

As you can see, these sample setup files contain commands to print a “fortune” and the date—just what happened earlier when we logged in! (*/usr/games/fortune* is a useless but entertaining program that prints a randomly selected saying from its collection. **fortune** isn’t available on all systems.)

But what are these other commands?

- The line with **PATH=** or **set path =** tells the shell which directories to search for Unix programs. This saves you the trouble of typing the complete pathname for each program you run. (Notice that */usr/games* isn’t part of the path, so we had to use the absolute pathname to get our daily dose of wisdom from the **fortune** program.) The **export PATH** is needed in the *.profile*, but not in *.login*.*
- The line with **LESS=** or **setenv LESS** tells the **less** program which options you want to set every time you use it. This saves you the trouble of typing the options on every **less** command line. The **export LESS** line is needed in the *.profile*, but not in *.login*.
- The **umask** command sets the default file permissions assigned to all files you create. Briefly, a value of 022 sets the permissions **rw-r--r--** (read-write by owner, but read-only by everyone else), and 002 produces **rw-rw-r--** (read-write by owner and group, but read-only by everyone else). If this file is a program or a directory, both **umask** settings also give execute (**x**) permission to all users. For more information, see one of the sources in the section “Documentation” of Chapter 8.

You can change these files with a text editor, such as **pico -w** (see the section “The Pico Text Editor” in Chapter 4). Don’t use a word processor that breaks long lines or puts special nontext codes into the file. Any changes you make to those files will take effect the next time you log in (or, in some cases, when you start a new shell—such as opening a new terminal window in your window system). Unfortunately, it’s not always easy to know which shell setup file you should change.† And an editing mistake in your shell setup file can keep you from logging in to your account! We suggest that beginners get help from experienced users—and not make changes to these files at all if you’re about to do some critical work with your account, unless there’s some reason you have to make the changes immediately.

* Some shells that read the *.profile* let you set a variable’s value on the same line as the **export** command, but not all do. Our two-step method for setting **PATH** works in all cases.

† Some files are read by *login shells*, and others by *nonlogin shells*. Some are read by *subshells*; others aren’t. Some terminal windows open login shells; others don’t.