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Understanding Linux / UNIX tr command

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

Q. Can you explain the tr command and how to use it under Linux / UNIX like oses?

A. The tr utility copies the given input to produced the output with substitution or deletion of selected characters. tr abbreviated as translate or transliterate. It takes as parameters two sets of characters, and replaces occurrences of the characters in the first set with the corresponding elements from the other set i.e. it is used to translate characters.



It is commonly used in shell scripts and other application.

[1]

tr command syntax

```
tr [options] "set1" "set2"
echo something | tr "set1" "set2"
tr "set1" "set2" < input.txt
tr "set1" "set2" < input.txt > output.txt
```

How do I use tr command under Linux / UNIX?

Translate the word 'linux' to upper-case:

```
$ echo 'linux' | tr "[:lower:]" "[:upper:]"
$ echo 'linux' | tr "a-z" "A-Z"
$ echo 'I LovE linuX. one is better Than 2' | tr "a-z" "A-Z"
```

Output:

```
LINUX
I LOVE LINUX. ONE IS BETTER THAN 2
```

Create a list of the words in /path/to/file, one per line, enter:

```
$ tr -cs "[:alpha:]" "\n" < /path/to/file
```

Where,

- -c : Complement the set of characters in string1
- -s : Replace each input sequence of a repeated character that is listed in SET1 with a single occurrence of that character

Shell scripting example

In the following example you will get confirmation before deleting the file. If the user responds in lower case, the tr command will do nothing, but if the user responds in upper case, the character will be changed to lower case. This will ensure that even if user responds with YES, YeS, YEs etc; script should remove file:

```
#!/bin/bash
echo -n "Enter file name : "
read myfile
echo -n "Are you sure ( yes or no ) ? "
read confirmation
confirmation="$(echo ${confirmation} | tr 'A-Z' 'a-z')"
```

```
if [ "$confirmation" == "yes" ]; then
    [ -f $myfile ] && /bin/rm $myfile || echo "Error - file $myfile not found"
else
```

```
: # do nothing  
fi
```

Remove all non-printable characters from myfile.txt

```
$ tr -cd "[:print:]" < myfile.txt
```

Remove all two more successive blank spaces from a copy of the text in a file called input.txt and save output to a new file called output.txt

```
tr -s ' ' ' ' < input.txt > output.txt
```

The -d option is used to delete every instance of the string (i.e., sequence of characters) specified in set1. For example, the following would remove every instance of the word nameserver from a copy of the text in a file called /etc/resolv.conf and write the output to a file called ns.ipaddress.txt:

```
tr -d 'nameserver' < /etc/resolv.conf > ns.ipaddress.txt
```

Recommended readings:

To check the other options that can be used in the tr command, see the tr command man page, enter:

```
$ man tr
```

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