

# Basic Linux Commands

Here is a short list of basic, but essential commands. In Linux, commands are case-sensitive and more often than not they are entirely in lowercase. Items that are surrounded by brackets ([]) are optional. You will more than likely use at least some of these commands every time you log into a Linux system. Become familiar with these commands because they can get you pretty far in a short amount of time.

`ls` - Lists directory contents. You will use `ls` to display information about files and directories.

`cd [dir]` - Changes the current directory to `dir`. If you execute `cd` without specifying a directory, `cd` changes the current directory to your home directory. This is how you navigate around the system.

`pwd` - Displays the present working directory name. If you don't know what directory you are in, `pwd` will tell you.

`cat [file]` - Concatenates and displays files. This is the command you run to view the contents of a file.

`echo [argument]` - Displays arguments to the screen.

`man command` - Displays the online manual for `command`. Type `q` to quit viewing the manual page. The documentation provided by the `man` command is commonly called "man pages."

`exit`, `logout`, or `Ctrl-d` - Exits the shell or your current session.

`clear` - Clears the screen.

Here is a screen capture of Bob's session using the above commands.

```
$ ls
PerformanceReviews sales-lecture.mp3 sales.data tpsreports
$ cd tpsreports
$ pwd
/home/bob/tpsreports
$ ls -l
total 2
-rw-r--r-- 1 bob users 31 Sep 28 14:49 coversheet.doc
-rw-r--r-- 1 bob users 35 Sep 27 08:47 sales-report.txt
$ cat sales-report.txt
We sold lots of widgets this week!
$ echo $PATH
/bin:/usr/bin:/usr/sbin:/usr/local/bin
$ man ls
NAME
    ls - list directory contents
...
```

More details on how you can fully exploit the power of these simple commands will be covered later.

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