

Bash Reference Manual Definitions

POSIX

A family of open system standards based on Unix. Bash is primarily concerned with the Shell and Utilities portion of the POSIX 1003.1 standard.

blank

A space or tab character.

builtin

A command that is implemented internally by the shell itself, rather than by an executable program somewhere in the file system.

control operator

A **token** that performs a control function. It is a **newline** or one of the following: '|', '&&', '&', ';', ';;', ';&', ';&', '|', '|&', '(', or ')'.
'|', '&&', '&', ';', ';;', ';&', ';&', '|', '|&', '(', or ')'

exit status

The value returned by a command to its caller. The value is restricted to eight bits, so the maximum value is 255.

field

A unit of text that is the result of one of the shell expansions. After expansion, when executing a command, the resulting fields are used as the command name and arguments.

filename

A string of characters used to identify a file.

job

A set of processes comprising a pipeline, and any processes descended from it, that are all in the same process group.

job control

A mechanism by which users can selectively stop (suspend) and restart (resume) execution of processes.

metacharacter

A character that, when unquoted, separates words. A metacharacter is a **space**, **tab**, **newline**, or one of the following characters: '|', '&', ';', '(', ')', '<', or '>'.
'|', '&', ';', '(', ')', '<', or '>'

name

A **word** consisting solely of letters, numbers, and underscores, and beginning with a letter or underscore. Names are used as shell variable and function names. Also referred to as an **identifier**.

operator

A **control operator** or a **redirection operator**. Operators contain at least one unquoted **metacharacter**.

process group

A collection of related processes each having the same process group ID.

process group ID

A unique identifier that represents a **process group** during its lifetime.

reserve word

A **word** that has a special meaning to the shell. Most reserved words introduce shell flow control constructs, such as **for** and **while**.

return status

A synonym for **exit status**

signal

A mechanism by which a process may be notified by the kernel of an event occurring in the system.

special builtin

A shell builtin command that has been classified as special by the POSIX standard.

token

A sequence of characters considered a single unit by the shell. It is either a **word** or an **operator**.

word

A sequence of characters as a unit by the shell. Words may not include unquoted **metacharacters**.