An introduction to Linux

To use Linux properly you’ll have to know some basic Debian commands. This includes creating, moving, renaming, and deleting files and directories and being able to navigate different directories.

1. Pwd

One directory is always considered the current working directory for the shell you’re using. You can view this directory with the *pwd* command, which stands for “Print working directory”. If you’re just getting started this is probably /home/yourusername.

1. Ls

*Ls* stands for “list”, as in “list files”. When you type *ls*, the system displays a list of all the files on your current working directory. Note that if you’ve just installed Debian, your home directory may be empty. If your working directory is empty, *ls* produces no output, since there are no files to list.

1. Cd /

*Cd* stands for “change directory”. Using “cd /” will change your working directory to the root directory. If you get lost, typing *cd* with no arguments will return you to your home directory - /home/yourusername

Try walking up and down the file system, inspect the directories and see what files are there.

1. Mkdir

*Mkdir* stands for “make directory”. Try creating a new directory called “practice” in your home directory. Using *mkdir*, the new directory will be created in your current working directory (which should be your home directory, otherwise, type *cd* to switch to it). You can also try using *ls* to verify that the directory was created.

Now, for a simple challenge, create a new subdirectory in the directory “practice”. Use the *cd*, *ls* and *mkdir* commands you’ve just learnt.

1. Cp

*Cp* is the command used for copying files. It takes a file or several files from the current working directory, and copies them to a new location that you specify.

Example: cp textfile.txt /home/practice.

This would copy textfile.txt into the practice directory we created earlier in our home directory. I don’t need to specify an address for the file since it currently is in my working directory. If the file you’re copying is not in the current working directory, you will need to specify a complete address to it. There are many different options you can include in the *cp* command to change how it works, far too many to list here. Try using Google to find a list of them if you want to learn more.

1. More

*More* is a command use to view text inside a text file. It is called *more* because it shows a screenful of the file at a time, and you press spacebar to see more. The command is finished when you reach the end of the file, or when you type q (quit).

Example 1: more textfile.txt (This will show all the contents of the file)

Example 2: more +5 textfile.txt (This will show the contents of the file, starting at line 5)

1. Mv

*Mv* stands for move. It is used to move files (like cut and paste in Windows). *Mv* can also be used to rename files.

Example 1: mv textfile.txt practice (Moves the file into the subdirectory “practice”)

Example 2: mv textfile ../ (Moves the file into its parent directory)

Example 3: mv textfile.txt filewithtext.txt (Renames the file to “filewithtext”)

1. Rm

*Rm* stands for remove. It is used to remove files. Be careful though, removal of files is permanent, there is no way to undo it!

Example: rm textfile.txt (This would remove textfile.txt, which has to be in your working directory since you don’t specify an address)

1. Rmdir

*Rmdir* stands for “remove directory”, it works in almost the same way as *rm*. The difference is that *rmdir* removes directories. *Rmdir* only works on empty directories. If a directory contains files, you must delete them first, or alternatively use *rm –r* instead of *rmdir*.

Linux is a multitasking system. It can do many tasks at once, and each of these tasks is called a process.