poll(2) — Linux manual page

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poll(2) **System Calls Manual** ***poll***(2)

NAME top

poll, ppoll - wait for some event on a file descriptor

LIBRARY top

Standard C library (*libc*, *-lc*)

SYNOPSIS top

```
#include <poll.h>

int poll(struct pollfd *fds, nfds_t nfds, int timeout);

#define _GNU_SOURCE         /* See feature_test_macros(7) */
#include <poll.h>

int ppoll(struct pollfd *fds, nfds_t nfds,
          const struct timespec *_Nullable tmo_p,
          const sigset_t *_Nullable sigmask);
```

DESCRIPTION top

poll() performs a similar task to select(2): it waits for one of a set of file descriptors to become ready to perform I/O. The Linux-specific epoll(7) API performs a similar task, but offers features beyond those found in **poll**().

The set of file descriptors to be monitored is specified in the *fds* argument, which is an array of structures of the following form:

```
struct pollfd {
    int   fd;         /* file descriptor */
    short events;     /* requested events */
    short revents;    /* returned events */
};
```

The caller should specify the number of items in the *fds* array in *nfds*.

The field *fd* contains a file descriptor for an open file. If this field is negative, then the corresponding *events* field is ignored and the *revents* field returns zero. (This provides an easy way of ignoring a file descriptor for a single **poll**() call: simply set the *fd* field to its bitwise complement.)

The field *events* is an input parameter, a bit mask specifying the events the application is interested in for the file descriptor *fd*. This field may be specified as zero, in which case the only events that can be returned in *revents* are **POLLHUP**, **POLLERR**, and **POLLNVAL** (see below).

The field *revents* is an output parameter, filled by the kernel with the events that actually occurred. The bits returned in *revents* can include any of those specified in *events*, or one of the values **POLLERR**, **POLLHUP**, or **POLLNVAL**. (These three bits are meaningless in the *events* field, and will be set in the *revents* field whenever the corresponding condition is true.)

If none of the events requested (and no error) has occurred for any of the file descriptors, then **poll**() blocks until one of the events occurs.

The *timeout* argument specifies the number of milliseconds that **poll**() should block waiting for a file descriptor to become ready. The call will block until either:

- a file descriptor becomes ready;
- the call is interrupted by a signal handler; or
- the timeout expires.

Being "ready" means that the requested operation will not block; thus, **poll**()ing regular files, block devices, and other files with no reasonable polling semantic *always* returns instantly as ready to read and write.

Note that the *timeout* interval will be rounded up to the system clock granularity, and kernel scheduling delays mean that the blocking interval may overrun by a small amount. Specifying a negative value in *timeout* means an infinite timeout. Specifying a *timeout* of zero causes **poll**() to return immediately, even if no file descriptors are ready.

The bits that may be set/returned in *events* and *revents* are defined in *<poll.h>*:

POLLIN There is data to read.

POLLPRI
There is some exceptional condition on the file descriptor. Possibilities include:

- There is out-of-band data on a TCP socket (see tcp(7)).
- A pseudoterminal master in packet mode has seen a state change on the slave (see ioctl_tty(2)).
- A *cgroup.events* file has been modified (see cgroups(7)).

POLLOUT
Writing is now possible, though a write larger than the available space in a socket or pipe will still block (unless **O_NONBLOCK** is set).

POLLRDHUP (since Linux 2.6.17)
Stream socket peer closed connection, or shut down writing half of connection. The **_GNU_SOURCE** feature test macro

must be defined (before including *any* header files) in order to obtain this definition.

POLLERR
Error condition (only returned in *revents*; ignored in *events*). This bit is also set for a file descriptor referring to the write end of a pipe when the read end has been closed.

POLLHUP
Hang up (only returned in *revents*; ignored in *events*). Note that when reading from a channel such as a pipe or a stream socket, this event merely indicates that the peer closed its end of the channel. Subsequent reads from the channel will return 0 (end of file) only after all outstanding data in the channel has been consumed.

POLLNVAL
Invalid request: *fd* not open (only returned in *revents*; ignored in *events*).

When compiling with **_XOPEN_SOURCE** defined, one also has the following, which convey no further information beyond the bits listed above:

POLLRDNORM
Equivalent to **POLLIN**.

POLLRDBAND
Priority band data can be read (generally unused on Linux).

POLLWRNORM
Equivalent to **POLLOUT**.

POLLWRBAND
Priority data may be written.

Linux also knows about, but does not use **POLLMSG**.

ppoll()

The relationship between **poll**() and **ppoll**() is analogous to the relationship between select(2) and pselect(2): like pselect(2), **ppoll**() allows an application to safely wait until either a file descriptor becomes ready or until a signal is caught.

Other than the difference in the precision of the *timeout* argument, the following **ppoll**() call:

```
    ready = ppoll(&fds, nfds, tmo_p, &sigmask);
```

is nearly equivalent to *atomically* executing the following calls:

```
    sigset_t origmask;
    int timeout;

    timeout = (tmo_p == NULL) ? -1 :
              (tmo_p->tv_sec * 1000 + tmo_p->tv_nsec / 1000000);
    pthread_sigmask(SIG_SETMASK, &sigmask, &origmask);
    ready = poll(&fds, nfds, timeout);
    pthread_sigmask(SIG_SETMASK, &origmask, NULL);
```

The above code segment is described as *nearly* equivalent because whereas a negative *timeout* value for **poll**() is interpreted as an infinite timeout, a negative value expressed in **tmo_p* results in an error from **ppoll**().

See the description of pselect(2) for an explanation of why **ppoll**() is necessary.

If the *sigmask* argument is specified as NULL, then no signal mask manipulation is performed (and thus **ppoll**() differs from **poll**() only in the precision of the *timeout* argument).

The *tmo_p* argument specifies an upper limit on the amount of time that **ppoll**() will block. This argument is a pointer to a **timespec**(3) structure.

If *tmo_p* is specified as NULL, then **ppoll**() can block indefinitely.

RETURN VALUE top

On success, **poll**() returns a nonnegative value which is the number of elements in the *pollfds* whose *revents* fields have been set to a nonzero value (indicating an event or an error). A return value of zero indicates that the system call timed out before any file descriptors became ready.

On error, -1 is returned, and *errno* is set to indicate the error.

ERRORS top

EFAULT *fds* points outside the process's accessible address space. The array given as argument was not contained in the calling program's address space.

EINTR A signal occurred before any requested event; see signal(7).

EINVAL The *nfds* value exceeds the **RLIMIT_NOFILE** value.

EINVAL (**ppoll**()) The timeout value expressed in **tmo_p* is invalid (negative).

ENOMEM Unable to allocate memory for kernel data structures.

VERSIONS top

On some other UNIX systems, **poll**() can fail with the error **EAGAIN** if the system fails to allocate kernel-internal resources, rather than **ENOMEM** as Linux does. POSIX permits this behavior. Portable programs may wish to check for **EAGAIN** and loop, just as with **EINTR**.

Some implementations define the nonstandard constant **INFTIM** with the value -1 for use as a *timeout* for **poll**(). This constant is not provided in glibc.

C library/kernel differences

The Linux **ppoll**() system call modifies its *tmo_p* argument. However, the glibc wrapper function hides this behavior by using a local variable for the timeout argument that is passed to the system call. Thus, the glibc **ppoll**() function does not modify its *tmo_p* argument.

The raw **ppoll**() system call has a fifth argument, *size_t sigsetsize*, which specifies the size in bytes of the *sigmask* argument. The glibc **ppoll**() wrapper function specifies this argument as a fixed value (equal to *sizeof(kernel_sigset_t)*). See sigprocmask(2) for a discussion on the differences between the kernel and the libc notion of the sigset.

STANDARDS top

poll() POSIX.1-2008.

ppoll()
Linux.

HISTORY top

poll() POSIX.1-2001. Linux 2.1.23.

On older kernels that lack this system call, the glibc **poll**() wrapper function provides emulation using select(2).

ppoll()
Linux 2.6.16, glibc 2.4.

NOTES top

The operation of **poll**() and **ppoll**() is not affected by the **O_NONBLOCK** flag.

For a discussion of what may happen if a file descriptor being monitored by **poll**() is closed in another thread, see select(2).

BUGS top

See the discussion of spurious readiness notifications under the BUGS section of select(2).

EXAMPLES top

The program below opens each of the files named in its command-line arguments and monitors the resulting file descriptors for readiness to read (**POLLIN**). The program loops, repeatedly using **poll**() to monitor the file descriptors, printing the number of ready file descriptors on return. For each ready file descriptor, the program:

- displays the returned *revents* field in a human-readable form;
- if the file descriptor is readable, reads some data from it, and displays that data on standard output; and
- if the file descriptor was not readable, but some other event occurred (presumably **POLLHUP**), closes the file descriptor.

Suppose we run the program in one terminal, asking it to open a FIFO:

```
$ mkfifo myfifo
$ ./poll_input myfifo
```

In a second terminal window, we then open the FIFO for writing, write some data to it, and close the FIFO:

```
$ echo aaaaabbbbbccccc > myfifo
```

In the terminal where we are running the program, we would then see:

```
Opened "myfifo" on fd 3
About to poll()
Ready: 1
  fd=3; events: POLLIN POLLHUP
    read 10 bytes: aaaaabbbbb
About to poll()
Ready: 1
  fd=3; events: POLLIN POLLHUP
    read 6 bytes: ccccc

About to poll()
Ready: 1
  fd=3; events: POLLHUP
    closing fd 3
All file descriptors closed; bye
```

In the above output, we see that **poll**() returned three times:

- On the first return, the bits returned in the *revents* field were **POLLIN**, indicating that the file descriptor is readable, and **POLLHUP**, indicating that the other end of the FIFO has been closed. The program then consumed some of the available input.

- The second return from **poll**() also indicated **POLLIN** and **POLLHUP**; the program then consumed the last of the available input.

- On the final return, **poll**() indicated only **POLLHUP** on the FIFO, at which point the file descriptor was closed and the program terminated.

Program source

```
/* poll_input.c

   Licensed under GNU General Public License v2 or later.
*/
#include <fcntl.h>
#include <poll.h>
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <sys/types.h>
#include <unistd.h>

#define errExit(msg)    do { perror(msg); exit(EXIT_FAILURE); \
                        } while (0)

int
main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    int            ready;
    char           buf[10];
    nfds_t         num_open_fds, nfds;
    ssize_t        s;
```

```
           struct pollfd  *pfds;

           if (argc < 2) {
              fprintf(stderr, "Usage: %s file...\n", argv[0]);
              exit(EXIT_FAILURE);
           }

           num_open_fds = nfds = argc - 1;
           pfds = calloc(nfds, sizeof(struct pollfd));
           if (pfds == NULL)
               errExit("malloc");

           /* Open each file on command line, and add it to 'pfds' array. */

           for (nfds_t j = 0; j < nfds; j++) {
               pfds[j].fd = open(argv[j + 1], O_RDONLY);
               if (pfds[j].fd == -1)
                   errExit("open");

               printf("Opened \"%s\" on fd %d\n", argv[j + 1], pfds[j].fd);

               pfds[j].events = POLLIN;
           }

           /* Keep calling poll() as long as at least one file descriptor is
              open. */

           while (num_open_fds > 0) {
               printf("About to poll()\n");
               ready = poll(pfds, nfds, -1);
               if (ready == -1)
                   errExit("poll");

               printf("Ready: %d\n", ready);

               /* Deal with array returned by poll(). */

               for (nfds_t j = 0; j < nfds; j++) {
                   if (pfds[j].revents != 0) {
                       printf("  fd=%d; events: %s%s%s\n", pfds[j].fd,
                              (pfds[j].revents & POLLIN)  ? "POLLIN "  : "",
                              (pfds[j].revents & POLLHUP) ? "POLLHUP " : "",
                              (pfds[j].revents & POLLERR) ? "POLLERR " : "");

                       if (pfds[j].revents & POLLIN) {
                           s = read(pfds[j].fd, buf, sizeof(buf));
                           if (s == -1)
                               errExit("read");
                           printf("    read %zd bytes: %.*s\n",
                                  s, (int) s, buf);
                       } else {                /* POLLERR | POLLHUP */
                           printf("    closing fd %d\n", pfds[j].fd);
                           if (close(pfds[j].fd) == -1)
                               errExit("close");
                           num_open_fds--;
                       }
                   }
               }
           }

           printf("All file descriptors closed; bye\n");
           exit(EXIT_SUCCESS);
       }
```

SEE ALSO top

restart_syscall(2), select(2), select_tut(2), **timespec**(3), epoll(7), time(7)

COLOPHON top

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