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UNIX Shell: Find Out Real Path Of File (Directory)

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Q. Some of my programs and scripts needs a real path and not a symbolic link. How to I determine a real path of any directory under Linux / UNIX operating systems? How do I remove references to `/.`, `./` and extra `'/'` character in path?

A. To get physical path use `realpath` command. The `realpath` command uses the `realpath()` function to resolve all symbolic links, extra `/` characters and references to `/.` and `./` in path. This is useful for shell scripting and security related applications.



[1]

realpath examples

Resolve symbolic link:

```
$ realpath /home
```

Sample output:

```
/usr/home
```

Remove characters:

```
$ realpath /etc//apache/.
$ realpath ./foo
$ realpath ../../some/where///../..path/
```

`realpath` includes with many distro and UNIX operating system such as FreeBSD. To install `realpath` under Debian / Ubuntu Linux, enter:

```
$ sudo apt-get install realpath
```

readlink command

Please note that mostly the same functionality is provided by the `-f` option of the `readlink` command:

```
$ readlink -f /home
```

Further readings:

- man pages `readlink`, `realpath`

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