

Introduction to Unix shell

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Introduction

Unix shell is a command line interpreter that provides a user interface for directing the operation of the computer by entering commands as text for a command line interpreter to execute, or by creating text scripts of one or more such commands. In plain English, it is a powerful way of telling your computer what to do. You can read more about the history of Unix shell here http://www.softpanorama.org/People/Shell_giants/introduction.shtml.

Developing skills for coding in any language consists of the following components:

- *Logic* - understanding the syntax, how commands and scripts are structured and how components fit together. This is something one has to learn.
- *Awareness* - knowing what commands, methods and tricks exist and what they can be used for. This is like checking your inventory of LEGO bricks - you need to know what you have in order to start thinking how to put them together to build what you want.
- *Practice* - and a lot of practice. Learning how to combine the bricks together to solve increasingly more complex problems is best achieved through continuous practice.
- *Google and Stack Overflow* <http://stackoverflow.com/> - what coding really is about. It is likely that unless you are doing something very very novel, someone else has run into the same problem and has a solution. Find it and use it, don't reinvent the wheel. This is an important part of the learning and practice process.

In this tutorial we focus on explaining the *Logic* component and on building some *Awareness* about existing commands and methods. Finally, we give some exercises for *Practice* and leave it up to you to familiarise yourself with how to search for answers if you get stuck.

If you have previous experience with Unix shell. Skip to the *Exercises* section below and try your skills at it.

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