

4.5.1 VPATH: Search Path for All Prerequisites

The value of the make variable VPATH specifies a list of directories that make should search. Most often, the directories are expected to contain prerequisite files that are not in the current directory; however, make uses VPATH as a search list for both prerequisites and targets of rules.

Thus, if a file that is listed as a target or prerequisite does not exist in the current directory, make searches the directories listed in VPATH for a file with that name. If a file is found in one of them, that file may become the prerequisite (see below). Rules may then specify the names of files in the prerequisite list as if they all existed in the current directory. See [Writing Recipes with Directory Search](#).

In the VPATH variable, directory names are separated by colons or blanks. The order in which directories are listed is the order followed by make in its search. (On MS-DOS and MS-Windows, semi-colons are used as separators of directory names in VPATH, since the colon can be used in the pathname itself, after the drive letter.)

For example,

```
VPATH = src:../headers
```

specifies a path containing two directories, src and ../headers, which make searches in that order.

With this value of VPATH, the following rule,

```
foo.o : foo.c
```

is interpreted as if it were written like this:

```
foo.o : src/foo.c
```

assuming the file `foo.c` does not exist in the current directory but is found in the directory `src`.

Next: [Selective Search](#), Previous: [Directory Search](#), Up: [Directory Search](#) [[Contents](#)][[Index](#)]