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Linux: How to delete a partition with fdisk command

Posted by Vivek Gite <vivek@nixcraft.com>

Q. My system comes with pre installed Linux and XP. Now I would like to delete a partition. How do I delete a partition?

A. Hard disks can be divided into one or more logical disks called partitions. This division is described in the partition table found in sector 0 of the disk.

You need to use fdisk command. It is a menu driven program for creation and manipulation of partition tables. However this program needs the device name (hard disk name) to manipulate partitions. Usually you use following names
/dev/hda
/dev/hdb
/dev/sda
/dev/sdb

[1]

So,
=> /dev/hd[a-h] for IDE disks
=> /dev/sd[a-p] for SCSI disks
=> /dev/ed[a-d] for ESDI disks
=> /dev/xd[ab] for XT disks.

A device name refers to the entire hard disk. For more information see Linux partition naming convention and IDE drive mappings [2].

Before typing any one of the following command(s) make sure you have the backup of important data.

First, get a listing of your current partition scheme, type the following command:

```
# fdisk -l.
```

Output:

```
Disk /dev/hda: 20.0 GB, 20060651520 bytes
255 heads, 63 sectors/track, 2438 cylinders
Units = cylinders of 16065 * 512 = 8225280 bytes

   Device Boot      Start         End      Blocks   Id  System
/dev/hda1              1        1024     8225248+   b  W95 FAT32
/dev/hda2   *        1025        2438    11357955    c  W95 FAT32 (LBA)

Disk /dev/hdb: 80.0 GB, 80060424192 bytes
255 heads, 63 sectors/track, 9733 cylinders
Units = cylinders of 16065 * 512 = 8225280 bytes

   Device Boot      Start         End      Blocks   Id  System
/dev/hdb1   *          1        2432    19535008+  83  Linux
/dev/hdb2            2433        2554      979965   82  Linux swap / Solaris
/dev/hdb3            2555        6202    29302560   83  Linux
/dev/hdb4            6203        9733    28362757+   5  Extended
/dev/hdb5            6203        9733    28362726   83  Linux
```

From above output I have two hard disks:
=> /dev/hda - 20 GB
=> /dev/hdb - 80 GB

Let us assume that you want to remove a partition from /dev/hdb disk. Type the following command:

```
# fdisk /dev/hdb
```

Output:

```
The number of cylinders for this disk is set to 9733.
There is nothing wrong with that, but this is larger than 1024,
and could in certain setups cause problems with:
1) software that runs at boot time (e.g., old versions of LILO)
2) booting and partitioning software from other OSs
   (e.g., DOS FDISK, OS/2 FDISK)

Command (m for help):
```

Now type p command to list partition:

```
Command (m for help): p
```

Output:

```
Disk /dev/hdb: 80.0 GB, 80060424192 bytes
255 heads, 63 sectors/track, 9733 cylinders
Units = cylinders of 16065 * 512 = 8225280 bytes

   Device Boot      Start         End      Blocks   Id  System
/dev/hdb1   *           1        2432    19535008+  83  Linux
/dev/hdb2            2433        2554      979965   82  Linux swap / Solaris
/dev/hdb3            2555        6202    29302560   83  Linux
/dev/hdb4            6203        9733    28362757+   5  Extended
/dev/hdb5            6203        9733    28362726   83  Linux
```

Now let us say you want to delete /dev/hdb3 (3rd partition). Type the d command to delete a partition:

```
Command (m for help): d
Partition number (1-4): 3
```

It will prompt you for the partition number. Type 3:

Verify that partition deleted:

```
Command (m for help): p
```

Now save the changes and exit to shell prompt. Type the w command:

```
Command (m for help): w
```

Reboot the system.

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[2] Linux partition naming convention and IDE drive mappings: **http://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/linux-partition-naming-convention-and-ide-drive-mappings/**