10.3.8 anacron Facts

Some distributions use anacron with cron to automate the running of tasks. The two services function in much the same way.

This lesson covers the following topics:

- Differences between cron and anacron
- anacron fields

Differences Between cron and anacron

The differences between cron and anacron are:

- The cron daemon assumes that the Linux operating system will remain up and running 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If a system is not powered on when a scheduled cron job should run, it is skipped.
- The anacron service compensates for times when the system is powered off. If a job is scheduled in anacron while the system is powered off, then the missed job will automatically run when the system comes back up.

anacron Fields

The anacron daemon uses the /etc/anacrontab file. This file uses the following fields:

Field	Description
Period	The Period field specifies the recurrence interval in days. For example: - 1 means the task recurs daily. - 7 means the task recurs weekly. - 30 means the task recurs every 30 days. - @monthly means the task recurs once per calendar month.
Delay	The Delay field specifies the time (in minutes) that the anacron daemon should wait before executing a missed job after the system starts back up.
Job-identifier	The Job-Identifier field specifies a name that will be used for the job's timestamp file. The identifier must be unique for each anacron job. The timestamp file is created in the /var/spool/anacron directory and contains a single line with a timestamp that indicates the last time the particular job was run.
Command	The Command field specifies the command or script that should be run.

In the following example, anacron is configured to run the /usr/bin/dbcleanup command once a day:

```
1     30     dbcleanup.log     /usr/bin/dbcleanup
```

If the system is down when the anacron job is supposed to run, the command will be automatically executed approximately 30 minutes after the system comes back up. The anacron daemon adds a random number of minutes to the value specified in the Delay field of each entry in the anacrontab file. The actual number of minutes added is constrained by the RANDOM_DELAY setting within the /etc/anacrontab file. By default, this setting is set to a value of 45, which allows the anacron daemon to add a random number of minutes between 0 and 45 to the delay time for each entry in the anacrontab file.