

Introduction to git

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Where to find this presentation

Find the presentation at <https://tinyurl.com/y8pr4mvq>.

On this page click on 'Download' to get a copy of the presentation.



Some commentary...

`https://stevebennett.me/2012/02/24/
10-things-i-hate-about-git/`

Purpose of presentation

- ▶ I don't want to teach you how to use git.
- ▶ Rather I want to illustrate (part of) git's 'internal model' and to define certain key git terminology so that you will be better prepared to teach yourself git.
- ▶ My examples assume you are calling git from the command-line. Friendlier interfaces to git exist - but you still need to know the underlying model to use them effectively.

Why is git (relatively) hard to come to terms with?

- ▶ The internal model is complicated.
- ▶ The interface is inconsistent.
- ▶ The documentation is suboptimal.
- ▶ Several key ideas have been given misleading names.
- ▶ It uses a 'distributed' model whereas what you usually want is a 'client/server' model. So you tend to be 'fighting against the paradigm'...

Source control

- ▶ Source control is software to ‘keep track of’ (i.e. store) successive versions as we edit a collection of *source* files (computer code, \LaTeX documents, etc.)
- ▶ Works best if the source is text, not binary. Intermediate files are usually not kept track of. Output files might be - your choice.
- ▶ Any serious project should be under source control.

Working directory and repository

- ▶ You need a *working directory* and a *repository*.
- ▶ The working directory and its subdirectories contain the actual files that you are editing.
- ▶ The repository is some sort of database containing all previous versions.
- ▶ One model would be to put the repository on the Internet or Intranet where everyone can see it...

Location of git repository

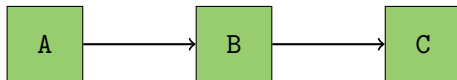
- ... But in git the repository is **next to** the working directory, in a hidden subdirectory (called `.git`) of the top-level working directory.

```
ucapwhi@splinter-login:pliny
[ucapwhi@splinter-login pliny]$ ls -la
total 52
drwxrwxr-x 14 ucapwhi ucapwhi 4096 Oct 20 15:44 .
drwxrwxr-x  8 ucapwhi ucapwhi   84 Sep 22 15:06 ..
drwxrwxr-x  4 ucapwhi ucapwhi   61 Sep 21 16:25 bench
drwxrwxr-x  2 ucapwhi ucapwhi 4096 Sep 22 13:48 bin
drwxrwxr-x  9 ucapwhi ucapwhi 4096 Sep 22 13:38 build
drwxrwxr-x  2 ucapwhi ucapwhi   51 Sep 21 16:25 cmake
-rw-rw-r--  1 ucapwhi ucapwhi  785 Sep 21 16:25 CMakeLists.txt
drwxrwxr-x  2 ucapwhi ucapwhi   45 Sep 21 16:25 doc
drwxrwxr-x  3 ucapwhi ucapwhi   44 Sep 21 16:25 examples
drwxrwxr-x  8 ucapwhi ucapwhi 4096 Oct 23 18:24 .git
-rw-rw-r--  1 ucapwhi ucapwhi  215 Sep 21 16:25 .gitignore
drwxrwxr-x  2 ucapwhi ucapwhi   57 Sep 21 16:25 libpliny
-rw-rw-r--  1 ucapwhi ucapwhi 15920 Sep 21 16:25 LICENSE
drwxrwxr-x  2 ucapwhi ucapwhi 4096 Sep 21 16:34 Pliny
drwxrwxr-x  2 ucapwhi ucapwhi   83 Sep 21 16:25 python
-rw-rw-r--  1 ucapwhi ucapwhi 2023 Sep 22 18:09 README.md
drwxrwxr-x  2 ucapwhi ucapwhi 4096 Oct 23 18:23 test
drwxrwxr-x  3 ucapwhi ucapwhi   22 Oct 20 15:44 Testing
[ucapwhi@splinter-login pliny]$
```

This has consequences...

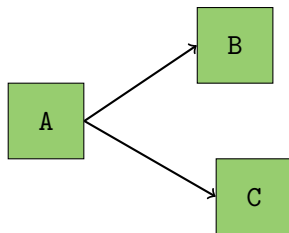
- ▶ You therefore need to have a git repository next to your working directory on your local directory (where you are doing the actual editing).
- ▶ But typically you will also need one on the internet (for backup and for collaboration and sharing).
- ▶ So you will typically be dealing with **two** git repositories (and dealing with the issues of keeping them in synch).
- ▶ The upside is that you can still do version control even if you are not connected to the Internet.

Example repository content



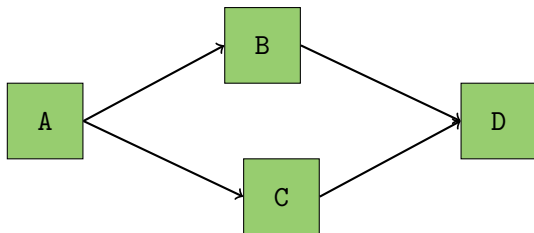
- ▶ This repository contains three successive versions of the files in the working directory (and its subdirectories).
- ▶ Each version is represented here as a *node* (in green).
- ▶ An initial set of files (version A) was committed to the repository; the files were then edited and the new file set (version B) was committed; the files were then edited and committed a third time (version C).

What do the arrows actually stand for?



- ▶ An arrow respects time (pointing from an earlier version to a later version), and indicates that a node was derived from an earlier node by editing.
- ▶ Q: There exists a set of edits that would take you from B to C, so why not show that arrow as well? A: It's an *itinerary* (showing the route we took), not a *map* of all possible routes.

Merging



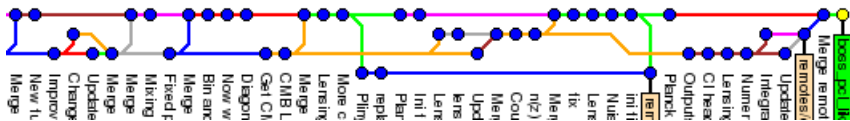
- ▶ Here we combined the 'A to B' edits and the 'A to C' edits (to form D), which was committed.
- ▶ More on such *merging* later.

DAG

- ▶ Hence we get a graph (in the mathematical sense of nodes plus edges).
- ▶ The graph is not a *tree* (because of merging).
- ▶ It is *directed* (edges have arrows) and *acyclic* (cycles would break causality), so we have a *DAG* (directed acyclic graph).
- ▶ Nodes have *parents* and *children*, and hence *ancestors* and *descendants*.
- ▶ One node - the initial *root* node - has no parents. All other nodes have one or two parents (or more in special cases). Thus the graph is connected, and any two nodes have ancestors in common.
- ▶ *Graph theory* is an interesting part of mathematics - but alas not useful here.

Seeing the DAG

- ▶ Run `gitk --all` to see the DAG (lots of other information as well).



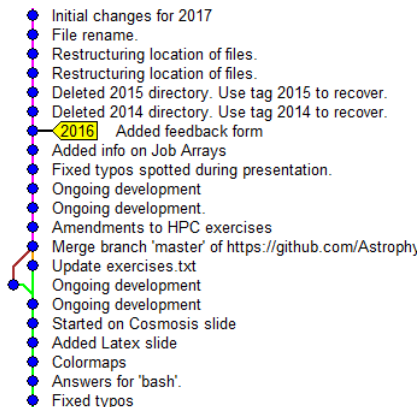
What's in a node?

At least:

- ▶ Pointers to enough information to reconstruct the working directory as of that instant.
- ▶ Administrative information: who made the commit, a 'commit message', etc.
- ▶ A permanent node name (SHA1 format - 40 hex digits e.g. c2d2ea34cec13a0956488f2b919861fccad8a448). You can abbreviate this to an initial substring (provided that it is long enough to be unique).

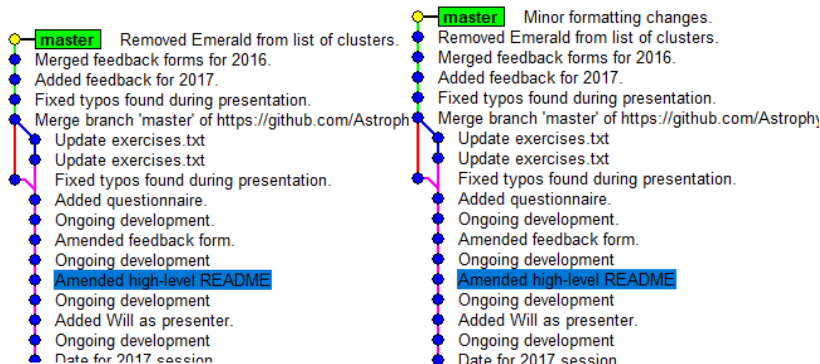
Pointers to nodes - tags

- ▶ A *tag* is a label that is attached to a node.



Pointers to nodes - branches (1)

- ▶ A *branch* is a moveable label that is attached to a node.
- ▶ Here 'moveable' means that if you commit an edit to that node then the branch label moves to the child node.

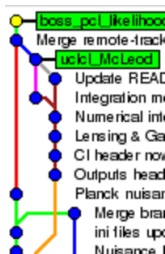


Pointers to nodes - branches (2)

- ▶ Because it moves with the commits, the branch is often thought of as a 'development line' (imagine not just the node that the branch points to, but also all the past and future nodes that the branch has pointed to or will point to).
- ▶ In some contexts (e.g. cloning) a branch is used to refer not only to the pointed-to node but also all its ancestors.

Pointers to nodes - branches (3)

- ▶ A branch can point to any node in the DAG - not just to a terminal node (= node with no descendents).
- ▶ So 'branch' is not a perfect metaphor; better is 'pointer to a place where growth may occur' (which may be on the trunk).

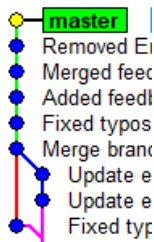


Pointers to nodes - branches (4)

- ▶ When git creates a new repository it creates a branch called 'master' that points to the root node.
- ▶ In the git community 'master' is usually taken to mean 'the main development line' and house rules often insist that the node pointed to by 'master' be 'good' (i.e. stable, tested, usable).
- ▶ But this is not forced by git. You don't even need to have a master branch.

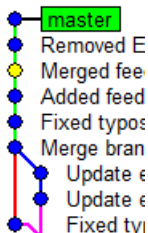
Pointers to nodes - HEAD (1)

- ▶ The special pointer HEAD points to the node that corresponds to the files in the working directory. This can be any node in the DAG.
- ▶ In gitk the HEAD node is shown in yellow.



Pointers to nodes - HEAD (2) - Detached HEAD

- Usually HEAD points to the same node as one of the branches. But it doesn't have to; if it doesn't then we say we have a 'detached HEAD'.



Name that node

How to refer to a node?

- ▶ Use its (abbreviated) SHA1 name e.g. 'c2d2ea34'.
- ▶ Or by a pointer name (a tag name, a branch name, or the name 'HEAD').
- ▶ Can append ^ to mean 'parent of', ^^ to mean 'grandparent', etc.
- ▶ Distinguish multiple parents via ^1 or ^2.
- ▶ Alternatively e.g. ~4 means the same as ^^^^.
- ▶ Example: `git checkout master^^`.