

How to manage your dotfiles with git

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Based on a [Hacker News solution proposed by StreakyCobra](#)

In his own words, some advantages of this approach are:

No extra tooling, no symlinks, files are tracked on a version control system, you can use different branches for different computers, you can replicate your configuration easily on new installation.



Getting started

If you're starting from scratch, go ahead and...

create a `.dotfiles` folder, which we'll use to track your dotfiles

```
git init --bare $HOME/.dotfiles
```

create an alias `dotfiles` so you don't need to type it all over again

```
alias dotfiles='/usr/bin/git --git-dir=$HOME/.dotfiles/ --work-tree=$HOME'
```

set git status to hide untracked files

```
dotfiles config --local status.showUntrackedFiles no
```

add the alias to .bashrc (or .zshrc) so you can use it later

```
echo "alias dotfiles='/usr/bin/git --git-dir=$HOME/.dotfiles/ --work-tree=$HOME'" >> $HOME/.bashrc
```

Usage

Now you can use regular git commands such as:

```
dotfiles status
dotfiles add .vimrc
dotfiles commit -m "Add vimrc"
dotfiles add .bashrc
dotfiles commit -m "Add bashrc"
dotfiles push
```

Nice, right? Now if you're moving to a virgin system...

Setup environment in a new computer

Make sure to have git installed, then:

clone your github repository

```
git clone --bare https://github.com/USERNAME/dotfiles.git $HOME/.dotfiles
```

define the alias in the current shell scope

```
alias dotfiles='/usr/bin/git --git-dir=$HOME/.dotfiles/ --work-tree=$HOME'
```

checkout the actual content from the git repository to your `$HOME`

```
dotfiles checkout
```

Note that if you already have some of the files you'll get an error message. You can either (1) delete them or (2) back them up somewhere else. It's up to you.

Awesome! You're done.

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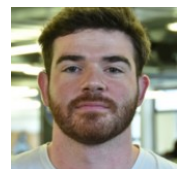
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