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Tar Extract a Single File(s) From a Large Tarball

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Q. I've couple of large tarballs such as `www.tar` and `images.tar`. Is it possible to extract a single file or a list of files from a large tarball such as `images.tar` instead of extracting the entire tarball? How do I extract specific files under Linux / UNIX operating systems?

A. GNU tar can be used to extract a single or more files from a tarball. To extract specific archive members, give their exact member names as arguments, as [printed by -t option](#) ^[3].

UNIX

[1]



[2]

Extracting Specific Files

Extract a file called `etc/default/sysstat` from `config.tar.gz` tarball:

```
$ tar -ztvf config.tar.gz
$ tar -zxvf config.tar.gz etc/default/sysstat
$ tar -xvf {tarball.tar} {path/to/file}
```

Some people prefers following syntax:

```
tar --extract --file={tarball.tar} {file}
```

Extract a directory called `css` from `cbz.tar`:

```
$ tar --extract --file=cbz.tar css
```

Wildcard based extracting

You can also extract those files that match a specific globbing pattern (wildcards). For example, to extract from `cbz.tar` all files that begin with `pic`, no matter their directory prefix, you could type:

```
$ tar -xf cbz.tar --wildcards --no-anchored 'pic*'
```

To extract all `php` files, enter:

```
$ tar -xf cbz.tar --wildcards --no-anchored '*.php'
```

Where,

- **-x**: instructs tar to extract files.
- **-f**: specifies filename / tarball name.
- **-v**: Verbose (show progress while extracting files).
- **-j**: filter archive through bzip2, use to decompress .bz2 files.
- **-z**: filter archive through gzip, use to decompress .gz files.
- **--wildcards**: instructs tar to treat command line arguments as globbing patterns.
- **--no-anchored**: informs it that the patterns apply to member names after any / delimiter.

Further readings:

- GNU tar man page

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[2] Image: <http://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/category/bash-shell/>

[3] printed by -t option: <http://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/list-the-contents-of-a-tar-or-targz-file/>

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