

Getting Help and Reading Documentation: Takeaways



by Dataquest Labs, Inc. - All rights reserved © 2020

Syntax

- Identify the type of a command: `type command` .
- Create an alias: `alias alias_name=command` .
- Remove an alias: `unalias alias_name` .
- Get a brief description of what an executable file does: `whatis command` .
- Access the manual of an executable file: `man command` .
- Access the manual of a built-in command: `help command` .
- See the contents of a file with `less` : `less filename` .
- See the contents of a file with `less` without wrapping lines: `less -S filename` .

Concepts

- There are five different types of commands: `file` , `builtin` , `alias` , `function` , and `keyword` .
- Only the executable files and built-ins have documentation.
- The way to access documentation depends on the type of command it is.
- Understanding usage messages:

bold text	type exactly as shown.
<i>italic text</i>	replace with appropriate argument.
<code>[-abc]</code>	any or all arguments within [] are optional.
<code>-a -b</code>	options delimited by cannot be used together.
<u>argument</u> ...	<u>argument</u> is repeatable.
[<u>expression</u>] ...	entire <u>expression</u> within [] is repeatable.

- A terminal pager is a program used to view the contents of a text file by navigating it page by page.

- The `man` command uses a terminal pager to display documentation.
- Working with `less` :

Input	Action
Up/down arrows	Scroll up/down one line
Left/right arrows	Move page to the left/right
b	Scroll up (or backwards) one page
Space	Scroll down one page
g	Move to the beginning of the file
G	Move to the end of the file
/pattern	Search forward for the occurrence of the regex pattern
?pattern	Search backwards for the occurrence of the regex pattern
n	Find next occurrence of the previous search
N	Find previous occurrence of the previous search
:p	Move to previous file
:n	Move to next file
h	Display less's help screen (with less)
q	Quit the active instance of less

Resources

- [Explain Shell](#)
- Bash's [keywords](#)
- Bash's [special built-ins](#)

- Bash's [autocompletion](#)
- Identifying what command is run when there is more than one with the same name:
 - [In Bash](#)
 - [POSIX standards](#)
- [POSIX standards on](#) `man`
- [POSIX standards on command syntax](#)
- Search across all man pages with the `apropos` [command](#).
- The `info` [command](#).

