

# 101 Bash Commands and Tips for Beginners to Experts



Andrew (he/him)   Jan 13 '19 Updated on Sep 25, 2019 · 40 min read

[#beginners](#)

[#bash](#)

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**Update 25 Sep 2019:** This article is now available in Japanese, thanks to the hard work of [ラナ・クアール](#). Please check out their work by following the link below. If you're aware of translations of this article to other languages, please let me know and I'll post them here.

[JP 日本語で読む](#)

**Update 8 July 2019:** I recently found [this very similar article](#) posted to a French-language message board about two years ago. If you're interested in learning some shell commands --

and you *parler français*, it's a great supplement to my article, below.

Until about a year ago, I worked almost exclusively within the macOS and Ubuntu operating systems. On both of those OSes, `bash` is my default shell. I've acquired a general understanding of how `bash` works over the past six or seven years and would like to give an overview of some of the more common / useful commands for those just getting started. If you think you know everything there is to know about `bash`, take a look below anyway -- I've included some tips and reminders of flags you may have forgotten about, which could make your work a bit easier.

The commands below are laid out in a more-or-less narrative style, so if you're just getting started with `bash`, you can work your way through from the beginning to the end. Things generally get less common and more difficult toward the end.

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## The Basics

# First Commands, Navigating the Filesystem

Modern filesystems have directory (folder) trees, where a directory is either a *root directory* (with no parent directory) or is a *subdirectory* (contained within a single other directory, which we call its "parent"). Traversing backwards through the file tree (from child directory to parent directory) will always get you to the root directory. Some filesystems have multiple root directories (like Windows' drives: `C:\`, `A:\`, etc.), but Unix and Unix-like systems only have a single root directory called `\`.

```
pwd / ls / cd
```

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When working within a filesystem, the user is always working *within* some directory, which we call the current directory or the *working directory*. Print the user's working directory with `pwd`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ pwd
/home/andrew
```

List the contents of this directory (files and/or child directories, etc.) with `ls`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ls
Git  TEST  jdoc  test  test.file
```

### **Bonus:**

Show hidden ("dot") files with `ls -a`

Show file details with `ls -l`

Combine multiple flags like `ls -l -a`

You can sometimes chain flags like `ls -la` instead of `ls -l -a`

Change to a different directory with `cd` (change directory):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ cd TEST/

[ andrew@pc01 TEST ]$ pwd
/home/andrew/TEST

[ andrew@pc01 TEST ]$ cd A

[ andrew@pc01 A ]$ pwd
/home/andrew/TEST/A
```

`cd ..` is shorthand for "`cd` to the parent directory”:

```
[ andrew@pc01 A ]$ cd ..
```

```
[ andrew@pc01 TEST ]$ pwd  
/home/andrew/TEST
```

`cd ~` or just `cd` is shorthand for "`cd` to my home directory" (usually `/home/username` or something similar):

```
[ andrew@pc01 TEST ]$ cd  
  
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ pwd  
/home/andrew
```

### Bonus:

`cd ~user` means "`cd` to `user`'s home directory"

You can jump multiple directory levels with `cd ../../`, etc.

Go back to the most recent directory with `cd -`

`.` is shorthand for "this directory", so `cd .` won't do much of anything

`;` `/` `&&` `/` `&`

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The things we type into the command line are called *commands*, and they always execute some machine code stored somewhere on your computer. Sometimes this machine code is a built-in



Linux command, sometimes it's an app, sometimes it's some code that you wrote yourself. Occasionally, we'll want to run one command right after another. To do that, we can use the `;` (semicolon):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ls; pwd
Git TEST jdoc test test.file
/home/andrew
```

Above, the semicolon means that I first ( `ls` ) list the contents of the working directory, and then I ( `pwd` ) print its location.

Another useful tool for chaining commands is `&&`. With `&&`, the command to the right will not run if the command to the left fails. `;` and `&&` can both be used multiple times on the same line:

```
# whoops! I made a typo here!
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ cd /Giit/Parser && pwd && ls && cd
-bash: cd: /Giit/Parser: No such file or directory

# the first command passes now, so the following commands are run
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ cd Git/Parser/ && pwd && ls && cd
/home/andrew/Git/Parser
README.md doc.sh pom.xml resource run.sh shell.sh source src target
```

...but with `;`, the second command will run even if the first one fails:

```
# pwd and ls still run, even though the cd command failed
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ cd /Giit/Parser ; pwd ; ls
-bash: cd: /Giit/Parser: No such file or directory
/home/andrew
Git TEST jdoc test test.file
```

& looks similar to && but actually fulfils a completely different function. Normally, when you execute a long-running command, the command line will wait for that command to finish before it allows you to enter another one. Putting & after a command prevents this from happening, and lets you execute a new command while an older one is still going:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ cd Git/Parser && mvn package & cd
[1] 9263
```

**Bonus:** When we use & after a command to "hide" it, we say that the job (or the "process"; these terms are more or less interchangeable) is "backgrounded". To see what background jobs are currently running, use the jobs command:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ jobs
[1]+  Running cd Git/Parser/ && mvn package &
```

## Getting Help

`-h`

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Type `-h` or `--help` after almost any command to bring up a help menu for that command:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ du --help
Usage: du [OPTION]... [FILE]...
  or:  du [OPTION]... --files0-from=F
Summarize disk usage of the set of FILES, recursively for directories.

Mandatory arguments to long options are mandatory for short options too.
  -0, --null          end each output line with NUL, not newline
  -a, --all           write counts for all files, not just directories
  --apparent-size     print apparent sizes, rather than disk usage; although
                     the apparent size is usually smaller, it may be
                     larger due to holes in ('sparse') files, internal
                     fragmentation, indirect blocks, and the like
  -B, --block-size=SIZE scale sizes by SIZE before printing them; e.g.,
                     '-BM' prints sizes in units of 1,048,576 bytes;
                     see SIZE format below
...
```

`man`

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Type `man` before almost any command to bring up a manual for that command (quit `man` with `q`):

```
LS(1)                                User Commands                                LS(1)

NAME
    ls - list directory contents

SYNOPSIS
    ls [OPTION]... [FILE]...

DESCRIPTION
    List information about the FILES (the current directory by default).
    Sort entries alphabetically if none of -cftuvSUX nor --sort is speci-
    fied.

    Mandatory arguments to long options are mandatory for short options
    too.

    ...
```

## Viewing and Editing Files

head / tail / cat / less

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`head` outputs the first few lines of a file. The `-n` flag specifies the number of lines to show (the default is 10):

```
# prints the first three lines
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ head -n 3 c
this
```

```
file  
has
```

`tail` outputs the last few lines of a file. You can get the last `n` lines (like above), or you can get the end of the file beginning from the `N`-th line with `tail -n +N`:

```
# prints the end of the file, beginning with the 4th line  
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ tail -n +4 c  
exactly  
six  
lines
```

`cat` concatenates a list of files and sends them to the standard output stream (usually the terminal). `cat` can be used with just a single file, or multiple files, and is often used to quickly view them. (**Be warned:** if you use `cat` in this way, you may be accused of a *Useless Use of Cat (UUOC)*, but it's not that big of a deal, so don't worry too much about it.)

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ cat a  
file a  
  
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ cat a b  
file a  
file b
```

`less` is another tool for quickly viewing a file -- it opens up a `vim`-like read-only window. (Yes, there is a command called

`more`, but `less` -- unintuitively -- offers a superset of the functionality of `more` and is recommended over it.) Learn more (or less?) about [less](#) and [more](#) at their `man` pages.

`nano` / `nedit`

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`nano` is a minimalistic command-line text editor. It's a great editor for beginners or people who don't want to learn a million shortcuts. It was more than sufficient for me for the first few years of my coding career (I'm only now starting to look into more powerful editors, mainly because defining your own syntax highlighting in `nano` can be a bit of a pain.)

`nedit` is a small graphical editor, it opens up an X Window and allows point-and-click editing, drag-and-drop, syntax highlighting and more. I use `nedit` sometimes when I want to make small changes to a script and re-run it over and over.

Other common CLI (command-line interface) / GUI (graphical user interface) editors include `emacs`, `vi`, `vim`, `gedit`, Notepad++, Atom, and lots more. Some cool ones that I've played around with (and can endorse) include Micro, Light Table, and VS Code.

All modern editors offer basic conveniences like search and replace, syntax highlighting, and so on. `vi(m)` and `emacs` have more features than `nano` and `nedit`, but they have a much

steeper learning curve. Try a few different editors out and find one that works for you!

## Creating and Deleting Files and Directories

`touch`

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`touch` was created to modify file timestamps, but it can also be used to quickly create an empty file. You can create a new file by opening it with a text editor, like `nano` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ ls  
  
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ nano a
```

*...editing file...*

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ ls  
a
```

...or by simply using `touch` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ touch b && ls  
a b
```

### Bonus:

Background a process with ^z (Ctrl+z)

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ nano a
```

*...editing file, then hit ^z...*

```
Use fg to return to nano
```

```
[1]+ Stopped nano a
```

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ fg
```

*...editing file again...*

---

### Double Bonus:

Kill the current (foreground) process by pressing ^c (Ctrl+c) while it's running

Kill a background process with `kill %N` where `N` is the job index shown by the `jobs` command



```
mkdir / rm / rmdir
```

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`mkdir` is used to create new, empty directories:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ ls && mkdir c && ls
a  b
a  b  c
```

You can remove any file with `rm` -- but be careful, this is non-recoverable!

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ rm a && ls
b  c
```

You can add an *"are you sure?"* prompt with the `-i` flag:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ rm -i b
rm: remove regular empty file 'b'? y
```

Remove an empty directory with `rmdir`. If you `ls -a` in an empty directory, you should only see a reference to the directory itself ( `.` ) and a reference to its parent directory ( `..` ):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ rmdir c && ls -a
.  ..
```

`rmdir` removes empty directories only:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ cd .. && ls test/
*.txt  0.txt  1.txt  a  a.txt  b  c

[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ rmdir test/
rmdir: failed to remove 'test/': Directory not empty
```

...but you can remove a directory -- and all of its contents -- with `rm -rf` ( `-r` = recursive, `-f` = force):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ rm -rf test
```

## Moving and Copying Files, Making Links, Command History

`mv` / `cp` / `ln`

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`mv` moves / renames a file. You can `mv` a file to a new directory and keep the same file name or `mv` a file to a "new file" (rename it):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ ls && mv a e && ls
a  b  c  d
b  c  d  e
```

`cp` copies a file:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ cp e e2 && ls
b  c  d  e  e2
```

`ln` creates a hard link to a file:

```
# first argument to ln is TARGET, second is NEW LINK
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ ln b f && ls
b  c  d  e  e2  f
```

`ln -s` creates a soft link to a file:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ ln -s b g && ls
b  c  d  e  e2  f  g
```

Hard links reference the same actual bytes in memory which contain a file, while soft links refer to the original file name, which itself points to those bytes. [You can read more about soft vs. hard links here.](#)

## Command History

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`bash` has two big features to help you complete and re-run commands, the first is *tab completion*. Simply type the first part of a command, hit the <tab> key, and let the terminal guess what you're trying to do:

```
[ andrew@pc01 dir ]$ ls <ENTER>
anotherlongfilename  thisisalongfilename  anewfilename

[ andrew@pc01 dir ]$ ls t <TAB>
```

*...hit the TAB key after typing `ls t` and the command is completed...*

```
[ andrew@pc01 dir ]$ ls thisisalongfilename <ENTER>
thisisalongfilename
```

You may have to hit <TAB> multiple times if there's an ambiguity:

```
[ andrew@pc01 dir ]$ ls a <TAB>  
  
[ andrew@pc01 dir ]$ ls an <TAB>  
anewfilename  anotherlongfilename
```

`bash` keeps a short history of the commands you've typed previously and lets you search through those commands by typing `^r` (Ctrl+r):

```
[ andrew@pc01 dir ]
```

*...hit `^r` (Ctrl+r) to search the command history...*

```
(reverse-i-search)`':
```

*...type 'anew' and the last command containing this is found...*

```
(reverse-i-search)`anew': touch anewfilename
```

## Directory Trees, Disk Usage, and Processes

```
mkdir -p / tree
```

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`mkdir`, by default, only makes a single directory. This means that if, for instance, directory `d/e` doesn't exist, then `d/e/f` can't be made with `mkdir` by itself:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ ls && mkdir d/e/f
a b c
mkdir: cannot create directory 'd/e/f': No such file or directory
```

But if we pass the `-p` flag to `mkdir`, it will make all directories in the path if they don't already exist:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ mkdir -p d/e/f && ls
a b c d
```

`tree` can help you better visualise a directory's structure by printing a nicely-formatted directory tree. By default, it prints the entire tree structure (beginning with the specified directory), but you can restrict it to a certain number of levels with the `-L` flag:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ tree -L 2
.
|-- a
```

```
| -- b
| -- c
|-- d
    |--e
```

3 directories, 2 files

You can hide empty directories in `tree`'s output with `--prune`. Note that this also removes "recursively empty" directories, or directories which aren't empty *per se*, but which contain only other empty directories, or other recursively empty directories:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ tree --prune
.
|-- a
|-- b
```

`df` / `du` / `ps`

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`df` is used to show how much space is taken up by files for the disks or your system (hard drives, etc.).

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ df -h
Filesystem                Size      Used Avail Use% Mounted on
udev                     126G         0   126G   0% /dev
tmpfs                     26G       2.0G    24G   8% /run
/dev/mapper/ubuntu--vg-root 1.6T       1.3T   252G  84% /
...
```

In the above command, `-h` doesn't mean "help", but "human-readable". Some commands use this convention to display file / disk sizes with `K` for kilobytes, `G` for gigabytes, and so on, instead of writing out a gigantic integer number of bytes.

`du` shows file space usage for a particular directory and its subdirectories. If you want to know how much space is free on a given hard drive, use `df`; if you want to know how much space a directory is taking up, use `du`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ du
4      ./d/e/f
8      ./d/e
12     ./d
4      ./c
20     .
```

`du` takes a `--max-depth=N` flag, which only shows directories `N` levels down (or fewer) from the specified directory:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ du -h --max-depth=1
12K    ./d
4.0K   ./c
20K    .
```

`ps` shows all of the user's currently-running processes (aka. jobs):



```
[ andrew@pc01 ex ]$ ps
  PID TTY          TIME CMD
 16642 pts/15    00:00:00 ps
 25409 pts/15    00:00:00 bash
```

## Miscellaneous

`passwd / logout / exit`

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Change your account password with `passwd`. It will ask for your current password for verification, then ask you to enter the new password twice, so you don't make any typos:

```
[ andrew@pc01 dir ]$ passwd
Changing password for andrew.
(current) UNIX password:  <type current password>
Enter new UNIX password:  <type new password>
Retype new UNIX password: <type new password again>
passwd: password updated successfully
```

`logout` exits a shell you've logged in to (where you have a user account):

```
[ andrew@pc01 dir ]$ logout
```

---

Session stopped

- Press <return> to exit tab
- Press R to restart session
- Press S to save terminal output to file

`exit` exits any kind of shell:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ exit  
logout
```

---

Session stopped

- Press <return> to exit tab
- Press R to restart session
- Press S to save terminal output to file

`clear` / \*

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Run `clear` to move the current terminal line to the top of the screen. This command just adds blank lines below the current prompt line. It's good for clearing your workspace.

Use the glob (`*`, aka. Kleene Star, aka. wildcard) when looking for files. Notice the difference between the following two commands:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ls Git/Parser/source/  
PArrayUtils.java      PFile.java           PSQLFile.java        PWatchman.java  
PDateTimeUtils.java   PFixedWidthFile.java PStringUtils.java     PXSVDFile.java  
PDelimitedFile.java   PNode.java           PTextFile.java       Parser.java  
  
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ls Git/Parser/source/PD*  
Git/Parser/source/PDateTimeUtils.java  Git/Parser/source/PDelimitedFile.java
```

The glob can be used multiple times in a command and matches zero or more characters:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ls Git/Parser/source/P*D*m*  
Git/Parser/source/PDateTimeUtils.java  Git/Parser/source/PDelimitedFile.java
```

## Intermediate

## Disk, Memory, and Processor Usage

ncdu

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`ncdu` (NCurses Disk Usage) provides a navigable overview of file space usage, like an improved `du`. It opens a read-only `vim`-like window (press `q` to quit):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ncdu
```

```
ncdu 1.11 ~ Use the arrow keys to navigate, press ? for help
```

```
--- /home/andrew -----
```

```
148.2 MiB [#####] /.m2
 91.5 MiB [#####] /.sbt
 79.8 MiB [#####] /.cache
 64.9 MiB [####] /.ivy2
 40.6 MiB [##] /.sdkman
 30.2 MiB [##] /.local
 27.4 MiB [#] /.mozilla
 24.4 MiB [#] /.nanobackups
 10.2 MiB [ ] .confout3.txt
  8.4 MiB [ ] /.config
  5.9 MiB [ ] /.nbi
  5.8 MiB [ ] /.oh-my-zsh
  4.3 MiB [ ] /Git
  3.7 MiB [ ] /.myshell
  1.7 MiB [ ] /jdoc
  1.5 MiB [ ] .confout2.txt
  1.5 MiB [ ] /.netbeans
  1.1 MiB [ ] /.jenv
564.0 KiB [ ] /.rstudio-desktop
```

```
Total disk usage: 552.7 MiB  Apparent size: 523.6 MiB  Items: 14618
```

`top` / `htop`

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`top` displays all currently-running processes and their owners, memory usage, and more. `htop` is an improved, interactive `top`. (Note: you can pass the `-u username` flag to restrict the displayed processes to only those owner by `username`.)

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ htop

 1 [ 0.0%]  9 [ 0.0%] 17 [ 0.0%] 25 [ 0.0%]
 2 [ 0.0%] 10 [ 0.0%] 18 [ 0.0%] 26 [ 0.0%]
 3 [ 0.0%] 11 [ 0.0%] 19 [ 0.0%] 27 [ 0.0%]
 4 [ 0.0%] 12 [ 0.0%] 20 [ 0.0%] 28 [ 0.0%]
 5 [ 0.0%] 13 [ 0.0%] 21 [ | 1.3%] 29 [ 0.0%]
 6 [ 0.0%] 14 [ 0.0%] 22 [ 0.0%] 30 [ | 0.6%]
 7 [ 0.0%] 15 [ 0.0%] 23 [ 0.0%] 31 [ 0.0%]
 8 [ 0.0%] 16 [ 0.0%] 24 [ 0.0%] 32 [ 0.0%]
Mem[|||||||||||||||||1.42G/252G] Tasks: 188, 366 thr; 1 running
Swp[| 2.47G/256G] Load average: 0.00 0.00 0.00
Uptime: 432 days(!), 00:03:55

  PID USER      PRI  NI  VIRT   RES   SHR  S  CPU% MEM%   TIME+  Command
 9389 andrew    20   0 23344   3848  2848  R   1.3   0.0   0:00.10 htop
10103 root       20   0 3216M 17896  2444  S   0.7   0.0  5h48:56 /usr/bin/docker
    1 root       20   0  181M   4604  2972  S   0.0   0.0 15:29.66 /lib/systemd/sy
  533 root       20   0 44676   6908  6716  S   0.0   0.0 11:19.77 /lib/systemd/sy
  546 root       20   0   244M     0     0  S   0.0   0.0  0:01.39 /sbin/lvmstat -
 1526 root       20   0   329M   2252  1916  S   0.0   0.0  0:00.00 /usr/sbin/Modem
 1544 root       20   0   329M   2252  1916  S   0.0   0.0  0:00.06 /usr/sbin/Modem
F1Help  F2Setup  F3Search F4Filter F5Tree  F6SortBy F7Nice -F8Nice +F9Kill F10Qui
```

## REPLs and Software Versions

# REPLs

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A **REPL** is a Read-Evaluate-Print Loop, similar to the command line, but usually used for particular programming languages.

You can open the Python REPL with the `python` command (and quit with the `quit()` function):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ python
Python 3.5.2 (default, Nov 12 2018, 13:43:14) ...
>>> quit()
```

Open the R REPL with the `R` command (and quit with the `q()` function):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ R
R version 3.5.2 (2018-12-20) --"Eggshell Igloo" ...
> q()
Save workspace image? [y/n/c]: n
```

Open the Scala REPL with the `scala` command (and quit with the `:quit` command):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ scala
Welcome to Scala 2.11.12 ...
scala> :quit
```

Open the Java REPL with the `jshell` command (and quit with the `/exit` command):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ jshell
| Welcome to JShell--Version 11.0.1 ...
jshell> /exit
```

Alternatively, you can exit any of these REPLs with `^d` (Ctrl+d). `^d` is the EOF (end of file) marker on Unix and signifies the end of input.

`-version / --version / -v`

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Most commands and programs have a `-version` or `--version` flag which gives the software version of that command or program. Most applications make this information easily available:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ls --version
ls (GNU coreutils) 8.25 ...

[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ncdu -version
ncdu 1.11
```

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ python --version
Python 3.5.2
```

...but some are less intuitive:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sbt scalaVersion
...
[info] 2.12.4
```

Note that some programs use `-v` as a version flag, while others use `-v` to mean "verbose", which will run the application while printing lots of diagnostic or debugging information:

```
SCP(1)                                BSD General Commands Manual                                SCP(1)

NAME
  scp -- secure copy (remote file copy program)
...
-v      Verbose mode. Causes scp and ssh(1) to print debugging messages
        about their progress. This is helpful in debugging connection,
        authentication, and configuration problems.
...

```

# Environment Variables and Aliases

## Environment Variables



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**Environment variables** (sometimes shortened to "env vars") are persistent variables that can be created and used within your `bash` shell. They are defined with an equals sign ( `=` ) and used with a dollar sign ( `$` ). You can see all currently-defined env vars with `printenv`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ printenv
SPARK_HOME=/usr/local/spark
TERM=xterm
...
```

Set a new environment variable with an `=` sign (don't put any spaces before or after the `=`, though!):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ myvar=hello
```

Print a specific env var to the terminal with `echo` and a preceding `$` sign:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo $myvar
hello
```

Environment variables which contain spaces or other whitespace should be surrounded by quotes ( `"..."` ). Note that

reassigning a value to an env var overwrites it without warning:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ myvar="hello, world!" && echo $myvar  
hello, world!
```

Env vars can also be defined using the `export` command. When defined this way, they will also be available to sub-processes (commands called from this shell):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ export myvar="another one" && echo $myvar  
another one
```

You can unset an environment variable by leaving the right-hand side of the `=` blank or by using the `unset` command:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ unset mynewvar  
  
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo $mynewvar
```

## Aliases

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**Aliases** are similar to environment variables but are usually used in a different way -- to replace long commands with

shorter ones:

```
[ andrew@pc01 apidocs ]$ ls -l -a -h -t
total 220K
drwxr-xr-x 5 andrew andrew 4.0K Dec 21 12:37 .
-rw-r--r-- 1 andrew andrew 9.9K Dec 21 12:37 help-doc.html
-rw-r--r-- 1 andrew andrew 4.5K Dec 21 12:37 script.js
...

[ andrew@pc01 apidocs ]$ alias lc="ls -l -a -h -t"

[ andrew@pc01 apidocs ]$ lc
total 220K
drwxr-xr-x 5 andrew andrew 4.0K Dec 21 12:37 .
-rw-r--r-- 1 andrew andrew 9.9K Dec 21 12:37 help-doc.html
-rw-r--r-- 1 andrew andrew 4.5K Dec 21 12:37 script.js
...
```

You can remove an alias with `unalias` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 apidocs ]$ unalias lc

[ andrew@pc01 apidocs ]$ lc
The program 'lc' is currently not installed. ...
```

### Bonus:

[Read about the subtle differences between environment variables and aliases here.](#)

Some programs, like **git**, allow you to define aliases specifically for that software.

# Basic `bash` Scripting

## `bash` Scripts

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`bash` scripts (usually ending in `.sh`) allow you to automate complicated processes, packaging them into reusable functions. A `bash` script can contain any number of normal shell commands:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo "ls && touch file && ls" > ex.sh
```

A shell script can be executed with the `source` command or the `sh` command:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ source ex.sh
Desktop  Git  TEST  c  ex.sh  project  test
Desktop  Git  TEST  c  ex.sh  file  project  test
```

Shell scripts can be made executable with the `chmod` command (more on this later):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo "ls && touch file2 && ls" > ex2.sh

[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ chmod +x ex2.sh
```

An executable shell script can be run by preceding it with `./`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ./ex2.sh
Desktop  Git  TEST  c  ex.sh  ex2.sh  file  project  test
Desktop  Git  TEST  c  ex.sh  ex2.sh  file  file2  project  test
```

Long lines of code can be split by ending a command with `\`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo "for i in {1..3}; do echo \
> \"Welcome \${i} times\"; done" > ex3.sh
```

Bash scripts can contain loops, functions, and more!

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ source ex3.sh
Welcome 1 times
Welcome 2 times
Welcome 3 times
```

## Custom Prompt and `ls`

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Bash scripting can make your life a whole lot easier and more colourful. [Check out this great bash scripting cheat sheet.](#)

`$PS1` (Prompt String 1) is the environment variable that defines your main shell prompt ([learn about the other prompts here](#)):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ printf "%q" $PS1
$'\n\\[\\E[1m\\]\\[\\E[30m\\]\\A'$'\\[\\E[37m\\]|\\[\\E[36m\\]\\u\\[\\E[37m\\]@\\[\\
```

You can change your default prompt with the `export` command:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ export PS1="\ncommand here> "

command here> echo $PS1
\ncommand here>
```

...[you can add colours, too!](#):

```
command here> export PS1="\e[1;31m\nCODE: \e[39m"

# (this should be red, but it may not show up that way in Markdown)
CODE: echo $PS1
\e[1;31m\nCODE: \e[39m
```

You can also change the colours shown by `ls` by editing the `$LS_COLORS` environment variable:

```
# (again, these colours might not show up in Markdown)
CODE: ls
Desktop  Git  TEST  c  ex.sh  ex2.sh  ex3.sh  file  file2  project  test

CODE: export LS_COLORS='di=31:fi=0:ln=96:or=31:mi=31:ex=92'

CODE: ls
Desktop  Git  TEST  c  ex.sh  ex2.sh  ex3.sh  file  file2  project  test
```

## Config Files

### Config Files / `.bashrc`

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If you tried the commands in the last section and logged out and back in, you may have noticed that your changes disappeared. *config* (configuration) files let you maintain settings for your shell or for a particular program every time you log in (or run that program). The main configuration file for a `bash` shell is the `~/.bashrc` file. Aliases, environment variables, and functions added to `~/.bashrc` will be available every time you log in. Commands in `~/.bashrc` will be run every time you log in.

If you edit your `~/.bashrc` file, you can reload it without logging out by using the `source` command:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ nano ~/.bashrc
```

*...add the line `echo "~/.bashrc loaded!"` to the top of the file...*

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ source ~/.bashrc
~/.bashrc loaded!
```

*...log out and log back in...*

```
Last login: Fri Jan 11 10:29:07 2019 from 111.11.11.111
~/.bashrc loaded!

[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]
```

## Types of Shells

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*Login* shells are shells you log in to (where you have a username). *Interactive* shells are shells which accept commands. Shells can be login and interactive, non-login and non-interactive, or any other combination.



In addition to `~/.bashrc`, there are a few other scripts which are sourced by the shell automatically when you log in or log out. These are:

- `/etc/profile`
- `~/.bash_profile`
- `~/.bash_login`
- `~/.profile`
- `~/.bash_logout`
- `/etc/bash.bash_logout`

Which of these scripts are sourced, and the order in which they're sourced, depend on the type of shell opened. See [the bash man page](#) and [these](#) Stack Overflow [posts](#) for more information.

Note that `bash` scripts can `source` other scripts. For instance, in your `~/.bashrc`, you could include the line:

```
source ~/.bashrc_add1
```

...which would also `source` that `.bashrc_add1` script. This file can contain its own aliases, functions, environment variables, and so on. It could, in turn, `source` other scripts, as well. (Be careful to avoid infinite loops of script-sourcing!)

It may be helpful to split commands into different shell scripts based on functionality or machine type (Ubuntu vs. Red Hat vs.

macOS), for example:

- `~/.bash_ubuntu` -- configuration specific to Ubuntu-based machines
- `~/.bashrc_styles` -- aesthetic settings, like `PS1` and `LS_COLORS`
- `~/.bash_java` -- configuration specific to the Java language

I try to keep separate `bash` files for aesthetic configurations and OS- or machine-specific code, and then I have one big `bash` file containing shortcuts, etc. that I use on every machine and every OS.

Note that there are also *different shells*. `bash` is just one kind of shell (the "Bourne Again Shell"). Other common ones include `zsh`, `csh`, `fish`, and more. Play around with different shells and find one that's right for you, but be aware that this tutorial contains `bash` shell commands only and not everything listed here (maybe none of it) will be applicable to shells other than `bash`.

## Finding Things

`whereis` / `which` / `whatis`

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`whereis` searches for "possibly useful" files related to a particular command. It will attempt to return the location of the binary (executable machine code), source (code source files), and `man` page for that command:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ whereis ls
ls: /bin/ls /usr/share/man/man1/ls.1.gz
```

`which` will only return the location of the binary (the command itself):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ which ls
/bin/ls
```

`whatis` prints out the one-line description of a command from its `man` page:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ whatis whereis which whatis
whereis (1)      - locate the binary, source, and manual page files for a
which (1)        - locate a command
whatis (1)       - display one-line manual page descriptions
```

`which` is useful for finding the "original version" of a command which may be hidden by an alias:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ alias ls="ls -l"

# "original" ls has been "hidden" by the alias defined above
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ls
total 36
drwxr-xr-x 2 andrew andrew 4096 Jan  9 14:47 Desktop
drwxr-xr-x 4 andrew andrew 4096 Dec  6 10:43 Git
...

# but we can still call "original" ls by using the location returned by which
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ /bin/ls
Desktop  Git  TEST  c  ex.sh  ex2.sh  ex3.sh  file  file2  project  test
```

## locate / find

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`locate` finds a file anywhere on the system by referring to a semi-regularly-updated cached list of files:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ locate README.md
/home/andrew/.config/micro/plugins/gotham-colors/README.md
/home/andrew/.jenv/README.md
/home/andrew/.myshell/README.md
...
```

Because it's just searching a list, `locate` is usually faster than the alternative, `find`. `find` iterates through the file system to find the file you're looking for. Because it's actually looking at

the files which *currently* exist on the system, though, it will always return an up-to-date list of files, which is not necessarily true with `locate`.

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ find ~/ -iname "README.md"
/home/andrew/.jenv/README.md
/home/andrew/.config/micro/plugins/gotham-colors/README.md
/home/andrew/.oh-my-zsh/plugins/ant/README.md
...
```

`find` was written for the very first version of Unix in 1971, and is therefore much more widely available than `locate`, which was added to GNU in 1994.

`find` has many more features than `locate`, and can search by file age, size, ownership, type, timestamp, permissions, depth within the file system; `find` can search using regular expressions, execute commands on files it finds, and more.

When you need a fast (but possibly outdated) list of files, or you're not sure what directory a particular file is in, use `locate`. When you need an accurate file list, maybe based on something other than the files' names, and you need to do something with those files, use `find`.

## Downloading Things

ping / wget / curl

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`ping` attempts to open a line of communication with a network host. Mainly, it's used to check whether or not your Internet connection is down:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ping google.com
PING google.com (74.125.193.100) 56(84) bytes of data.
Pinging 74.125.193.100 with 32 bytes of data:
Reply from 74.125.193.100: bytes=32 time<1ms TTL=64
...
```

`wget` is used to easily download a file from the Internet:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ wget \
> http://releases.ubuntu.com/18.10/ubuntu-18.10-desktop-amd64.iso
```

`curl` can be used just like `wget` (don't forget the `--output` flag):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ curl \
> http://releases.ubuntu.com/18.10/ubuntu-18.10-desktop-amd64.iso \
> --output ubuntu.iso
```

`curl` and `wget` have their own strengths and weaknesses. `curl` supports many more protocols and is more widely available

than `wget` ; `curl` can also send data, while `wget` can only receive data. `wget` can download files recursively, while `curl` cannot.

In general, I use `wget` when I need to download things from the Internet. I don't often need to send data using `curl` , but it's good to be aware of it for the rare occasion that you do.

`apt / gunzip / tar / gzip`

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Debian-descended Linux distributions have a fantastic package management tool called `apt` . It can be used to install, upgrade, or delete software on your machine. To search `apt` for a particular piece of software, use `apt search` , and install it with `apt install` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ apt search bleachbit
...bleachbit/bionic,bionic 2.0-2 all
  delete unnecessary files from the system

# you need to 'sudo' to install software
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sudo apt install bleachbit
```

Linux software often comes packaged in `.tar.gz` ("tarball") files:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ wget \
> https://github.com/atom/atom/releases/download/v1.35.0-beta0/atom-amd64.tar.gz
```

...these types of files can be unzipped with `gunzip`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ gunzip atom-amd64.tar.gz && ls
atom-amd64.tar
```

A `.tar.gz` file will be `gunzip`-ped to a `.tar` file, which can be extracted to a directory of files using `tar -xf` (`-x` for "extract", `-f` to specify the file to "untar"):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ tar -xf atom-amd64.tar && mv \
atom-beta-1.35.0-beta0-amd64 atom && ls
atom atom-amd64.tar
```

To go in the reverse direction, you can create (`-c`) a tar file from a directory and zip it (or unzip it, as appropriate) with `-z`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ tar -zcf compressed.tar.gz atom && ls
atom atom-amd64.tar compressed.tar.gz
```

`.tar` files can also be zipped with `gzip`:



```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ gzip atom-amd64.tar && ls  
atom  atom-amd64.tar.gz  compressed.tar.gz
```

## Redirecting Input and Output

| / > / < / echo / printf

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By default, shell commands read their input from the standard input stream (aka. stdin or 0) and write to the standard output stream (aka. stdout or 1), unless there's an error, which is written to the standard error stream (aka. stderr or 2).

`echo` writes text to stdout by default, which in most cases will simply print it to the terminal:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo "hello"  
hello
```

The pipe operator, `|`, redirects the output of the first command to the input of the second command:

```
# 'wc' (word count) returns the number of lines, words, bytes in a file
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo "example document" | wc
      1      2     17
```

> redirects output from stdout to a particular location

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo "test" > file && head file
test
```

printf is an improved echo, allowing formatting and escape sequences:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ printf "1\n3\n2"
1
3
2
```

< gets input from a particular location, rather than stdin:

```
# 'sort' sorts the lines of a file alphabetically / numerically
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sort <(printf "1\n3\n2")
1
2
3
```

Rather than a [UUOC](#), the recommended way to send the contents of a file to a command is to use `<`. Note that this causes data to "flow" right-to-left on the command line, rather than (the perhaps more natural, for English-speakers) left-to-right:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ printf "1\n3\n2" > file && sort < file
1
2
3
```

`0 / 1 / 2 / tee`

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0, 1, and 2 are the standard input, output, and error streams, respectively. Input and output streams can be redirected with the `|`, `>`, and `<` operators mentioned previously, but `stdin`, `stdout`, and `stderr` can also be manipulated directly using their numeric identifiers:

Write to `stdout` or `stderr` with `>&1` or `>&2`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ cat test
echo "stdout" >&1
echo "stderr" >&2
```

By default, stdout and stderr both print output to the terminal:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ./test
stderr
stdout
```

Redirect stdout to `/dev/null` (only print output sent to stderr):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ./test 1>/dev/null
stderr
```

Redirect stderr to `/dev/null` (only print output sent to stdout):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ./test 2>/dev/null
stdout
```

Redirect all output to `/dev/null` (print nothing):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ./test &>/dev/null
```

Send output to stdout and any number of additional locations with `tee`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ls && echo "test" | tee file1 file2 file3 && ls  
file0  
test  
file0  file1  file2  file3
```

## Advanced

## Superuser

```
sudo / su
```

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You can check what your username is with `whoami` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 abc ]$ whoami  
andrew
```

...and run a command as another user with `sudo -u username`  
(you will need that user's password):

```
[ andrew@pc01 abc ]$ sudo -u test touch def && ls -l  
total 0  
-rw-r--r-- 1 test test 0 Jan 11 20:05 def
```

If `-u` is not provided, the default user is the superuser (usually called "root"), with unlimited permissions:

```
[ andrew@pc01 abc ]$ sudo touch ghi && ls -l
total 0
-rw-r--r-- 1 test test 0 Jan 11 20:05 def
-rw-r--r-- 1 root root 0 Jan 11 20:14 ghi
```

Use `su` to become another user temporarily (and `exit` to switch back):

```
[ andrew@pc01 abc ]$ su test
Password:
test@pc01:/home/andrew/abc$ whoami
test
test@pc01:/home/andrew/abc$ exit
exit

[ andrew@pc01 abc ]$ whoami
andrew
```

Learn more about the differences between `sudo` and `su` [here](#).

!!

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The superuser (usually "root") is the only person who can install software, create users, and so on. Sometimes it's easy to forget that, and you may get an error:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ apt install ruby
E: Could not open lock file /var/lib/dpkg/lock-frontend - open (13: Permission
E: Unable to acquire the dpkg frontend lock (/var/lib/dpkg/lock-frontend), are
```

You could retype the command and add `sudo` at the front of it (run it as the superuser):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sudo apt install ruby
Reading package lists...
```

Or, you could use the `!!` shortcut, which retains the previous command:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ apt install ruby
E: Could not open lock file /var/lib/dpkg/lock-frontend - open (13: Permission
E: Unable to acquire the dpkg frontend lock (/var/lib/dpkg/lock-frontend), are

[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sudo !!
sudo apt install ruby
Reading package lists...
```

By default, running a command with `sudo` (and correctly entering the password) allows the user to run superuser commands for the next 15 minutes. Once those 15 minutes are up, the user will again be prompted to enter the superuser password if they try to run a restricted command.

## File Permissions

### File Permissions

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Files may be able to be read ( `r` ), written to ( `w` ), and/or executed ( `x` ) by different users or groups of users, or not at all. File permissions can be seen with the `ls -l` command and are represented by 10 characters:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ls -lh
total 8
drwxr-xr-x 4 andrew andrew 4.0K Jan  4 19:37 tast
-rwxr-xr-x 1 andrew andrew  40 Jan 11 16:16 test
-rw-r--r-- 1 andrew andrew   0 Jan 11 16:34 tist
```

The first character of each line represents the type of file, ( `d` = directory, `l` = link, `-` = regular file, and so on); then there are three groups of three characters which represent the permissions held by the user (u) who owns the file, the



permissions held by the group (g) which owns the file, and the permissions held any other (o) users. (The number which follows this string of characters is the number of links in the file system to that file (4 or 1 above).)

`r` means that person / those people have read permission, `w` is write permission, `x` is execute permission. If a directory is “executable”, that means it can be opened and its contents can be listed. These three permissions are often represented with a single three-digit number, where, if `x` is enabled, the number is incremented by 1, if `w` is enabled, the number is incremented by 2, and if `r` is enabled, the number is incremented by 4. Note that these are equivalent to binary digits ( `r-x` -> `101` -> `5` , for example). So the above three files have permissions of 755, 755, and 644, respectively.

The next two strings in each list are the name of the owner ( `andrew` , in this case) and the group of the owner (also `andrew` , in this case). Then comes the size of the file, its most recent modification time, and its name. The `-h` flag makes the output human readable (i.e. printing `4.0K` instead of `4096` bytes).

`chmod / chown`

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File permissions can be modified with `chmod` by setting the access bits:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ chmod 777 test && chmod 000 tist && ls -lh
total 8.0K
drwxr-xr-x 4 andrew andrew 4.0K Jan  4 19:37 tast
-rwxrwxrwx 1 andrew andrew  40 Jan 11 16:16 test
----- 1 andrew andrew    0 Jan 11 16:34 tist
```

...or by adding ( + ) or removing ( - ) `r`, `w`, and `x` permissions with flags:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ chmod +rwx tist && chmod -w test && ls -lh
chmod: test: new permissions are r-xrwxrwx, not r-xr-xr-x
total 8.0K
drwxr-xr-x 4 andrew andrew 4.0K Jan  4 19:37 tast
-r-xrwxrwx 1 andrew andrew  40 Jan 11 16:16 test
-rwxr-xr-x 1 andrew andrew    0 Jan 11 16:34 tist
```

The user who owns a file can be changed with `chown` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sudo chown marina test
```

The group which owns a file can be changed with `chgrp` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sudo chgrp hadoop tist && ls -lh
total 8.0K
drwxr-xr-x 4 andrew andrew 4.0K Jan  4 19:37 tast
----w--w- 1 marina andrew  40 Jan 11 16:16 test
-rwxr-xr-x 1 andrew hadoop    0 Jan 11 16:34 tist
```

# User and Group Management

## Users

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`users` shows all users currently logged in. Note that a user can be logged in multiple times if -- for instance -- they're connected via multiple `ssh` sessions.

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ users
andrew colin colin colin colin colin colin krishna krishna
```

To see all users (even those not logged in), check `/etc/passwd`.  
(**WARNING:** do not modify this file! You can corrupt your user accounts and make it impossible to log in to your system.)

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ alias au="cut -d: -f1 /etc/passwd \
> | sort | uniq" && au
_apt
anaid
andrew...
```

Add a user with `useradd` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sudo useradd aardvark && au  
_apt  
aardvark  
anaid...
```

Delete a user with `userdel` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sudo userdel aardvark && au  
_apt  
anaid  
andrew...
```

Change a user's default shell, username, password, or group membership with `usermod` .

## Groups

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`groups` shows all of the groups of which the current user is a member:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ groups  
andrew adm cdrom sudo dip plugdev lpadmin sambashare hadoop
```

To see all groups on the system, check `/etc/group` . (DO NOT MODIFY this file unless you know what you are doing.)

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ alias ag="cut -d: -f1 /etc/group \  
> | sort" && ag  
adm  
anaid  
andrew...
```

Add a group with `groupadd` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sudo groupadd aardvark && ag  
aardvark  
adm  
anaid...
```

Delete a group with `groupdel` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ sudo groupdel aardvark && ag  
adm  
anaid  
andrew...
```

Change a group's name, ID number, or password with `groupmod` .

# Text Processing

`uniq / sort / diff / cmp`

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`uniq` can print unique lines (default) or repeated lines:

```
[ andrew@pc01 man ]$ printf "1\n2\n2" > a && \> printf "1\n3\n2" > b  
  
[ andrew@pc01 man ]$ uniq a  
1  
2
```

`sort` will sort lines alphabetically / numerically:

```
[ andrew@pc01 man ]$ sort b  
1  
2  
3
```

`diff` will report which lines differ between two files:

```
[ andrew@pc01 man ]$ diff a b  
2c2  
< 2  
---  
> 3
```

`cmp` reports which bytes differ between two files:

```
[ andrew@pc01 man ]$ cmp a b
a b differ: char 3, line 2
```

`cut` / `sed`

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`cut` is usually used to cut a line into sections on some delimiter (good for CSV processing). `-d` specifies the delimiter and `-f` specifies the field index to print (starting with 1 for the first field):

```
[ andrew@pc01 man ]$ printf "137.99.234.23" > c

[ andrew@pc01 man ]$ cut -d'.' c -f1
137
```

`sed` is commonly used to replace a string with another string in a file:

```
[ andrew@pc01 man ]$ echo "old" | sed s/old/new/
new
```

...but `sed` is an extremely powerful utility, and cannot be properly summarised here. It's actually Turing-complete, so it can do anything that any other programming language can do. `sed` can find and replace based on regular expressions, selectively print lines of a file which match or contain a certain pattern, edit text files in-place and non-interactively, and much more.

A few good tutorials on `sed` include:

- <https://www.tutorialspoint.com/sed/>
- <http://www.grymoire.com/Unix/Sed.html>
- <https://www.computerhope.com/unix/used.htm>

## Pattern Matching

`grep`

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The name `grep` comes from `g / re / p` (search `g`lobally for a `r`egular `e`xpression and `p`rint it); it's used for finding text in files.

`grep` is used to find lines of a file which match some pattern:



```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ grep -e ".*fi.*" /etc/profile
# /etc/profile: system-wide .profile file for the Bourne shell (sh(1))
# The file bash.bashrc already sets the default PS1.
fi
fi
...
```

...or contain some word:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ grep "andrew" /etc/passwd
andrew:x:1000:1000:andrew,,,:/home/andrew:/bin/bash
```

`grep` is usually the go-to choice for simply finding matching lines in a file, if you're planning on allowing some other program to handle those lines (or if you just want to view them).

`grep` allows for ( `-E` ) use of extended regular expressions, ( `-F` ) matching any one of multiple strings at once, and ( `-r` ) recursively searching files within a directory. These flags used to be implemented as separate commands ( `egrep` , `fgrep` , and `rgrep` , respectively), but those commands are now deprecated.

**Bonus:** [see the origins of the names of a few famous `bash` commands](#)

awk

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awk is a pattern-matching language built around reading and manipulating delimited data files, like CSV files.

As a rule of thumb, grep is good for finding strings and patterns in files, sed is good for one-to-one replacement of strings in files, and awk is good for extracting strings and patterns from files and analysing them.

As an example of what awk can do, here's a file containing two columns of data:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ printf "A 10\nB 20\nC 60" > file
```

Loop over the lines, add the number to sum, increment count, print the average:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ awk 'BEGIN {sum=0; count=0; OFS=" "} {sum+=$2; count++;} END  
Average: 30'
```

sed and awk are both Turing-complete languages. There have been multiple books written about each of them. They can be extremely useful with pattern matching and text processing. I

really don't have enough space here to do either of them justice. Go read more about them!

**Bonus:** [learn about some of the differences between `sed`, `grep`, and `awk`](#)

## Copying Files Over `ssh`

`ssh` / `scp`

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`ssh` is how Unix-based machines connect to each other over a network:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ssh -p <port> andrew@137.xxx.xxx.89
Last login: Fri Jan 11 12:30:52 2019 from 137.xxx.xxx.199
```

Notice that my prompt has changed as I'm now on a different machine:

```
[ andrew@pc02 ~ ]$ exit
logout
Connection to 137.xxx.xxx.89 closed.
```

Create a file on machine 1:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo "hello" > hello
```

Copy it to machine 2 using `scp` (secure copy; note that `scp` uses `-P` for a port #, `ssh` uses `-p`)

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ scp -P <port> hello andrew@137.xxx.xxx.89:~
hello                                     100%   0   0.0KB/s   00:00
```

`ssh` into machine 2:

```
[ andrew@pc02 ~ ]$ ssh -p <port> andrew@137.xxx.xxx.89
Last login: Fri Jan 11 22:47:37 2019 from 137.xxx.xxx.79
```

The file's there!

```
[ andrew@pc02 ~ ]$ ls
hello  multi  xargs

[ andrew@pc02 ~ ]$ cat hello
hello
```

## rsync

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`rsync` is a file-copying tool which minimises the amount of data copied by looking for deltas (changes) between files.

Suppose we have two directories: `d`, with one file, and `s`, with two files:

```
[ andrew@pc01 d ]$ ls && ls ../s
f0
f0 f1
```

Sync the directories (copying only missing data) with `rsync` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 d ]$ rsync -av ../s/* .
sending incremental file list...
```

`d` now contains all files that `s` contains:

```
[ andrew@pc01 d ]$ ls
f0 f1
```

`rsync` can be performed over `ssh` as well:

```
[ andrew@pc02 r ]$ ls

[ andrew@pc02 r ]$ rsync -avz -e "ssh -p <port>" andrew@137.xxx.xxx.79:~/s/* .
receiving incremental file list
f0
f1

sent 62 bytes  received 150 bytes  141.33 bytes/sec
total size is 0  speedup is 0.00

[ andrew@pc02 r ]$ ls
f0 f1
```

## Long-Running Processes

yes / nohup / ps / kill

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Sometimes, `ssh` connections can disconnect due to network or hardware problems. Any processes initialized through that connection will be “hung up” and terminate. Running a command with `nohup` insures that the command will not be hung up if the shell is closed or if the network connection fails.

Run `yes` (continually outputs "y" until it's killed) with `nohup` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ nohup yes &  
[1] 13173
```

`ps` shows a list of the current user's processes (note PID number 13173):

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ps | sed -n '/yes/p'  
13173 pts/10    00:00:12 yes
```

*...log out and log back into this shell...*

The process has disappeared from `ps` !

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ ps | sed -n '/yes/p'
```

But it still appears in `top` and `htop` output:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ top -bn 1 | sed -n '/yes/p'  
13173 andrew    20    0   4372    704    636 D   25.0   0.0   0:35.99 yes
```

Kill this process with `-9` followed by its process ID (PID) number:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ kill -9 13173
```

It no longer appears in `top`, because it's been killed:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ top -bn 1 | sed -n '/yes/p'
```

```
cron / crontab / >>
```

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`cron` provides an easy way of automating regular, scheduled tasks.

You can edit your `cron` jobs with `crontab -e` (opens a text editor). Append the line:

```
* * * * * date >> ~/datefile.txt
```

This will run the `date` command every minute, appending (with the `>>` operator) the output to a file:

```
[ andrew@pc02 ~ ]$ head ~/datefile.txt  
Sat Jan 12 14:37:01 GMT 2019
```



```
Sat Jan 12 14:38:01 GMT 2019
Sat Jan 12 14:39:01 GMT 2019...
```

Just remove that line from the `crontab` file to stop the job from running. `cron` jobs can be set up to run at particular minutes of each hour (0-59), particular hours of each day (0-23), particular days of each month (1-31), particular months of each year (1-12), or particular days of each week (0-6, Sun-Sat). This is what the five stars at the beginning of the command above represent, respectively. Replace them with specific numbers to run them on particular days or at particular times.

If a job is to be run irrespective of, for instance, the day of the week, then the position that represents the day of the week (the 5th position) should contain a star ( `*` ). This is why the command above runs every minute (the smallest interval available). `cron` jobs can be set up to run only when the system is rebooted, with `@reboot` replacing the stars/numbers. Jobs can also be run a specific number of times per hour or day or at multiple specific times per hour / day / week / month / etc.

[Check out this tutorial for more info.](#)

## Miscellaneous

```
pushd / popd
```

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Use `pushd` and `popd` to maintain a directory stack, instead of `cd`-ing everywhere.

Start in the `home` directory -- this will be the bottom directory in our "stack":

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ pwd
/home/andrew
```

Move to this directory with a long name, "push" it onto the stack with `pushd`:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ pushd /etc/java/security/security.d/
/etc/java/security/security.d ~
```

Move to a third directory and add it to the stack:

```
[ andrew@pc01 security.d ]$ pushd ~/test/
~/test /etc/java/security/security.d ~
```

When a new directory is added to the stack, it is added to the left-hand side of the list printed by `pushd`. To "pop" the top directory off (return to the most recent directory we added), we can use the `popd` command.

“Pop” off the top directory, move to the next one down the stack with `popd` :

```
[ andrew@pc01 test ]$ popd
/etc/java/security/security.d ~

[ andrew@pc01 security.d ]$ pwd
/etc/java/security/security.d
```

Pop another directory off the stack and we’ve back to where we started:

```
[ andrew@pc01 security.d ]$ popd
~

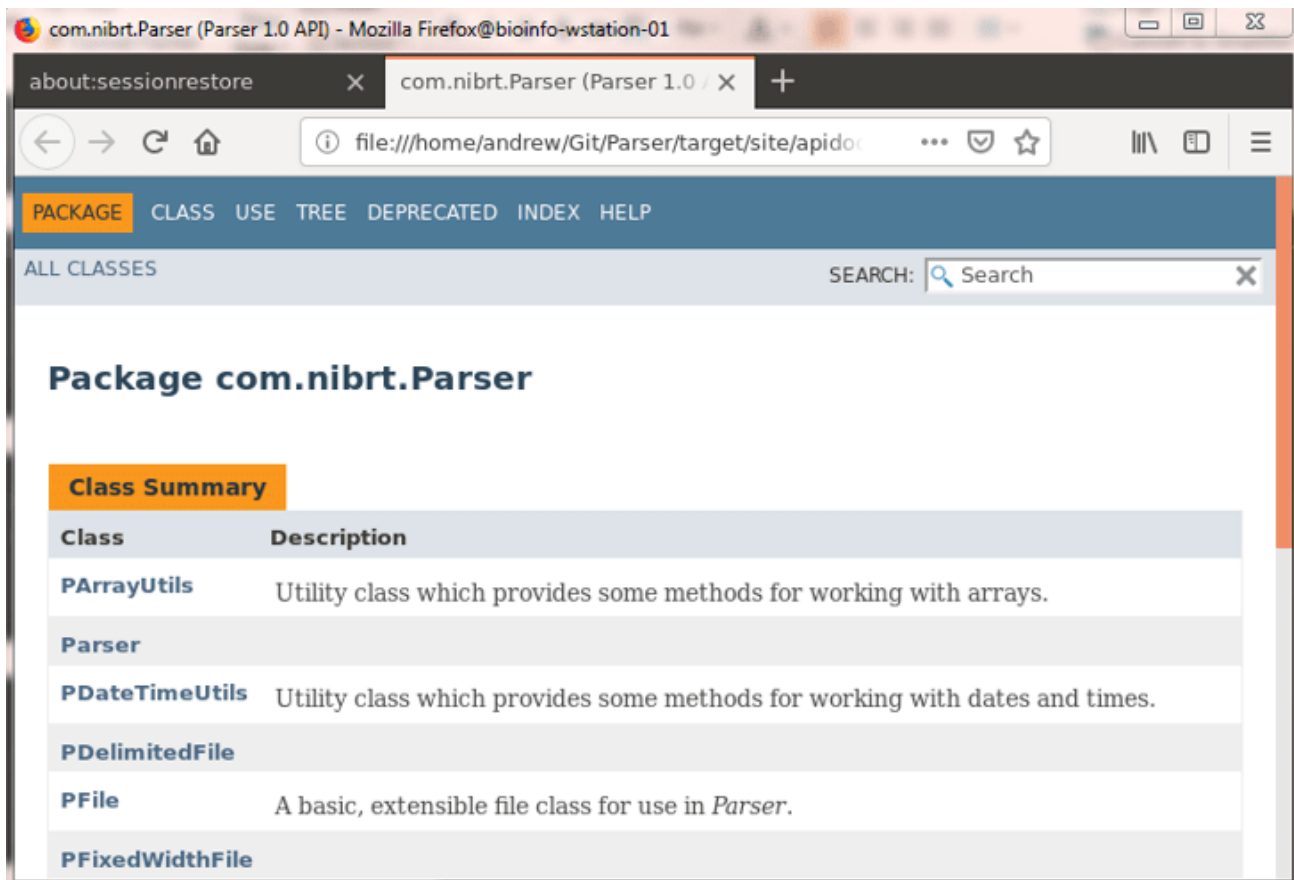
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ pwd
/home/andrew
```

`xdg-open`

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`xdg-open` opens a file with the default application (which could be a GUI program). It's a really useful tool for opening HTML documents from the command line. It's the Unix equivalent of macOS's `open` command:

```
[ andrew@pc01 security.d ]$ xdg-open index.html
```



xargs

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xargs vectorises commands, running them over any number of arguments in a loop.

ls this directory, its parent directory, and its grandparent directory:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ export lv=".\\n..\\n../.."

[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ printf $lv | xargs ls
.:
multi  file

..:
anaid  andrew  colin...

../...:
bin    dev    index...
```

Arguments can be run through a chain of commands with the `-I` flag.

`pwd` this directory, its parent directory, and its grandparent directory by `cd`-ing into each directory first:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ printf $lv | xargs -I % sh -c 'cd %; pwd %'
/home/andrew
/home
/
```

[Here's a great tutorial on xargs.](#)

## Bonus: Fun But Mostly Useless Things

w / write / wall / lynx

[\[ Back to Table of Contents \]](#)

w is a more detailed who, showing who's logged in and what they're doing:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ w
17:32:42 up 434 days,  3:11,  8 users,  load average: 2.32, 2.46, 2.57
USER      TTY      FROM            LOGIN@   IDLE   JCPU   PCPU   WHAT
colin     pts/9    137.xx.xx.210   03Jan19  5:28m  1:12   0.00s  sshd: colin [p
andrew    pts/10   137.xx.xx.199   11:05    1.00s  0.15s  0.04s  sshd: andrew [
colin     pts/12   137.xx.xx.210   03Jan19  34:32  1.59s  1.59s  -bash
...
```

write sends a message to a specific user:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ echo "hello" | write andrew pts/10

Message from andrew@pc01 on pts/10 at 17:34 ...
hello
EOF
```

wall is similar to write, but it sends the same message to every logged-in user. write and wall used to be more useful before email, Twitter, WhatsApp and instant messaging.

lynx is a fully-functional, text-based web browser:

```
<<< Google
Search Images Maps Play YouTube News Gmail Drive More
Web History | Settings | Sign in
Evelyn Dove's 117th Birthday
-----
Google Search I'm Feeling Lucky Advanced search
Language tools
Google offered in: Gaeilge
Advertising Programs Business Solutions About Google
Google.ie
2019 - Privacy - Terms
(NORMAL LINK) Use right-arrow or <return> to activate.
Arrow keys: Up and Down to move. Right to follow a link; Left to go back.
H)elp O)ptions P)rint G)o M)ain screen Q)uit /=search [delete]=history list
```

nautilus / date / cal / bc

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nautilus initialises a GUI remote desktop session and opens a file browser.

date shows the current date and time:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ date
Fri Jan 11 17:40:30 GMT 2019
```

cal shows an ASCII calendar of this month with today's date highlighted:

```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ cal
January 2019
```

```
Su Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa
      1  2  3  4  5
  6  7  8  9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 29 30 31
```

`bc` is a basic arithmetic calculator (use Python instead):

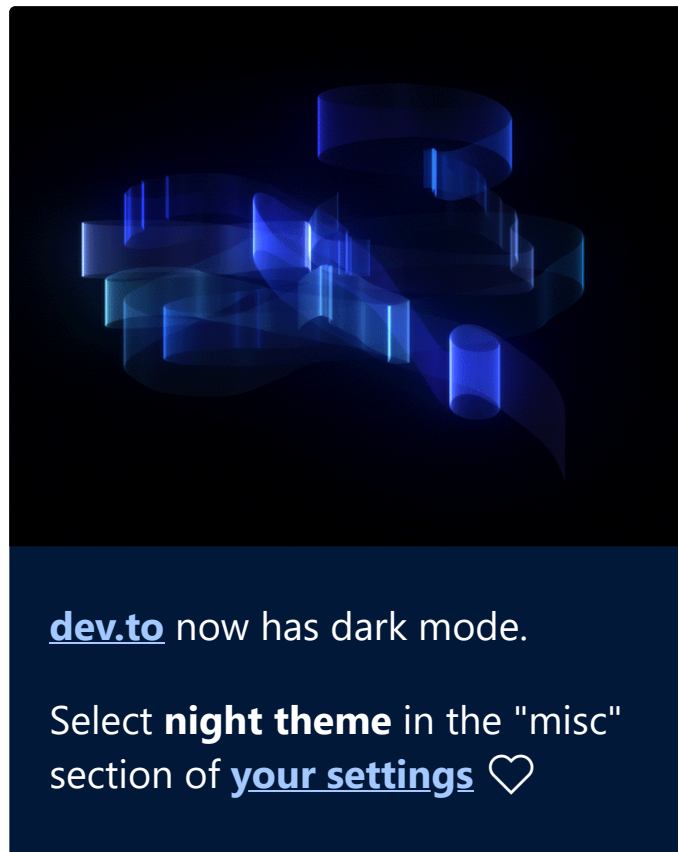
```
[ andrew@pc01 ~ ]$ bc
bc 1.06.95 ...
20/4
5
```

---

That's it for now! Let me know if you know of any extra features or cool commands I should add to this list. Also, please let me know if you find any typos or misinformation. I've tried my best to check everything, but there's a lot here!

If you enjoyed this post, please consider supporting my work by [buying me a coffee!](#)





Andrew (he/him) [+ FOLLOW](#)

Got a Ph.D. looking for dark matter, but not finding any. Now I code full-time. Je parle un peu français. dogs > cats

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PREVIEW

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Ben Halpern [Twitter](#) [GitHub](#)

Jan 14 '19 [More](#)

Holy cow!



[REPLY](#)



Andrew (he/him)  

Jan 14 '19 ■■■

My Markdown editor started choking near the end of writing this. RIP Simplenote.



[REPLY](#)



Joe Hobot 

Jan 15 '19 ■■■

That's what s..... ah nevermind 🙄



[REPLY](#)



Andrea Giammarchi 

Jan 15 '19 ■■■



this is an awesome post but I've no idea how could anyone use a shell that looks like a pipe operator all the time ... some command with pipe reads very badly, why not removing all the starting parts of your snippets, adding a classic \$ like any other shell, instead of

```
17:40 | andrew@pc01 ~ | ?
```



[REPLY](#)



Phil Ashby  

Jan 14 '19 ■■■

Fabulous readable reference, thanks Andrew!

Minor niggle - almost all of these are not bash commands, but command line tools that work the same from any shell - it would be nice to know what are bash built-ins that might go pop in another shell, and what aren't :)

Long-running advanced voodoo:


- disown (bash built-in): disconnects background processes from your terminal such that they stay running after you log off.
- screen (cli tool): opens a new terminal (tty/pty), such that anything you run in that terminal stays running when you disconnect from it / log off. You can also reconnect (screen -r) when you log back in.

I prefer screen over using disown, because of the reconnection ability.



[REPLY](#)



David J Eddy  

Jan 16 '19 

I'd like to add tmux to this list of helpful tools. Does similar thing as `screen`.



[REPLY](#)



Andrew (he/him)  

Jan 14 '19 

Thanks, Phil! I'll have to do some more research.

Watch out for the "unabridged" version of this in the future.



[REPLY](#)



xhiena 

Jan 15 '19 

Yes, I was missing those on the SSH section, [@andrew](#) really awesome post



[REPLY](#)



Solomon Ucko 

Jan 15 '19 

FWIW, most of these aren't actually `bash` commands (only the builtins are); they're Unix/Posix/whatever commands.

Also, the prompt you use confuses me: it looks like there's an extra command (such as the `ex` command) at the start of the pipeline.



[REPLY](#)



Vincent Boiteau-Robert 

Jan 14 '19 

Great reference, I would suggest changing the format of your prompt. Having the `|` symbol dividing the time and username is confusing on first look.



[REPLY](#)



Venkatesh-Prasad Ranganath  

Jan 15 '19 

Great list!! I would have added "type" and "tmux" to the list :)

For folks interested in useful Unix tricks, [Unix Power Tools book](#) is a great source.



REPLY



jikuja  

Jan 17 '19 

Cool article but there are few things I need to disagree.

### Environment variable creation

Using format `foo=bar` stores environment variable only current command. To keep environment variable loaded in your running bash process you need to export it with `export foo=bar`. This behaviour can be checked with commands `env`, `printenv` or by echoing environment variable.

### *source* vs *sh*

Results of *source* and *sh* commands might look identical but they are not. Source command executes script in running bash and all exported environment variables are part of the running bash shell. *sh* invokes a new shell and exported variables are not usable in the calling shell. Also working directory of calling bash shell might be changed when using *source* command.

Please note that *sh* usually is linked to *posh* or some other lightweight shell which does not have all bash features.



REPLY



jikuja  

Jan 18 '19 

### More about *source*

In some systems *source* and `.` are interchangeable command. (POSIX compatibility is swamp)

Anyway *source* command is good if you need (temporary) setup your environment: e.g. load environment variables, aliases and even request passwords from user with `read -s <variable_name>` or to load functions from external libraries.

Usually *source* is used in scripts(1) but I'm sure that users can find use cases when to use *source* to setup environment for running shell.



REPLY



Kyle R. Conway

Jan 14 '19

Impressive post! I remember when I found `ncdu` it was an amazing day. It's by far my favorite tool to find what's taking up my disk space! I really hope more people use it as a result of your excellent post!



4

REPLY



Andrew (he/him)

Jan 14 '19

`ncdu` is great, it's what `du` should have been. Writing this post, I found a few other commands and flags that I forgot about / never learned about. One of my favourite ones is the `-p` flag to `mkdir`, which will create all missing intermediate directories! Small things like that can save you lots of time.



3

REPLY



Bryn Smith

Jan 15 '19

Good post! Do not run `kill -9`, but rather use just plain `kill`, or `kill -15` if that doesn't work. `kill` and `kill -15` end a process somewhat gracefully, so that the os is at least notified that the process is killed. `-9` just causes it to vanish with no notice. It's akin to just hitting the power button, on a process level, without doing any sort of shutdown routine. Also, `ag` (SILVERSURFER) is my team's `grep` replacement, give it a look.



3

REPLY



Heiko Müller

Jan 15 '19

Thank you for your impressive post!  
And for mac users: If you want to use the very convenient `ncdu` command, there's a version available for Homebrew:

```
brew install ncdu
```



3

REPLY



Paul Rennix



Oct 12 '19

WELL DONE!

set -x is a favorite of mine for debugging.

```
#!/bin/bash
```

```
set -x
```

this turns on line-by-line logic/command flow output and is great for debugging. It can be used inside a script or on the command line. If using on the command line, you'll want to turn it off at the end of the line. When used in a script, it's activity ends when the script does, or when unset with set -x

```
~ prennix$ set -x; for number in $(seq 1 3); \  
do echo "Number ${number}"; done; \  
if [ "${number}" == "3" ]; then echo "it's three"; \  
else echo "this text is never printed"; fi; set +x  
  
++ seq 1 3  
+ for number in '$(seq 1 3)'  
+ echo 'Number 1'  
Number 1  
+ for number in '$(seq 1 3)'  
+ echo 'Number 2'  
Number 2  
+ for number in '$(seq 1 3)'  
+ echo 'Number 3'  
Number 3  
+ '[' 3 == 3 ']'  
+ echo 'it'\''s three'  
it's three  
+ set +x
```



1

REPLY



letsfindcourse



Nov 3 '19

This tutorial means that this is a brief introductory guide to SED that will help give beginners a solid foundation about concrete tasks.

[letsfindcourse.com/tutorials/sed-t...](https://letsfindcourse.com/tutorials/sed-t...)



2

REPLY



Katie  

Jan 14 '19 ■■■

Great post!

BTW, A similarly "for beginners" tutorial that I enjoyed, in book form, is M.G. Venkateshmurthy's "[Introduction to Unix and Shell Programming](#)," if anyone is still looking for additional material. *(It gives fun "why" context to all of its "how" -- for example, it points out that the commands/flags of command-line interfaces are short and hard to remember because back when the only way to interact with your computer was a command line interface and only specialists used computers, the last thing programmers wanted to do was type a lot, so they just made up a bunch of cryptic short commands.)*



2

[REPLY](#)



Aaron Ross 

Jan 15 '19 ■■■

`rm -rf` is commonly referred to as "rimraf" or "rimraf-ing".

Looking back it seems intuitive but I didn't make that connection for the longest time.

Great article :)



3

[REPLY](#)



Robin Kretzschmar 

Jan 16 '19 ■■■

I think it's really awesome that you thought of the reader and added a "Back to TOC" after each topic for easy navigation!  
And of course the content is very well explained with just enough words but much information in it :)



2

[REPLY](#)



Uday Vunnam  

Jan 15 '19 ■■■


This is so good. I can use many of these.  
Thanks for sharing!!



3

[REPLY](#)



Rishabh Raj 

Sep 14 '19 

Thank You for sharing such an informative post. I like the way you present the things and make the post more presentable. At PegaLogics, You will get the best industry-leading experience in the field of Mobile App Development & Web Designing. Visit our website, Regards-  
[pegalogics.com/services/web-design...](https://pegalogics.com/services/web-design...)



REPLY



jikuja  

Feb 7 '19 

Bonus tip for date command: `date +%s` prints unix time (in seconds)



REPLY



Ben Sinclair  

Apr 2 '19 

df takes a `--max-depth=N`


You meant `du` there, I think.



REPLY



Andrew (he/him)  

Apr 2 '19 


I did, thanks! It's fixed now.



REPLY



Lasha Kakhidze  

Feb 28 '19 

Awesome post!!! Thanks Andrew.



REPLY





Md. Atiqul Haque

Jan 15 '19

Very useful article. Thanks Andrew for this article.



REPLY



John

Jan 19 '19

the picture associated with the `xdg-open` command appears to be from a Windows machine! how would it be possible?



REPLY



Andrew (he/him)

Jan 25 '19

Hi Amr,

Because I'm `ssh` ing into an Ubuntu machine from Windows using [MobaXTerm](#). `xdg-open` (at least in this case) is using the default window styling from Windows.



REPLY



John 'BBQ' Wollner

Jan 15 '19

Thanks for the firehouse, but an excellent article for newbies or those, like me, who are a little rusty.



REPLY



readyready15728

Jan 15 '19

Good article. Should have mentioned `ipython` and `trash-cli` though. (Also probably in most contexts, for the Python 3 version to run, one has to enter in "`python3`", "`ipython3`", "`pip3`" etc.)



REPLY



Andrew (he/him)  

Jan 25 '19 

Hi everyone!

Thanks for the amazing response to this article! **I've updated the command prompt** so it's a bit less confusing. I hope to post an updated / revised / expanded version of this in the future, where I'll take everyone's suggestions below into consideration.

Thanks again!



1

[REPLY](#)



Aidas Bendoraitis 

Jan 16 '19 

Really remarkable article!

But it seems that `top` uses the capital `-U` for the username. At least on Mac OS and FreeBSD.



2

[REPLY](#)



Thomas Melville  

Jan 22 '19 

A great resource, thanks.



If the file you're looking for is not found with `locate`, you can run `updatedb` to update the list of files for `locate`.



2

[REPLY](#)



Di Wu  

Jan 15 '19 

sick post! need these



2

[REPLY](#)



Sung M. Kim  

Jan 15 '19 

Thank you, Andrew.

A great article written at the perfect time (I started using Ubuntu recently) 👍



REPLY



Vignesh D

Jan 15 '19

Great. But that Pipe operator as prompt in the command snippet seems very confusing.



REPLY

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Classic DEV Post from Apr 29 '19

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Luca Grandicelli

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91



53

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Tyler V. (he/him)

Brief intro to get started with Firebase authentication services.



104



5

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Ben Halpern



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6



## Universal sentence encoder

Jingles - Feb 10



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## Create a dynamic sticky table of contents for your website with JavaScript

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## SpriteKit Gotcha: Taps Near the Bottom of the Screen

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