ask ubuntu

A command to list all users? And how to add, delete, modify users?

Asked 5 years, 6 months ago   Active 2 months ago   Viewed 3.0m times

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I need a command to list all users in terminal. And how to add, delete, modify users from terminal.

That could help in administrating your accounts easily by terminal.

command-line   user-management

edited Jul 2 '14 at 18:10   community wiki
                                             19 revs, 2 users 77%
                                             nux

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3   sed answer `sed 's/:.*//' /etc/passwd` — Avinash Raj Jul 21 '16 at 13:02

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2   list users: `awk -F: '{ print $1 }' /etc/passwd` — saviour123 Aug 23 '17 at 9:51

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8 Answers

```
cut -d: -f1 /etc/passwd
```

To list all users capable of authenticating (in some way), including non-local, see [this reply](#).

Some more useful user-management commands (also limited to *local* users):

To add

To add a new user you can use:

```
sudo adduser new_username
```

or:

```
sudo useradd new_username
```

See also: [What is the difference between adduser and useradd?](#)

To remove/delete

To remove/delete a user, first you can use:

```
sudo userdel username
```

Then you may want to delete the home directory for the deleted user account :

```
sudo rm -r /home/username
```

Please use with caution the above command!

To modify

To modify the username of a user:

```
usermod -l new_username old_username
```

To change the password for a user:

```
sudo passwd username
```

To change the shell for a user:

```
sudo chsh username
```

To change the details for a user (for example real name):

```
sudo chfn username
```

or

```
usermod -aG sudo username
```

And, of course, see also: `man adduser` , `man useradd` , `man userdel` … and so on.

edited May 27 at 18:12
Pablo Bianchi
3,911 ● 2 ● 19 ● 44

answered Jan 24 '14 at 20:23
Radu Rădeanu
126k ● 36 ● 264 ● 333

12   Radu forgot to mention `sudo chfn <username>` which changes user details (for example real name). I tried to add this as a comment, but I got error telling me that I must have +50 reputation to do so. – Mikaela Jan 29 '14 at 7:26

2   I think that it should be underlined that the correct answer to the linked question is askubuntu.com/a/381646/16395 --- otherwise you have to take into account the GID/UID Ubuntu policies by hand. The accepted answer is not so clear. – Rmano May 21 '14 at 18:02

    sudo userdel DOMAIN\\johndoe gives me the error: "userdel: cannot remove entry 'DOMAIN\johndoe' from /etc/passwd -- I looked in /etc/passwd and they're not even in there, likely because it's a "domain" account? – 00fruX Aug 7 '14 at 19:44 ✎

1   @00fruX Yeah... If you're using a centralised user database you're going to need to deal with it directly. – Oli ♦ Aug 8 '14 at 8:32

1   +1 for What is the difference between adduser and useradd? – sonlexqt Oct 22 '15 at 10:20

Just press `Ctrl`+`Alt`+`T` on your keyboard to open Terminal. When it opens, run the command(s) below:

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```
cat /etc/passwd
```

OR

```
less /etc/passwd
more /etc/passwd
```

You can also use awk:awk

```
awk -F':' '{ print $1}' /etc/passwd
```

answered Jan 24 '14 at 19:28
Mitch ♦

You can use useradd command. – Mitch ♦ Jan 24 '14 at 19:32

@nux A bit late to the party, but from command line use `adduser` instead, `useradd` should be limited to scripts where the author really really knows what he is doing. – flindeberg Jul 24 '16 at 14:39

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The easiest way to get this kind of information is `getent` - see manpage for the `getent` command 🔲. While that command gives the same output as `cat /etc/passwd` it is useful to remember because it will give you lists of several elements in the OS.

To get a list of all users you type (as users are listed in `/etc/passwd`)

```
getent passwd
```

To add a user *newuser* to the system you would type

```
sudo adduser newuser
```

to create a user that has all default settings applied.

Bonus: To add any user (for instance *anyuser*) to a group (for instance *cdrom*) type

```
sudo adduser anyuser cdrom
```

You delete a user (for instance *obsolete*) with

```
sudo deluser obsolete
```

If you want to delete his home directory/mails as well you type

```
sudo deluser --remove-home obsolete
```

And

```
sudo deluser --remove-all-files obsolete
```

will remove the user **and** all files owned by this user on the whole system.

answered Feb 2 '14 at 18:50   community wiki
                                      guntbert

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8   It's useful to remember that getent doesn't just print the output of users in /etc/passwd but all users in all
     configured userdb backends on a given system, whether it's /etc/passwd or LDAP, etc. – Marcin Kaminski
     Sep 25 '14 at 16:34

@MarcinKaminski is right, it also prints users setup in SSO systems who have access to the server. this answer is the the best one, with `getent passwd` being the right command – ulkas Sep 28 '18 at 8:25

@MarcinKaminski from all *enumerable* userdb backends – John Wiersba Jun 27 at 18:21

You can use `compgen` [GNU bash built-in](#) too:

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```
compgen -u
```

Will lists all users.

edited May 8 at 8:37

community wiki
2 revs, 2 users 89%
Ravexina

1   Shortest and working! Should be the accepted one in my view. – Nam G VU Mar 17 at 16:49

This should get, *under most normal situations*, all normal (non-system, not weird, etc) users:

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```
awk -F'[/:]' '{if ($3 >= 1000 && $3 != 65534) print $1}' /etc/passwd
```

This works by:

- reading in from `/etc/passwd`
- using `:` as a delimiter
- if the third field (the User ID number) is larger than 1000 and not 65534, the first field (the username of the user) is printed.

This is because on many linux systems, usernames above 1000 are reserved for unprivileged (you could say normal) users. Some info on this [here](#):

A user ID (UID) is a unique positive integer assigned by a Unix-like operating system to each user. Each user is identified to the system by its UID, and user names are generally used only as an interface for humans.

UIDs are stored, along with their corresponding user names and other user-specific information, in the /etc/passwd file...

The third field contains the UID, and the fourth field contains the group ID (GID), which by default is equal to the UID for all ordinary users.

In the Linux kernels 2.4 and above, UIDs are unsigned 32-bit integers that can represent values from zero to 4,294,967,296. However, it is advisable to use values only up to 65,534 in order to maintain compatibility with systems using older kernels or filesystems that can only accommodate 16-bit UIDs.

The UID of 0 has a special role: it is always the root account (i.e., the omnipotent administrative user). Although the user name can be changed on this account and additional accounts can be created with the same UID, neither action is wise from a security point of view.

The UID 65534 is commonly reserved for nobody, a user with no system privileges, as opposed to an ordinary (i.e., non-privileged) user. This UID is often used for individuals accessing the system remotely via FTP (file transfer protocol) or HTTP (hypertext transfer

UIDs 1 through 99 are traditionally reserved for special system users (sometimes called pseudo-users), such as wheel, daemon, lp, operator, news, mail, etc. These users are administrators who do not need total root powers, but who perform some administrative tasks and thus need more privileges than those given to ordinary users.

Some Linux distributions (i.e., versions) begin UIDs for non-privileged users at 100. Others, such as Red Hat, begin them at 500, and still others, such Debian, start them at 1000. Because of the differences among distributions, manual intervention can be necessary if multiple distributions are used in a network in an organization.

Also, it can be convenient to reserve a block of UIDs for local users, such as 1000 through 9999, and another block for remote users (i.e., users elsewhere on the network), such as 10000 to 65534. The important thing is to decide on a scheme and adhere to it.

Among the advantages of this practice of reserving blocks of numbers for particular types of users is that it makes it more convenient to search through system logs for suspicious user activity.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not necessary that each entry in the UID field be unique. However, non-unique UIDs can cause security problems, and thus UIDs should be kept unique across the entire organization. Likewise, recycling of UIDs from former users should be avoided for as long as possible.

edited Jun 8 '15 at 20:09

community wiki
2 revs
Wilf

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1   Almost a perfect answer, but IMO it's cleaner to use `getent` instead of reading straight from `/etc/passwd` and lookup `UID_MIN` / `UID_MAX` instead of hard-coding the values: `getent passwd | awk -F: "{if (\$3 >= $(awk '/^UID_MIN/ {print $2}' /etc/login.defs) && \$3 <= $(awk '/^UID_MAX/ {print $2}' /etc/login.defs)) print \$1}"` – Max Truxa Jul 8 at 12:29

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list of all users who can login (no system users like: bin,deamon,mail,sys, etc.)

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```
awk -F':' '$2 ~ "\$" {print $1}' /etc/shadow
```

add new user

```
sudo adduser new_username
```

or

```
sudo useradd new_username
```

delete/remove username

```
sudo userdel username
```

or

```
sudo rm -r /path/to/user_home_dir
```

If you want to delete all files from the system from this user (not only is the home diretory)

```
sudo deluser --remove-all-files
```

answered Sep 25 '14 at 15:47

community wiki
Donovan Vesters

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1   Maybe you should explain the difference between `adduser` and `useradd` . An also add the `sudo` -prefix to the first command. The password shadow file can only be read as root. – s3lph Sep 25 '14 at 20:13

1   `awk -F':' '$2 ~ "\$" {print $1}' /etc/shadow` showed me all user including bin, daemon, etc. and threw this warning: escape sequence `\$' treated as plain` $' I found this post stackoverflow.com/a/25867768/847954 and added one more backslash and it worked fine: `awk -F':' '$2 ~ "\\$" {print $1}' /etc/shadow` — jeff musk Jun 20 '18 at 5:43 ✏

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8   Ok here is a trick that will help you sort this. The terminal has auto completion if you type user and hit Tab key twice it will list all the commands that exist with user as the first 4 chars.

```
user (tab tab)
```

gives me as possible options useradd userdel usermod users users-admin
if you want to know more about a command google it or type man man useradd gives useradd - create a new user or update default new user information ... ...

to list users you should go with what Mitch said.

Hope that helps I love tab completion in bash saves me from remembering things.

answered Jan 24 '14 at 19:38

user239243
114 ● 3

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6   To find out the users which have home-directories in the /home-folder on the machine, run the following commands

```
cd /home
ls
```

You can then see the users who have authorization to log into the server. If we want to look into the files of any users, you must be the root user.

edited Jul 24 '16 at 14:45

community wiki

mandatory. – David Foerster Dec 19 '14 at 0:57

`ls /home` may also contain user directories of deleted users. – Suraj Jul 1 at 9:12

protected by Radu Rădeanu Feb 22 '15 at 17:21

Thank you for your interest in this question. Because it has attracted low-quality or spam answers that had to be removed, posting an answer now requires 10 reputation on this site (the association bonus does not count).

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