of *users*)

Be sure not to type spaces anywhere in the pathname. [Figure 3.2](#) shows this structure.

#### Figure 3.2: Absolute path of directory john

Figure 3.2

If you look at [Figure 3.2](#), you'll see that the directory *john* has a subdirectory named *work*. Its absolute pathname is */users/john/work*.

The root is always indicated by the slash (/) at the start of the pathname.

### 3.1.5 Relative Pathnames

You can also locate a file or directory with a *relative pathname*. A relative pathname gives the location relative to your working directory.

Unless you use an absolute pathname (starting with a slash), UNIX assumes that you're using a relative pathname. Like absolute pathnames, relative pathnames can go through more than one directory level by naming the directories along the path.

For example, if you're currently in the *users* directory (see [Figure 3.2](#)), the relative pathname to the *carol* directory below is simply *carol*. The relative pathname to the *play* directory below that is *carol/play*.

Notice that neither of the pathnames in the previous paragraph starts with a slash. That's what makes them relative pathnames! These pathnames start at the working directory, not the root directory.

### 3.1.5.1 Exercise

Here's a short but important exercise. The example above explained the relative pathname *carol/play*. What do you think UNIX would say about the pathname */carol/play*? (Look again at [Figure 3.2](#).)

UNIX would say "No such file or directory." Why? (Please think about that before you read more. It's very important and it's one of the most common beginner's mistakes.) Here's the answer. Because it starts with a slash, the pathname */carol/play* is an absolute pathname that starts from the root. It says to look in the *root* directory for a subdirectory named *carol*. But there is no subdirectory named *carol* one level directly below the root, so the pathname is wrong. The only absolute pathname to the *play* directory is */users/carol/play*.

### 3.1.5.2 Relative pathnames up

You can go up the tree by using the shorthand *..* (dot dot) for the parent directory. As you saw above, you can also go down the tree by using subdirectory names. In either case (up or down), separate each level by a slash (*/*).

[Figure 3.3](#) shows a part of [Figure 3.1](#). If your working directory in the figure is *work*, there are two pathnames for the *play* subdirectory of *carol*. You already know how to write the absolute pathname, */users/carol/play*. You can also go up one level (with *..*) to *carol*, then go down the tree to *play*. [Figure 3.3](#) shows that.

### Figure 3.3: Relative pathname from work to play

Figure 3.3

The relative pathname would be *../play*. It would be wrong to give the relative address as *carol/play*. Using *carol/play* would say that *carol* is a subdirectory of your working directory instead of what it is in this case: the parent directory.

Absolute and relative pathnames are totally interchangeable. UNIX commands simply follow whatever path you specify to wherever it leads. If you use an absolute pathname, the path starts from the root. If you use a relative pathname, the path starts from your working directory. Choose whichever is easier at the moment.

## 3.1.6 Changing Your Working Directory

When you know the absolute or relative pathname of a directory, you can move up and down the UNIX directory tree.

### 3.1.6.1 pwd

To find which directory you're currently in, use the **pwd** (print working directory) command. The **pwd** command takes no arguments.

```
% pwd
/users/john
%
```

**pwd** prints the absolute pathname of your working directory.

### 3.1.6.2 cd

You can change your working directory to any directory (including another user's directory - if you have permission) with the **cd** (change directory) command.

The **cd** command has the form:

```
cd pathname
```

The argument is an absolute or a relative pathname (whichever is easier) for the directory you want to change to.

```
% cd /users/carol
% pwd
/users/carol
% cd work
```



```
% pwd
/users/carol/work
%
```

Here's a handy tip: the command **cd**, with no arguments, takes you to your home directory from wherever you are in the filesystem.

Note that you can only change to another directory. You cannot **cd** to a filename. If you try, UNIX will give you an error message:

```
% cd /etc/passwd
/etc/passwd: Not a directory
%
```

*/etc/passwd* is a file that contains information about users allowed to log in to the system.

### 3.1.7 Files in the Directory Tree

A directory can hold subdirectories. And, of course, a directory can hold files. [Figure 3.4](#) is a close-up of the filesystem around *john*'s home directory. The four files are shown along with the *work* subdirectory.

#### Figure 3.4: Files in the directory tree

#### Figure 3.4

Pathnames to files are made the same way as pathnames to directories. For example, if your working directory is *users*, the relative pathname to the *work* directory below would be *john/work*. The relative pathname to the *ch1* file would be *john/ch1*.

### 3.1.8 Listing Files

To use the **cd** command, you must decide which entries in a directory are subdirectories and which are files. The **ls** command lists the entries in the directory tree.

#### 3.1.8.1 ls

When you enter the **ls** command, you'll get a listing of the files and subdirectories contained in your working directory. The syntax is:

```
ls option(s) directory-and-filename(s)
```

If you've just logged in for the first time, entering **ls** without any arguments may seem to do nothing. This isn't surprising because you haven't made any files in your working directory. If you have no files, nothing is displayed; you'll simply get a new shell prompt.

```
% ls
%
```

But if you've already made some files or directories in your account, those names are displayed. The output depends on what's in your directory. The display should look something like this:

```
% ls
ch1      ch10     ch2      ch3      intro
%
```

(Some systems display filenames in a single column. If yours does, you can change the display to columns with the **-x** option.) **ls** has a lot of options that change the information and display format.

The **-a** option (for *all*) is guaranteed to show you some more files, as in the following example:

```
% ls -a
.          .exerc  ch1      ch2      intro
..         .profile ch10     ch3
%
```

You'll always see at least two new entries with the names "." (dot) and ".." (dot dot). As mentioned earlier, .. is always the relative pathname to the parent directory, and a single . always stands for any working directory. There may also be other files, like *.profile* or *.exerc*. Any entry whose name begins with a dot is hidden - it will be listed only if you use **ls -a**.

To get more information about each file, add the **-l** option. (That's a lowercase letter "L" for *long*.) This option can be used alone, or in combination with **-a**, as shown in [Figure 3.5](#).

### Figure 3.5: Output from **ls -al**

Figure 3.5

The long format provides the following information about each file:

*Total n*

*n* amount of storage used by the files in this directory.

## *Type*

Tells whether the file is a directory (d) or a plain file (-). (There are other less common types that we don't explain here.)

## *Access modes*

Specifies three types of users (yourself, your group, all others) who are allowed to read (r), write (w), or execute (x) your files.

## *Links*

The number of files and directories linked to this one.

## *Owner*

The person who created or owns the file.

## *Group*

The group that owns the file. (If your version of UNIX doesn't show this column, add the **-g** option to see it.)

## *Size (in bytes)*

The size of the file.

## *Modification date*

The date when the file was last modified.

## *Name*

The name of the file or directory.

Notice especially the columns that list the owner and group of the files, and the access modes (also called permissions). The person who creates a file is its owner; if you've created any files (or the system administrator did it for you), this column should show your username. You also belong to a group, to which you were assigned by the system administrator. Files you create will either be marked with the name of your group or, in some cases, the group that owns the directory.

The *permissions* control who can read, write (modify), or execute the file (if it's a program). The permissions have ten characters. The first character shows the file type (directory or plain file). The second through the fourth characters show the permissions for the file's owner - yourself if you created the file. The fifth through the seventh characters show permissions for other members of the file's group. The eighth through the tenth characters show permissions for all other users.

For example, the permissions for *.profile* are `-rw-r--r--`, so it's a plain file. You, the owner, have both read and write permissions. But other users of the system can only read the file; they cannot modify

the file's contents. No one has execute (x) permission, which should only be used for executable files (files that hold programs).

In the case of directories, x means the permission to access the directory - for example, to run a command that reads a file there or to use a subdirectory. Notice that the two directories shown in the example are executable (searchable by you, by your group, and by everyone else on the system). A directory with w (write) permission allows deleting, renaming, or adding files within the directory. Read (r) permission allows listing the directory with **ls**.

You can use the **chmod** command to change the permissions of your files and directories. See the section of this chapter called "Protecting and Sharing Files."

If you need to know only which files are directories and which are executable files, you can use the **-F** option.

If you give the pathname to a directory, **ls** will list the directory but it will *not* change your working directory. The **pwd** command in the following example shows that:

```
% ls -F /users/andy
calendar      goals        ideas/
ch2           guide/      testpgm*
% pwd
/etc
%
```

**ls -F** puts a / (slash) at the end of each directory name. (The directory name doesn't really have a slash in it; that's just the shortcut **ls -F** uses with a directory.) In our example, *guide* and *ideas* are directories. You can verify this by using **ls -l** and noting the "d" in the first field of the output. Files with an execute status (x), like programs, are marked with an \* (asterisk). The file *testpgm* is an executable file. Files that aren't marked are not executable.

On Linux and other systems with the GNU version of **ls**, you may be able to see names in color. For instance, directories could be green and program files could be yellow. Like almost everything on UNIX, of course, this is configurable - and the details are more than we can cover in an introductory book. Try typing **ls --color** and see what happens. (It's time for our familiar mantra: "check your documentation"; see [Chapter 7, Where to Go from Here](#).)

### 3.1.8.2 Exercise: Exploring the filesystem

You're now equipped to explore the filesystem with **cd**, **ls**, and **pwd**. Take a tour of the directory system, hopping one or many steps at a time, with a mixture of **cd** and **pwd** commands.

Go to your home directory.

Enter **cd**

Find your working directory.

Enter **pwd**

Change to new working directory.

Enter **cd /etc**

List files in new working directory.

Enter **ls**

Change directory to root and list files.

Enter **cd /; ls**

Change to a new directory.

Enter **cd usr**

Give a wrong pathname.

Enter **cd xqk**

Change to a new directory with its absolute pathname.

Enter **cd /etc**

List files in another directory.

Enter **ls /bin**

Find your working directory (notice that **ls** didn't change it). Enter **pwd**

Return to your home directory.

Enter **cd**

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## 3.6 Customizing Your Account

As we saw earlier, your home directory may have a hidden file called *.profile*. If it doesn't, there'll probably be one or more files named *.login*, *.cshrc*, *.tshrc*, *.bashrc*, *.bash\_profile*, or *.bash\_login*. These file are *shell setup files*, the key to customizing your account. Shell setup files contain commands that are automatically executed when a new shell starts - especially when you log in.

Let's take a look at these files. Go to your home directory, then use *cat* to display the file. Your *.profile* might look something like this:

```
PATH=/bin:/usr/bin:/usr/local/bin:
export PATH
/usr/games/fortune
date
umask 002
stty erase ^H intr ^C
```

A *.login* file might look something like this:

```
set path = (/bin /usr/bin /usr/local/bin .)
/usr/games
date
umask 002
stty erase ^H intr ^C
```

As you can see, these sample setup files contain commands to print a "fortune" and the date - just what happened earlier when we logged in! (*/usr/games/fortune* is a useless but entertaining program that prints a randomly selected saying from its collection. **fortune** isn't available on all systems.)

But what are these other commands?

- The line with `PATH=` or `set path =` tells the shell which directories to search for UNIX commands. This saves you the trouble of typing the complete pathname for each program you run. (Notice that `/usr/games` isn't part of the path, so we had to use the absolute pathname to get our daily dose of wisdom from the **fortune** command.)
- The **umask** command sets the default file permissions assigned to all files you create. Briefly, a value of 022 sets the permissions `rw-r--r--` (read-write by owner, but read-only by everyone else), and 002 will produce `rw-rw-r--` (read-write by owner and group, but read-only by everyone else). If this file is a program or a directory, both **umasks** will also give execute (`x`) permission to all users. See one of the books in [Appendix A](#) or your UNIX documentation for details.
- The **stty** command sets your terminal control characters - for example, the erase and interrupt characters we discussed earlier.

You can execute any of these commands from the command line, as well. For example, to change your erase character from [ BACKSPACE ] [ ( CTRL-H ) ] to [ DEL ] [ CTRL-? ] you would enter:

```
% stty erase ^?
```

(The [ DEL ] key actually generates the control code [ CTRL-? ] so that's what you'll see on your screen.)

Now pressing [ DEL ] will backspace and erase characters you type. (If your account is already set up to use [ DEL ] as the erase character, reverse this example, and change the erase character to [ BACKSPACE ].

If you experiment with **stty**, be careful not to reset the erase or interrupt character to a character you'll need otherwise. If you do, though, simply log out and then log back in; you'll get the default erase and interrupt characters again.

UNIX has many other configuration commands to learn about; the references in [Appendix A](#) list some of them. One popular configuration is to change your screen colors. On some Linux systems (and others), for example, the command **setterm -background blue** makes a blue background. Unfortunately, different systems do this in different ways; ask a local expert or someone who has a colored screen.

Just as you can execute the setup commands from the command line, the converse is true: any command that you can execute from the command line can be executed automatically when you log in by placing it in your setup file. (Running interactive commands like **mail** from your setup file isn't a good idea, though.)

You probably shouldn't edit your setup files yet, but it's good to know what's in them. Later, when you know more about UNIX, feel free to add or change commands in this file.

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### 4.1 Methods of Creating Files

You'll usually create a text file with a text editor. An editor lets you add, change, and rearrange text easily. Two common UNIX editors are **vi** (pronounced "vee-eye") and **emacs** ("ee-macs").

Neither of those editors has the same features as popular word processing software on personal computers. Instead of being designed for making documents, envelopes, and so on, **vi** and **emacs** are very sophisticated, extremely flexible editors for all kinds of text files: programs, email messages, and so on. Many UNIX systems also support easy-to-use word processors. Ask your system administrator what's available. **Pico** is a simple editor (not word processor) that has been added to many UNIX systems.

Since there are several editor programs, you can choose one you're comfortable with. **vi** is probably the best choice because almost all UNIX systems have it, but **emacs** is also widely available. The O'Reilly & Associates books *Learning the vi Editor* and *Learning GNU Emacs* cover those editors in detail. If you'll be doing only simple editing, however, **pico** is a great choice. Although **pico** is much less powerful than **emacs** or **vi**, it's also a lot easier to learn.

You can also create a file by using a UNIX feature called *input/output redirection*, as [Chapter 5, Redirecting I/O](#), explains. This sends the output of a command directly to a file - to make a new file or make an existing file larger.

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## 4.2 File and Directory Names

As [Chapter 3, Your UNIX Account](#), explained, both files and directories are identified by their names. A directory is really just a special kind of file, so the rules for naming directories are the same as the rules for naming files.

Filenames may contain any character except `/`, which is reserved as the separator between files and directories in a pathname. Filenames are usually made of upper- and lowercase letters, numbers, `.` (dot), and `_` (underscore). Other characters (including spaces) are legal in a filename - but they can be hard to use because the shell gives them special meanings. So we recommend using only letters, numbers, dot, and underscore characters.

Unlike some operating systems, UNIX doesn't require a dot (`.`) in a filename; in fact, you can use as many as you want. For instance, the filenames *pizza* and *this.is.a.mess* are both legal.

Some UNIX systems limit filenames to 14 characters. Most newer systems allow much longer filenames.

A filename must be unique inside its directory, but other directories may have files with the same names. For example, you may have the files called *chap1* and *chap2* in the directory `/users/carol/work` and also have files with the same names in `/users/carol/play`.

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## 4.3 File and Directory Wildcards

When you have a number of files named in series (for example, *chap1* to *chap12*) or filenames with common characters (like *aegis*, *aeon*, and *aerie*), you can use *wildcards* (also called *metacharacters*) to specify many files at once. These special characters are \* (asterisk), ? (question mark), and [ ] (square brackets). When used in a filename given as an argument to a command:

\*

An asterisk is replaced by any number of characters in a filename. For example, *ae\** would match *aegis*, *aerie*, *aeon*, etc. if those files were in the same directory. You can use this to save typing for a single filename (for example, *al\** for *alphabet.txt*) or to name many files at once (as in *ae\**).

?

A question mark is replaced by any single character (so *h?p* matches *hop* and *hip*, but not *help*).

[ ]

Square brackets can surround a choice of characters you'd like to match. Any one of the characters between the brackets will be matched. For example, *[Cc]hapter* would match either *Chapter* or *chapter*, but *[ch]apter* would match either *capter* or *hapter*. Use a hyphen (-) to separate a range of consecutive characters. For example, *chap[13]* would match *chap1*, *chap2*, or *chap3*.

The examples below demonstrate the use of wildcards. The first command lists all the entries in a directory, and the rest use wildcards to list just some of the entries. The last one is a little tricky; it matches files whose names contain two (or more) *a*'s.

```
% ls
chap10      chap2      chap5      cold
chap1a.old  chap3.old  chap6      haha
chap1b      chap4      chap7      oldjunk
% ls chap?
```

```

chap2      chap5      chap7
chap4      chap6
% ls chap[5-8]
chap5      chap6      chap7
% ls chap??
chap10     chap1b
% ls *old
chap1a.old  chap3.old    cold
% ls *a*a*
chap1a.old  haha

```

Wildcards are useful for more than listing files. Most UNIX commands accept more than one filename, and you can use wildcards to put multiple files on the command line. For example, the command **more** is used to display a file on the screen. Let's say you want to display files *chap3.old* and *chap1a.old*. Instead of specifying these files individually, you could enter the command as:

```
% more *.old
```

This is equivalent to "**more chap1a.old chap3.old**".

Wildcards match directory names, too. For example, let's say you have subdirectories named *Jan*, *Feb*, *Mar*, and so on. Each has a file named *summary*. You could read all the summary files by typing "**more \*/summary**". That's almost equivalent to "**more Jan/summary Feb/summary ...**" but there's one important difference: The names will be alphabetized, so *Apr/summary* would be first in the list.

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# 4.4 Managing Your Files

The tree structure of the UNIX filesystem makes it easy to organize your files. After you make and edit some files, you may want to copy or move files from one directory to another, rename files to distinguish different versions of a file, or give several names to the same file. You may want to create new directories each time you start working on a different project.

A directory tree can get cluttered with old files you don't need. If you don't need a file or a directory, delete it to free storage space on the disk. The sections below explain how to make and remove directories and files.

## 4.4.1 Creating Directories

It's handy to group related files in the same directory. If you were writing a spy novel, you probably wouldn't want your intriguing files mixed with restaurant listings. You could create two directories: one for all the chapters in your novel (*spy*, for example), and another for restaurants (*boston.dine*).

### 4.4.1.1 mkdir

To create a new directory, use the **mkdir** command. The format is:

```
mkdir dirname(s)
```

*dirname* is the name of the new directory. To make several directories, put a space between each directory name. To continue our example, you would enter:

```
% mkdir spy boston.dine
```

## 4.4.2 Copying Files

If you're about to edit a file, you may want to save a copy of it first. Doing that makes it easy to get back the original version.

#### 4.4.2.1 cp

The **cp** command can put a copy of a file into the same directory or into another directory. **cp** doesn't affect the original file, so it's a good way to keep an identical backup of a file.

To copy a file, use the command:

```
cp old new
```

where *old* is a pathname to the original file and *new* is the pathname you want for the copy. For example, to copy the */etc/passwd* file into a file called *password* in your working directory, you would enter:

```
% cp /etc/passwd password
%
```

You can also use the form:

```
cp old olddir
```

This puts a copy of the original file *old* into an existing directory *olddir*. The copy will have the same filename as the original.

If there's already a file with the same name as the copy, **cp** will replace the old file with your new copy. This is handy when you want to replace an old copy with a newer version, but it can cause trouble if you accidentally overwrite a copy you wanted to keep. To be safe, use **ls** to list the directory before you make a copy there. Also, many versions of **cp** have a **-i** (interactive) option that will query the user before overwriting an existing file.

You can copy more than one file at a time to a single directory by listing the pathname of each file you want copied, with the destination directory at the end of the command line. You can use relative or absolute pathnames (see [Chapter 3](#)) as well as simple filenames. For example, let's say your working directory was */users/carol* (from the filesystem diagrams in [Chapter 3](#)). To copy three files called *ch1*, *ch2*, and *ch3* from */users/john* to a subdirectory called *work* (that's */users/carol/work*), by entering:

```
% cp ../john/ch1 ../john/ch2 ../john/ch3 work
```

Or, you could use wildcards and let the shell find all the appropriate files. This time, let's add the **-i** option for safety:

```
% cp -i ../john/ch[1-3] work
cp: overwrite work/ch2? n
```

There was already a file named *ch2* in the *work* directory. When **cp** asked, I answered **n** to prevent copying *ch2*. Answering **y** would overwrite the old *ch2*.

The shorthand forms **.** and **..** will put the copy in the working directory or its parent. For example:

```
% cp ../john/ch[1-3] .
```

puts the copies into the working directory.

#### 4.4.2.2 Problem checklist

*The system says something along the lines of "cp: cannot copy file to itself".*

If the copy is in the same directory as the original, the filenames must be different.

*The system says something like "cp: filename: no such file or directory".*

The system can't find the file you want to copy. Check for a typing mistake. If a file isn't in the working directory, be sure to use its pathname.

*The system says something like "cp: permission denied".*

You may not have permission to copy a file created by someone else or copy it into a directory that does not belong to you. Use **ls -l** to find the owner and the permissions for the file, or **ls -ld** to check the directory. If you feel that you should have permission to copy a file whose access is denied to you, ask the file's owner or the system administrator to change the access modes for the file.

#### 4.4.2.3 rcp

Some versions of UNIX have an **rcp** (remote copy) command for copying files between two computers. In general, you must have accounts on both computers. The syntax of **rcp** is like **cp**, but **rcp** also lets you add the remote hostname to the start of a file or directory pathname. The syntax of each argument is:

*hostname:pathname*

*hostname:* is needed only for remote files. You can copy from a remote computer to the local computer, from the local to a remote, or between two remote computers.

For example, let's copy the files named *report.may* and *report.june* from your home directory on the



computer named *giraffe*. Put the copies into your working directory (.) on the machine you're logged in to now:

```
% rcp giraffe:report.may giraffe:report.june .
```

To use wildcards in the remote filenames, put quotation marks (<">name<">) around each remote name. For example, to copy all files from your *food/lunch* subdirectory on your *giraffe* account into your working directory on the local account, enter:

```
% rcp "giraffe:food/lunch/*" .
```

Unlike **cp**, most versions of **rcp** do not have a **-i** safety option. Also, even if your system has **rcp**, your system administrator may not want you to use it for system security reasons. Another command, **ftp**, is more flexible and secure than **rcp**.

#### 4.4.2.4 ftp

The command **ftp** (file transfer protocol) is a flexible way to copy files between two computers. (Some systems have a friendlier version of **ftp** named **ncftp**.) Both computers don't need to be running UNIX, though they do need to be connected by a network (like the Internet) that **ftp** can use. To start **ftp**, give the hostname of the remote computer:

```
ftp hostname
```

**ftp** will prompt for your username and password on the remote computer. This is something like a remote login (see [Chapter 1, Getting Started](#)), but **ftp** doesn't start your usual shell. Instead, **ftp** prints its own prompt and uses a special set of commands for transferring files. [Table 4.1](#) lists the most important **ftp** commands.

Table 4.1: Some ftp Commands

Command	Description
<b>put filename</b>	Copies the file <i>filename</i> from your local computer to the remote computer. If you give a second argument, the remote copy will have that name.
<b>mput filenames</b>	Copies the named files (you can use wildcards) from local to remote.
<b>get filename</b>	Copies the file <i>filename</i> from the remote computer to your local computer. If you give a second argument, the local copy will have that name.
<b>mget filenames</b>	Copies the named files (you can use wildcards) from remote to local.
<b>cd pathname</b>	Changes the working directory on the remote machine to <i>pathname</i> ( <b>ftp</b> usually starts at your home directory on the remote machine).

<b>lcd <i>pathname</i></b>	Changes <b>ftp</b> 's working directory on the local machine to <i>pathname</i> ( <b>ftp</b> starts at your working directory on the local computer). Note that the <b>ftp lcd</b> command changes only <b>ftp</b> 's working directory. After you quit <b>ftp</b> , your shell's working directory will not have changed.
<b>dir</b>	Lists the remote directory (like <b>ls -l</b> ).
<b>binary</b>	Tells <b>ftp</b> to copy the following file(s) without translation. This preserves pictures, sound, or other data.
<b>ascii</b>	Transfers plain text files, translating data if needed.
<b>quit</b>	Ends the <b>ftp</b> session and takes you back to a shell prompt.

Here's an example. Carol uses **ftp** to copy the file *todo* from her *work* subdirectory on her account on the remote computer *rhino*:

```
% ls
afile  ch2    somefile
% ftp rhino
Connected to rhino.zoo.com.
Name (rhino:carol): csmith
Password:
ftp> cd work
ftp> dir
total 3
-rw-r--r--  1 csmith  mgmt    47 Feb  5  1997 for.ed
-rw-r--r--  1 csmith  mgmt   264 Oct 11 12:18 message
-rw-r--r--  1 csmith  mgmt   724 Nov 20 14:53 todo
ftp> get todo
ftp> quit
% ls
afile  ch2    somefile  todo
```

We've covered the most basic **ftp** commands here. Entering **help** at an `ftp>` prompt gives a list of all commands; entering **help** followed by an **ftp** command name gives a one-line summary of that command.

## 4.4.3 Renaming and Moving Files

You may need to change a filename. To rename a file, use the **mv** (move) command. The **mv** command can also move a file from one directory to another.

### 4.4.3.1 mv

The **mv** command has the same syntax as the **cp** command:

```
mv old new
```

*old* is the old name of the file and *new* is the new name. **mv** will write over existing files, which is handy for updating old versions of a file. If you don't want to overwrite an old file, be sure that the new name is unique. If your **cp** has a **-i** option for safety, your **mv** probably has one too.

```
% mv chap1 intro
%
```

The previous example changed the name of the file *chap1* to *intro*. If you list your files with **ls**, you will see that the filename *chap1* has disappeared.

The **mv** command can also move a file from one directory to another. As with the **cp** command, if you want to keep the same filename, you only need to give **mv** the name of the destination directory.

## 4.4.4 Finding Files

If your account has lots of files, organizing those files into subdirectories can help you find the files later. Sometimes you may not remember which subdirectory has a file. The **find** command can search for files in many ways; we'll look at two of them.

Change to your home directory so **find** will start its search there. Then carefully enter one of the two **find** commands below. (The syntax is strange and ugly - but **find** does the job!)

```
% cd
% find . -type f -name 'chap*' -print
./chap2
./old/chap10b
% find . -type f -mtime -2 -print
./work/to_do
```

The first command looked in your working (home) directory and all its subdirectories for files (**type f**) whose names start with *chap*. (**find** understands wildcards in filenames.) The second command looked for all files that have been created or modified in the last two days (**-mtime -2**). The relative pathnames that **find** finds start with a dot (*.*), the name of the working directory, which you can ignore.

Linux systems, and some others, have the GNU **locate** command. If it's been set up and maintained on your system, you can use **locate** to search part or all of a filesystem for a file with a certain name. For instance, if you're looking for a file named *alpha-test*, *alphatest*, or something like that, try this:

```
% locate alpha
/users/alan/alpha3
/usr/local/projects/mega/alphatest
```

You'll get the absolute pathnames of files and directories that have *alpha* in their names. (If you get a lot of output, add a pipe to **more** or **pg** - see [Chapter 5](#).) **locate** may or may not list protected, private files; its listings usually also aren't completely up to date. To learn much more about **find** and **locate**, read your online documentation (see [Chapter 7, Where to Go from Here](#)) or read the chapter about them in O'Reilly's *UNIX Power Tools*.

## 4.4.5 Removing Files and Directories

You may have finished working on a file or directory and see no need to keep it, or the contents may be obsolete. Periodically removing unwanted files and directories will free storage space.

### 4.4.5.1 rm

The **rm** command removes files. The syntax is simple:

```
rm filename(s)
```

**rm** removes the named files, as the following examples show:

```
% ls
chap10      chap2      chap5      cold
chap1a.old  chap3.old  chap6      haha
chap1b      chap4      chap7      oldjunk
% rm *.old chap10
% ls
chap1b      chap4      chap6      cold      oldjunk
chap2       chap5      chap7      haha
% rm c*
% ls
haha      oldjunk
%
```

When you use wildcards with **rm**, be sure you're deleting the right files! If you accidentally remove a file you need, you can't recover it unless you have a copy in another directory or in the system backups.

**CAUTION:** Do not enter **rm \*** carelessly. It deletes all the files in your working directory.

Here's another easy mistake to make: You want to enter a command like **rm c\*** (remove all filenames starting with "c") but instead enter **rm c \*** (remove the file named **c** and all files!).

It's good practice to list the files with **ls** before you remove them. Or, if you use **rm**'s **-i** (interactive) option, **rm** will ask you whether you want to remove each file.

#### 4.4.5.2 rmdir

Just as you can create new directories, you can also remove them with the **rmdir** command. As a precaution, the **rmdir** command will not let you delete directories that contain any files or subdirectories: the directory must first be empty. (The **rm -r** command removes a directory and everything in it. It can be dangerous for beginners, though.)

The syntax is:

```
rmdir dirname(s)
```

If a directory you try to remove does contain files, you will get a message like "rmdir: *dirname* not empty".

To delete a directory that contains some files:

1. Enter **cd** *dirname* to get into the directory you want to delete.
2. Enter **rm \*** to remove all files in that directory.
3. Enter **cd ..** to go to the parent directory.
4. Enter **rmdir** *dirname* to remove the unwanted directory.

#### 4.4.5.3 Problem checklist

*I still get the message "dirname not empty" even after I've deleted all the files.*

Use **ls -a** to check that there are no hidden files (names that start with a period) other than **.** and **..** (the working directory and its parent). The command **rm .[a-zA-Z].??\*** is good for cleaning up hidden files.

### 4.4.6 Files on Other Operating Systems

You read above about **ftp**, a program for transferring files across a network - possibly to non-UNIX operating systems. Your system may also be able to run operating systems other than UNIX. For instance, many Linux systems can also run MS-DOS and Windows 95. If yours does, you can probably

use those files from your Linux account.

If the DOS or Windows filesystem is *mounted* with your other filesystems, you'll be able to use its files by typing a UNIX-like pathname. For instance, from our PC under Linux, we can access the DOS file `C:\WORD\REPORT.DOC` through the pathname `/dos/word/report.doc`.

Your Linux (or other) system may also have the MTOOLS utilities. These give you DOS-like commands that interoperate with the UNIX-like system. For example, we can put a Windows 95 floppy disk in the A: drive and then copy a file named `summary.txt` into our current directory (`.`) by entering:

```
% mcopy a:summary.txt .
Copying summary.txt
%
```

Your system administrator should be able to tell you whether other filesystems are mounted, whether you have utilities like MTOOLS, and how to use them.

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## 4.5 Printing Files

Before you print a file on a UNIX system, you may want to reformat it to adjust the margins, highlight some words, and so on. Most files can also be printed without reformatting, but the raw printout may not look quite as nice.

Many versions of UNIX include two powerful text formatters, **nroff** and **troff**. (There are also versions called **gnroff** and **groff**.) They are much too complex to describe here. Before we cover printing itself, let's look at a simple formatting program called **pr**.

### 4.5.1 pr

The **pr** command does minor formatting of files on the terminal screen or for a printer. For example, if you have a long list of names in a file, you can format it onscreen into two or more columns.

The syntax is:

```
pr option(s) filename(s)
```

**pr** changes the format of the file only on the screen or on the printed copy; it doesn't modify the original file. [Table 4.2](#) lists some **pr** options.

Table 4.2: Some pr Options

Option	Description
<b>-k</b>	Produces <i>k</i> columns of output.
<b>-d</b>	Double-spaces the output (not on all <b>pr</b> versions).
<b>-h "header"</b>	Takes the next item as a report <i>header</i> .
<b>-t</b>	Eliminates printing of header and top/bottom margins.

Other options allow you to specify the width of the columns, set the page length, and so on.

Before using **pr**, here are the contents of a sample file named *food*:

```
% cat food
Sweet Tooth
Bangkok Wok
Mandalay
Afghani Cuisine
Isle of Java
Big Apple Deli
Sushi and Sashimi
Tio Pepe's Peppers
.
.
.
```

Let's use **pr** options to make a two-column report with the header "Restaurants."

```
% pr -2 -h "Restaurants" food

Nov  7  9:58 1997  Restaurants    Page 1

Sweet Tooth                Isle of Java
Bangkok Wok                Big Apple Deli
Mandalay                   Sushi and Sashimi
Afghani Cuisine            Tio Pepe's Peppers
.
.
.

%
```

The text is output in two-column pages. The top of each page has the date and time, header (or name of the file, if header is not supplied), and page number. To send this output to the printer instead of the terminal screen, you create a pipe to the printer program - usually **lp** or **lpr**. The following section describes **lp** and **lpr**; [Chapter 5](#) covers pipes.

## 4.5.2 lp and lpr

If you have a long file, it may be best to print it so you can see it all on paper. The command **lp** or **lpr** prints a file (onto paper as opposed to the screen display). Your system will probably have one or the other - but not both. The syntax is:



**lp** *option(s) filename(s)*

**lpr** *option(s) filename(s)*

Printers on UNIX systems are usually shared by a group of users. After you enter the command to print a file, the shell prompt returns to the screen and you can enter another command. However, seeing the prompt doesn't mean that your file has been printed. Your file has been added to the printer queue to be printed in turn.

Your system administrator has probably set up a default printer at your site. To print a file named *bills* on the default printer, use the **lp** or **lpr** command, as in this example:

```
% lp bills
request id is laserp-525 (1 file)
%
```

**lp** shows an ID that you can use to cancel the print job or check its status. If you need ID numbers for **lpr** jobs, use the **lpq** command (see "lpstat and lpq" in the following section). The file *bills* will be sent to a printer called *laserp*. The ID number of the request is "laserp-525".

**lp** and **lpr** have several options. [Table 4.3](#) lists three of them.

Table 4.3: Some lp and lpr Options

Option	Description
<b>lp</b> <b>lpr</b>	
-dprinter -Pprinter	Use given <i>printer</i> name if there is more than one printer at your site. The printer names are assigned by the system administrator.
-n#      -#	Print # copies of the file.
-m      -m	Notify sender by email when the printing is done.

If **lp** and **lpr** don't work at your site, ask other users for the printer command. You'll also need the printer locations - so you know where to get your output.

### 4.5.3 Problem checklist

*My printout hasn't come out.*

See whether the printer is printing now. If it is, other users may have made a request to the same printer ahead of you and your file should be printed in turn. The section below explains how to check the print requests.

If no file is printing, check the printer's physical connections and power switch. The printer may also be hung. If it is, ask your system administrator what to do.

## 4.5.4 Viewing the Printer Queue

If you want to find out how many files or "requests" for output are ahead of yours in the printer queue, use the command **lpstat** (for **lp**) or **lpq** (for **lpr**). The **cancel** command lets you terminate a printing request made by **lp**; **lprm** cancels jobs from **lpr**.

### 4.5.4.1 lpstat and lpq

The **lpstat** command shows what's in the printer queue: request IDs, owners, file sizes, when the jobs were sent for printing, and the status of the requests. Use **lpstat -o** if you want to see all output requests rather than just your own. Requests are shown in the order they'll be printed:

```
% lpstat -o
laserp-573  john  128865  Nov 7   11:27   on laserp
laserp-574  grace  82744   Nov 7   11:28
laserp-575  john   23347   Nov 7   11:35
%
```

The first entry shows that the request "laserp-573" is currently printing on *laserp*. The exact format and amount of information given about the printer queue may differ from system to system. If the printer queue is empty, **lpstat** will say "No entries" or simply give you back the shell prompt.

**lpq** gives slightly different information than **lpstat -o**:

```
% lpq
laserp is ready and printing
Rank  Owner      Job  Files                Total Size
active john       573  report.ps           128865 bytes
1st   grace      574  ch03.ps ch04.ps          82744 bytes
2nd   john       575  standard input      23347 bytes
%
```

The first line displays the printer status. If the printer is disabled or out of paper, you may see different messages on this first line. The "active" job, the one being printed, is listed first. The "Job" number is like the **lpstat** request ID. To specify another printer, and the **P** option ([Table 4.3](#)).

### 4.5.4.2 cancel and lprm

**cancel** terminates a printing request from the **lp** command. **lprm** terminates **lpr** requests. You can specify either the ID of the request (displayed by **lp** or **lpq**) or the name of the printer.

If you don't have the request ID, get it from **lpstat** or **lpq**. Then use **cancel** or **lprm**. Specifying the request ID cancels the request, even if it is currently printing:

```
% cancel laserp-575
request "laserp-575" cancelled
```

To cancel whatever request is currently printing, regardless of its ID, simply enter **cancel** and the printer name:

```
% cancel laserp
request "laserp-573" cancelled
```

The **lprm** command will cancel the active job if it belongs to you. Otherwise, you can give job numbers as arguments, or use a dash (-) to remove all of your jobs:

```
% lprm 575
dfA575diamond dequeued
cfA575diamond dequeued
```

**lprm** tells you the actual filenames removed from the printer queue (which you probably don't need).

#### 4.5.4.3 Exercise: Manipulating files

In this exercise, you'll create, rename and delete files. Find out if your site has one or more printers as well as the appropriate command to use for printing.

Go to home directory.	Enter <b>cd</b>
Copy distant file to working directory.	Enter <b>cp /etc/passwd myfile</b>
Create new directory.	Enter <b>mkdir temp</b>
List working directory.	Enter <b>ls -F</b>
Move file to new directory.	Enter <b>mv myfile temp</b>
Change working directory.	Enter <b>cd temp</b>
Copy file to working directory.	Enter <b>cp myfile myfile.two</b>
Print the file.	Enter your printer command and the filename
List filenames with wildcard.	Enter <b>ls -l myfile*</b>
Remove files.	Enter <b>rm myfile*</b>

Go up to parent directory.           Enter **cd ..**  
Remove directory.                    Enter **rmdir temp**  
Verify that directory was removed.   Enter **ls -F**

---

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Chapter 5

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# 5. Redirecting I/O

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[Standard Input and Standard Output](#)[Pipes and Filters](#)

## 5.1 Standard Input and Standard Output

Many UNIX commands read input (such as a file) and write output.

In general, if no filename is specified in a command, the shell takes whatever you type on your keyboard as input to the command (after you press the first [RETURN] to start the command running, that is). Your terminal keyboard is the command's *standard input*.

As a command runs, the results are usually displayed on your terminal screen. The terminal screen is the command's *standard output*.

So, by default, each command takes its input from the standard input and sends the results to the standard output.

These two default cases of input/output can be varied. This is called *input/output redirection*. You can use a given file as input to a command that doesn't normally accept filenames by using the "<" (less-than symbol) operator. For example, the following command mails the contents of the file *to\_do* to *bigboss@corp*:

```
% mail bigboss@corp < to_do
%
```

You can also write the results of a command to a named file or some other device instead of displaying output on the screen using the > (greater-than symbol) operator. The pipe operator | sends the standard

output of one command to the standard input of another command. Input/output redirection is one of the nicest features of UNIX because of its tremendous power and flexibility.

## 5.1.1 Putting Text in a File

Instead of always letting the output of a command come to the screen, you can redirect output into a file. This is useful when you have a lot of output that would be hard to read on the screen or when you put files together to create a bigger file.

As we've seen, the **cat** command can display a short file. It can also be used to put text into a file, or to create a bigger file out of smaller files.

### 5.1.1.1 The > operator

When you add "> *filename*" to the end of a command line, the results of the command are diverted from the standard output to the named file. The > symbol is called the *output redirection operator*.

For example, let's use **cat** with this operator. The contents of the file that you'd normally see on the screen (from the standard output) are diverted into another file:

```
% cat /etc/passwd > password
% cat password
root::0:0:Root:/:/bin/sh
daemon:NONE:1:1:Admin:/:
.
.
.
john::128:50:John Doe:/usr/john:/bin/sh
%
```

An example in [Chapter 3, Your UNIX Account](#), showed how **cat /etc/passwd** displays the file */etc/passwd* on the screen. The example above adds the > operator; so the output of **cat** goes to a file called *password* in the working directory. Displaying the file *password* shows that its contents are the same as the file */etc/passwd* (the effect is the same as the copy command **cp /etc/passwd password**).

You can use the > redirection operator with any command that sends text to its standard output - not just with **cat**. For example:

```
% who > users
% date > today
% ls
```

```
password  today  users  ...
```

We've sent the output of **who** to a file called *users* and the output of **date** to the file named *today*. Listing the directory shows the two new files. Let's look at the output from the **who** and **date** commands, regarding these two files:

```
% cat users
tim      tty1      Aug 12   07:30
john     tty4      Aug 12   08:26
% cat today
Tue Aug 12 08:36:09 EDT 1997
%
```

You can also use the **cat** command and the **>** operator to make a small text file. We told you earlier to type [CTRL-D] if you accidentally enter **cat** without a filename. This is because the **cat** command alone takes whatever you type on the keyboard as input. Thus, the command:

```
cat > filename
```

takes input from the keyboard and redirects it to a file. Try the following example:

```
% cat > to_do
Finish report by noon
Lunch with Xannie
Swim at 5:30
^D
%
```

**cat** takes the text that you typed as input, and the **>** operator redirects it to a file called *to\_do*. Type [CTRL-D] on a new line by itself to signal the end of the text. You should get a shell prompt.

You can also create a bigger file out of many smaller files using the **cat** command and the **>** operator. The form:

```
cat file1 file2 > newfile
```

creates a file *newfile*, consisting of *file1* followed by *file2*.

```
% cat today to_do > diary
% cat diary
Tue Aug 12 08:36:09 EDT 1997
Finish report by noon
```

```
Lunch with Xannie
Swim at 5:30
%
```

**CAUTION:** If you are using the `>` (output redirection) operator, you should be careful not to overwrite the contents of a file accidentally. Your system may let you redirect output to an existing file. If so, the old file will be deleted (or, in UNIX lingo, "clobbered"). Be careful not to overwrite a much-needed file! Many shells can protect you from this risk. In the C shell, use the command **set noclobber**. The Korn shell and **bash** command is **set -o noclobber**. Enter the command at a shell prompt or put it in your shell's startup file. After that, the shell will not allow you to redirect onto an existing file and overwrite its contents.

This doesn't protect against overwriting by UNIX commands like **cp**; it works only with the `>` redirection operator. For more protection, you can set UNIX file access permissions.

### 5.1.1.2 The `>>` operator

You can add more text to the end of an existing file, instead of replacing its contents, by using the `>>` (append redirection) operator. Use it like the `>` (output redirection) operator. So,

```
cat file2 >> file1
```

appends the contents of *file2* to the end of *file1*. For an example, let's append the contents of the file *users*, and also the current date and time, to the file *diary*. Then we display the file:

```
% cat users >> diary
% date >> diary
% cat diary
Tue Aug 12 08:36:09 EDT 1997
Finish report by noon
Lunch with Xannie
Swim at 5:30
tim      tty1      Aug 12   07:30
john     tty4      Aug 12   08:26
Tue Aug 12 09:07:24 EDT 1997
%
```

---

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## 7. Where to Go from Here

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### 7.1 Standard UNIX Documentation

Now that you've come to the end of this guide, you might want to know the options to the commands we've introduced and the many other UNIX commands. You're now ready to consult your system's documentation.

Different system manufacturers have adapted UNIX documentation in different ways. However, almost all UNIX documentation is derived from a manual originally called the *UNIX Programmer's Manual*. One section you'll want to consult is the one that lists general UNIX commands like **who** and **ls**. There's probably another section with tutorials and extended documentation.

Many UNIX installations (especially larger systems with plenty of disk space) have individual manual pages stored on the computer; users can read them online.

If you want to know the correct syntax for entering a command or the particular features of a program, enter the command **man** and the name of the command. The syntax is:

**man** *command*

For example, if you want to find information about the program **mail**, which allows you to send messages to other users, you would enter:

```
% man mail
```

```
.
```

```
.
```

```
%
```

The output of **man** may be filtered through the **more** command automatically. If it isn't, just pipe the output of **man** to **more** (or **pg**).

After you enter the command, the screen will fill up with text. Press [SPACE] or [RETURN] to read more.

Some systems also have a command called **apropos** or **man k** to help you locate a command if you have an idea of what it does but are not sure of its correct name. Enter **apropos** followed by a descriptive word; you'll get a list of commands that might help.

Linux systems, and many other systems, may also have a command called **info**. It serves the same purpose as **man**: to document system commands. The **info** output is in a different format, though. The syntax to start **info** is:

### **info** *command*

For example, if you want to find information about the program **find**, which searches for files, you would enter **info find**. After you enter the command, the screen will fill up with text. Press [SPACE] to read more or "q" to quit.

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## 7.2 Shell Aliases and Functions

If you type command names that are hard for you to remember, or command lines that seem too long, you'll want to learn about *shell aliases and functions*. These shell features let you abbreviate commands, command lines, and long series of commands. In most cases, you can replace them with a single word or a word and a few arguments. For example, one of the long pipelines in [Chapter 5, Redirecting I/O](#), could be replaced by an alias or function named (for instance) "aug". When you type **aug** at a shell prompt, the shell would list files modified in August, sorted by size.

Making an alias or function is almost as simple as typing in the command line or lines that you want to run. The references in [Appendix A, Reading List](#), have more information. Shell aliases and functions are actually a simple case of shell programming.

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## A. Reading List

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[General UNIX Books](#)[Text Processing and Programming](#)[Shells](#)[The X Window System](#)

This section lists a few good books in several areas.

### A.1 General UNIX Books

- *Harley Hahn's Student Guide to UNIX*, second edition; McGraw-Hill; ISBN 0-07-025492-3; 1996. Not just for students, this is a complete and very readable guide to UNIX and networking.
- *UNIX for the Impatient* by Paul W. Abrahams and Bruce Larson; Addison-Wesley; 1996. Terse and detailed, for people comfortable with technical material.
- *UNIX Power Tools*, second edition, by Jerry Peek, Tim O'Reilly, Mike Loukides, and others; O'Reilly & Associates; ISBN 1-56592-260-3; 1997. A huge collection of tips, techniques, and concepts for making intermediate users into advanced users.
- *UNIX in a Nutshell: System V Edition* by Daniel Gilly and the staff of O'Reilly & Associates; ISBN 1-56592-001-5; 1992. From user commands to programmers' utilities, this book covers UNIX with concise descriptions and illustrative examples.
- *Linux in a Nutshell* by Jessica Perry Hekman and the staff of O'Reilly & Associates; ISBN 1-56592-167-4; 1997. A complete reference for Linux.

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## A.4 The X Window System

- *X Window System User's Guide, Volume 3, OSF/Motif edition*; Valerie Quercia and Tim O'Reilly; O'Reilly & Associates; ISBN 1-56592-015-5; 1993. A thorough guide to using and customizing the OSF/Motif graphical interface to X. Easy for beginners, but thorough enough to be a guide for experienced users.

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## B. Reference

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## B.1 Commands and Their Meanings

cancel <i>request</i>	Cancel an <b>lp</b> print request.
cat <i>files</i>	Display one or more files.
cd	Change to home directory.
cd <i>pathname</i>	Change working directory to <i>pathname</i> .
cp <i>old new</i>	Copy <i>old</i> file to <i>new</i> file.
date	Display current date and time.
grep " <i>pattern</i> " <i>files</i>	Show lines matching <i>pattern</i> in <i>files</i> .
kill <i>PID</i>	End process <i>PID</i> .
lp <i>files</i>	Send <i>files</i> to default printer.
lpq	Check requests on <b>lpr</b> printer queue.
lpr <i>files</i>	Send <i>files</i> to default printer.
lprm <i>request</i>	Cancel an <b>lpr</b> print request.
lpstat	Check requests on <b>lp</b> printer queue.
ls	List names of files in working directory.
mail	Read your own mail.
mail <i>user</i>	Send mail to <i>user</i> .
man <i>command</i>	Display manual page of <i>command</i> .



<code>mkdir <i>pathname</i></code>	Create a new directory with <i>pathname</i> .
<code>more <i>files</i></code>	Display one screenful of each <i>file</i> at a time.
<code>mv <i>old new</i></code>	Move or rename <i>old</i> file to <i>new</i> file.
<code>pg <i>files</i></code>	Display one screenful of each <i>file</i> at a time.
<code>ps</code>	List your processes and their PIDs.
<code>pwd</code>	Print working (current) directory name.
<code>rm <i>files</i></code>	Remove <i>files</i> .
<code>rmdir <i>pathname</i></code>	Remove empty directory with <i>pathname</i> .
<code>sort <i>files</i></code>	Sort lines of <i>files</i> .
<code>who</code>	List users currently on system.
<code>who am i</code>	Display listing for this session.

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## B.2 Special Symbols

- | Set up a pipe.
- > Redirect output to a file.
- < Redirect input from a file.
- >> Append output to an existing file.
- / Separator used in pathnames.
- . Current directory.
- .. Parent directory.
- & Process command in the background.
- \* Match any number of characters in filename.
- ? Match any single character in filename.
- [] Match any one of the enclosed characters in filename.
- ; Command separator.
- () Group commands.

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