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Why and How To Customize a UNIX / Linux User Account?

Posted by [Vivek Gite](#) <vivek@nixcraft.com>

Q. Can you tell more about UNIX user account customization along with some sample configuration?

A. Usually [useradd / adduser](#) ^[2] and [passwd commands](#) ^[3] are used for creating an entry for a user in [/etc/passwd](#) ^[4], [/etc/shadow](#) ^[5] and [/etc/group](#) ^[6] files. However, adding user in files may not provide all the functionality needed. You need to set user customization by modifying various scripts located at /etc or ~/ (user home directory). These scripts executed at the start of every console (text based) login or ssh session to setup the user's environment.



[1]

Typical UNIX / Linux login scenario

```
User login / SSH Login
|
System login script /etc/profile
|
Personal login script $HOME/.profile
|
Shell startup script $HOME/.bash_profile $HOME/.shrc
|
User logged in (login complete)
```

You can add system wide customization using /etc/profile file. End users can manage their own profile / custom environment using personal login script or shell startup script.

Why customize a UNIX / Linux / BSD user account?

Following are few common examples:

1. Set the JDK / JVM / PATH variables
2. Set the user's terminal type
3. Customize the user's prompt
4. Set a default text editor
5. Setup historyfile size and location
6. Run reports as soon as you log into account etc
7. Set a command line shortcuts and aliases

Sample Customization

```
$ cat ~/.bash_profile
```

Output:

```
export TERM=xterm # my terminal type
export PS1="$ " # my sweet prompt
export JAVA_HOME=/opt/jvm/java-6-sun #for java
export PATH=$PATH:$JAVA_HOME/bin:/home/vivek/bin # my binary file search path
export EDITOR=vim # my editor
```

```
export HISTSIZE=100 # history file size
export HISTFILE=~/.cmd_history # history file location
umask 077 # my umask
ulimit -c 0 # unlimited core file
# some shell variables
set -o noclobber
set -o physical
shopt -s cdspell
shopt -s extglob
shopt -s dotglob
shopt -s cmdhist
shopt -s lithist
shopt -s progcomp
shopt -s checkhash
shopt -s histreedit
shopt -s promptvars
shopt -s cdable_vars
shopt -s checkwinsize
shopt -s hostcomplete
shopt -s expand_aliases
shopt -s interactive_comments
bind '"\C-t": possible-completions' # replaces 'transpose-chars'
bind '"\M-t": menu-complete' # replaces 'transpose-words'
```

View environment variables list

Simply user env command, enter:

```
$ env
```

/etc/skel directory to push configuration to user

By default all files from /etc/skel are copied to the new user's home directory; when a new user account created. There are few files included in /etc/skel/ by default.

- /etc/skel/.bash_logout
- /etc/skel/.bashrc
- /etc/skel/.profile
- /etc/skel/.cshrc
- /etc/skel/.exrc (/etc/skel/.vimrc)

You can also create or copy existing scripts in /etc/skel. For example copy /usr/share/vim/vimrc to /etc/skel/.vimrc

```
# cp /usr/share/vim/vimrc /etc/skel/.vimrc
```

Now file /etc/skel/.vimrc will be copied when a new user account created.

Suggested readings:

- man pages bash, csh, ksh, sh

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URLs in this post:

- [1] Image: <http://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/faq/category/bash-shell/>
- [2] useradd / adduser: <http://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/howto-add-new-linux-user-account/>
- [3] passwd commands: <http://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/linux-set-change-password-how-to/>
- [4] /etc/passwd: <http://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/understanding-etcpasswd-file-format/>
- [5] /etc/shadow: <http://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/understanding-etcshadow-file/>
- [6] etc/group: <http://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/understanding-etcgroup-file/>

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