



Filtering Input

The **grep** command is a text filter that will search input and return lines which contain a match to a given pattern.

```
grep [OPTIONS] PATTERN [FILE]
```

Follow Along

Use the following command to switch to the **Documents** directory:

```
sysadmin@localhost:~$ cd ~/Documents
```

If the example below fails, repeat the example from *Section 11: Copying Files*:

```
sysadmin@localhost:~/Documents$ cp /etc/passwd .
```

For example, the **passwd** file we previously copied into the **Documents** directory contains the details of special system accounts and user accounts on the system. This file can be very large, however the **grep** command can be used to filter out information about a specific user, such as the **sysadmin** user. Use **sysadmin** as the pattern argument and **passwd** as the file argument:

```
sysadmin@localhost:~/Documents$ grep sysadmin passwd
sysadmin:x:1001:1001:System Administrator,,,,:/home/sysadmin:/bin/bash
```

The command above returned the line from the **passwd** which contains the pattern **sysadmin**.

Note

This line is the `/etc/passwd` entry pertaining to the user `sysadmin` and provides information that is beyond the scope of this course. To learn more about this file, check out [NDG Linux Essentials](#).

The example above uses a simple search term as the pattern, however `grep` is able to interpret much more complex search patterns.