made any files in your working directory. If you have no files, nothing is displayed; you'll simply get a new shell prompt:

```
$ ls
$
```

But if you've already made some files or directories in your account, those names are displayed. The output depends on what's in your directory. The screen should look something like this:

```
$ ls
ch1    ch10    ch2    ch3    intro
$
```

(Some systems display filenames in a single column. If yours does, you can make a multicolumn display with the **-C** [uppercase "C"] option or the **-x** option.) **ls** has a lot of options that change the information and display format.

The **-a** option (for *all*) is guaranteed to show you some more files, as in the following example showing a directory like the one in Figure 3-4:

```
$ ls -a
.       .exrc       ch1     ch2     intro
..      .profile    ch10    ch3
$
```

When you use **ls -a**, you'll always see at least two entries with the names "." (dot) and ".." (dot dot). As mentioned earlier, .. is always the relative pathname to the parent directory. A single . always stands for its working directory; this is useful with commands like **cp** (see the section "Copying Files" in Chapter 4). There may also be other files, such as *.profile* or *.exrc*. Any entry whose name begins with a dot is hidden—it's listed only if you use **ls -a**.

To get more information about each item that **ls** lists, add the **-l** option. (That's a lowercase "L" for "long.") This option can be used alone, or in combination with **-a**, as shown in Figure 3-5.

The long format provides the following information about each item:

Total n

n amount of storage used by everything in this directory. (This is measured in *blocks*. On many systems, but not all, a full block holds 1024 bytes. A block can also be partly full.)