NAME
>   whatis – display one-line manual page descriptions

SYNOPSIS
>   **whatis** [**−dlv?V**] [**−r** | **−w**] [**−s** *list*] [**−m** *system* [,. . .]] [**−M** *path*] [**−L** *locale*] [**−C** *file*] *name* . . .

DESCRIPTION
>   Each manual page has a short description available within it. **whatis** searches the manual page names and
>   displays the manual page descriptions of any *name* matched.
>
>   *name* may contain wildcards (**−w**) or be a regular expression (**−r**). Using these options, it may be neces-
>   sary to quote the *name* or escape (\) the special characters to stop the shell from interpreting them.
>
>   **index** databases are used during the search, and are updated by the **mandb** program. Depending on your
>   installation, this may be run by a periodic cron job, or may need to be run manually after new manual pages
>   have been installed. To produce an old style text **whatis** database from the relative **index** database, issue
>   the command:
>
>   **whatis −M** *manpath* **−w** **'*'** **| sort >** *manpath/whatis*
>
>   where *manpath* is a manual page hierarchy such as */usr/man*.

OPTIONS
>   **−d**, **−−debug**
>
> >   Print debugging information.
>
>   **−v**, **−−verbose**
>
> >   Print verbose warning messages.
>
>   **−r**, **−−regex**
>
> >   Interpret each *name* as a regular expression. If a *name* matches any part of a page name, a match
> >   will be made. This option causes **whatis** to be somewhat slower due to the nature of database
> >   searches.
>
>   **−w**, **−−wildcard**
>
> >   Interpret each *name* as a pattern containing shell style wildcards. For a match to be made, an ex-
> >   panded *name* must match the entire page name. This option causes **whatis** to be somewhat slower
> >   due to the nature of database searches.
>
>   **−l**, **−−long**
>
> >   Do not trim output to the terminal width. Normally, output will be truncated to the terminal width
> >   to avoid ugly results from poorly-written **NAME** sections.
>
>   **−s** *list*, **−−sections** *list*, **−−section** *list*
>
> >   Search only the given manual sections. *list* is a colon- or comma-separated list of sections. If an
> >   entry in *list* is a simple section, for example "3", then the displayed list of descriptions will include
> >   pages in sections "3", "3perl", "3x", and so on; while if an entry in *list* has an extension, for exam-
> >   ple "3perl", then the list will only include pages in that exact part of the manual section.
>
>   **−m** *system* [,. . .]*, **−−systems=***system* [,. . .]
>
> >   If this system has access to other operating system's manual page names, they can be accessed us-
> >   ing this option. To search NewOS's manual page names, use the option **−m NewOS**.
> >
> >   The *system* specified can be a combination of comma delimited operating system names. To in-
> >   clude a search of the native operating system's manual page names, include the system name **man**
> >   in the argument string. This option will override the $**SYSTEM** environment variable.
>
>   **−M** *path*, **−−manpath=***path*
>
> >   Specify an alternate set of colon-delimited manual page hierarchies to search. By default, **whatis**
> >   uses the $**MANPATH** environment variable, unless it is empty or unset, in which case it will

determine an appropriate manpath based on your $**PATH** environment variable. This option overrides the contents of $**MANPATH**.

−L *locale*, **−−locale=***locale*

> **whatis** will normally determine your current locale by a call to the C function **setlocale**(3) which interrogates various environment variables, possibly including $**LC_MESSAGES** and $**LANG**. To temporarily override the determined value, use this option to supply a *locale* string directly to **whatis**. Note that it will not take effect until the search for pages actually begins. Output such as the help message will always be displayed in the initially determined locale.

−C *file*, **−−config−file=** *file*

> Use this user configuration file rather than the default of ˜/.*manpath*.

−?, **−−help**

> Print a help message and exit.

−−usage

> Print a short usage message and exit.

−V, **−−version**

> Display version information.

EXIT STATUS

0   Successful program execution.

1   Usage, syntax or configuration file error.

2   Operational error.

16   Nothing was found that matched the criteria specified.

ENVIRONMENT

SYSTEM

> If $**SYSTEM** is set, it will have the same effect as if it had been specified as the argument to the **−m** option.

MANPATH

> If $**MANPATH** is set, its value is interpreted as the colon-delimited manual page hierarchy search path to use.

MANWIDTH

> If $**MANWIDTH** is set, its value is used as the terminal width (see the **−−long** option). If it is not set, the terminal width will be calculated using the value of $**COLUMNS**, an **ioctl**(2) if available, or falling back to 80 characters if all else fails.

FILES

/usr/share/man/index.(bt|db|dir|pag)

> A traditional global *index* database cache.

/var/cache/man/index.(bt|db|dir|pag)

> An FHS compliant global *index* database cache.

/usr/share/man/ . . . /whatis

> A traditional **whatis** text database.

SEE ALSO

apropos(1), **man**(1), **mandb**(8)

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