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Korn Shell Variables

Posted by [Vivek Gite](#) <vivek@nixcraft.com>This entry is part 2 of 3 in the series [UNIX Korn Shell Scripting](#) ^[1][UNIX Korn Shell Scripting](#) ^[1]

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What is a shell variables? How do I define and use a variable under korn shell?

A variable is nothing but a symbolic name associated with a value and whose associated value may be changed.

Variables is used by the Korn shell to store values. Setting variables within a script or at a shell prompt is pretty simple. Define a variable called IP and BASE as follows:

^[4]

```
IP="foo"  
BASE="/nas/backup"
```

To display variable, use:

```
echo $IP  
echo $BASE
```

Rules For Naming Korn Shell Variables

1. Korn shell variable names can begin with an alphabetic (a–Z) or underscore character.
2. Other variable names that contain only digits (0–9) or special characters (!, @, #, %, *, ?, \$) are reserved for special parameters set directly by the Korn shell.

How Do I Create a Null Variable?

Simply use the following syntax:

```
DIR=
```

If a value is not given, the variable is set to null.

Common Shell Variable Examples

Set backup directory path:

```
BACKUPROOT=/iscsi/mysql
```

Store date and time:

```
NOW=$(date)
```

Set file path

```
HTTPDCONF=/etc/httpd/httpd.conf
```

A Sample Shell Script Using Variables

```
#!/bin/ksh
NOW=$(date)
DNSCONF="/etc/resolv.conf"
SERVERNAME=$(hostname)
OS=$(uname)

echo "Your OS : $OS"
echo "Server Name : $SERVERNAME"
echo "Current date and time : $NOW"
echo "Client DNS Config file - $DNSCONF"
echo "-----"
cat $DNSCONF
```

typeset Command

Use typeset to define variable attributes. Some common examples:

Set the type of variable to be integer

```
typeset -i x=10
typeset -i y=10
typeset -i z=$(( $x + $y ))
echo "$x + $y = $z"
```

Set the type of variable to be float

```
typeset -F PI=3.14
echo $PI
```

You can also use it as follows:

```
typeset -F3 PI=3.14159
echo $PI
```

How Do I Store Command Output To a Variable?

Variables can be assigned command output using the following format:

```
variable=$(command)
```

or

```
variable=`command`
```

For e.g. store hostname to a variable called HOST, enter:

```
HOST=`hostname`
echo $HOST
```

OR

```
HOST=$(hostname)
```

How Do I Define Read Only Variable?

Set the readonly attribute using typeset command:

```
typeset -r BASE=/iscsi
```

If you try to make change, you will be greeted with an error message:

```
BASE=foo
```

ksh: BASE: is read only

ksh shell programming, unix ksh variable, ksh positional parameters, ksh variable substitution, bin ksh, ksh shell script

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