

6. Copying Files

The **cp** command is used to copy a file and specifies source and destination file as follows:

cp source-file destination-file

We give the command followed by the file we want to copy and then give what we want to call this copy.

For example, type the following:

ls – shows we have a file called zeebrafile

cp zeebrafile zeebrafile2 - copies the zeebrafile file to a new zeebrafile2 file

ls

zeebrafile zeebrafile2- shows both now exist

When using this command it is important to remember that if the destination file already exists it will be overwritten without waiting for user confirmation. So if zeebrafile2 was there already it would have been overwritten with a copy of what was in zeebrafile.

To avoid this, use the cp command together with its **-i** option. This will prompt you for confirmation whenever the copy would overwrite an existing file.

cp -i zeebrafile zeebrafile2 - it will ask you for confirmation first

Note: You cannot copy a file that does not exist

It always copies to the current location unless specified. To copy a file from your current working directory to a subdirectory:

cp apple training/fruit

This copies the file apple from your current working directory to the file fruit in the subdirectory training.

ls training – shows the fruit file was created in the training directory.

cat apple – to show contents

cat training/fruit - to show contents are the same

To copy a file to the parent directory:

cd training – go to the training directory

cp fruit ..

This copies the file fruit to the directory immediately above the current working directory – one level up which in this case is the home directory. If you do not specify a name it will call it the same name by default.

cd .. – go up one level

ls – *you will be able to see that fruit was created*

There is also another way of doing this directly from the level directory you want to copy it into you could have typed in:

cp training/fruit ./banana

The . (dot) is shorthand for the current working directory. What you are saying here is copy the file fruit in the training directory into the current directory you are in and call the copy banana. You can cat this banana file if you want to make sure they are the same.

To copy a file from a subdirectory to a directory elsewhere in the file system:

cp training/fruit /training/dir1/fruitcopy

This copies the file fruit in the subdirectory training to the directory training/dir1

To copy a directory type in the following

cp -r training training2

ls – *you will see both training and training2 now exist*

ls training1 training2 - *to view the contents of both to check they are the same*