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Using Your Unix Account

Once you log in, you can use the many facilities that Unix provides. As an authorized system user, you have an account that gives you:

- A place in the Unix filesystem where you can store your files.

- A username that identifies you, lets you control access to your files, and is an address for your email.

- An environment you can customize.

The Unix Filesystem

A *file* is the unit of storage in Unix, as in most other systems. A file can hold anything: text (a report you're writing, a to-do list), a program, digitally encoded pictures or sound, and so on. All of those are just sequences of raw data until they're interpreted by the right program.

In Unix, files are organized into directories. A *directory* is actually a special kind of file where the system stores information about other files. You can think of a directory as a place, so that files are said to be contained *in* directories and you are said to work *inside* a directory. (If you've used a Macintosh or Microsoft Windows computer, a Unix directory is similar to a folder.)

This section introduces the Unix filesystem. Later sections in this chapter show how you can look in files and protect them. Chapter 4 has more information.