How to Fix “Username is not in the sudoers file. This incident will be reported” in Ubuntu

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In Unix/Linux systems, the `root` user account is the super user account, and it can therefore be used to do anything and everything achievable on the system.

However, this can be very dangerous in so many ways – one could be that the **root** user might enter a wrong command and breaks the whole system or an attacker gets access to root user account and takes control of the whole system and who knows what he/she can possibly do.

Based upon this background, in **Ubuntu** and its derivatives, the **root** user account is locked by default, regular users (system administrators or not) can only gain super user privileges by using the `sudo` command.

And one of the worst things that can happen to a Ubuntu System admin is losing privileges to use the **sudo** command, a situation commonly referred to as “**broken sudo**”. This can be absolutely devastating.

A broken **sudo** may be caused by any of the following:

- A user should not have been removed from the **sudo** or **admin** group.
- The **/etc/sudoers** file was altered to prevent users in **sudo** or **admin** group from elevating their privileges to that of **root** using **sudo** command.
- The permission on **/etc/sudoers** file is not set to **0440**.

In order to perform crucial tasks on your system such as viewing or altering important system files, or updating the system, you need the **sudo** command to gain super user privileges. What if you are denied usage of **sudo** due one or more of the reasons we mentioned above.

Below is an image showing a case in which the default system user is being prevented from running **sudo** command:

```
tecmint@TecMint ~ $ sudo visudo
[ sudo ] password for aaronkilik:
aaronkilik is not in the sudoers file.   This incident will be report

tecmint@TecMint ~ $ sudo apt install vim
```

```
tecmint@tecmint ~ $ sudo apt install vim
[ sudo ] password for aaronkilik:
aaronkilik is not in the sudoers file.   This incident will be report
```

How To Fix Broken sudo Command in Ubuntu

If you happen to be running only **Ubuntu** on your machine, after powering it, press the `Shift` key for a few seconds to get the **Grub** boot menu. On the other hand, if you are running a dual-boot (Ubuntu alongside Windows or **Mac OS X**), then you should see the Grub boot menu by default.

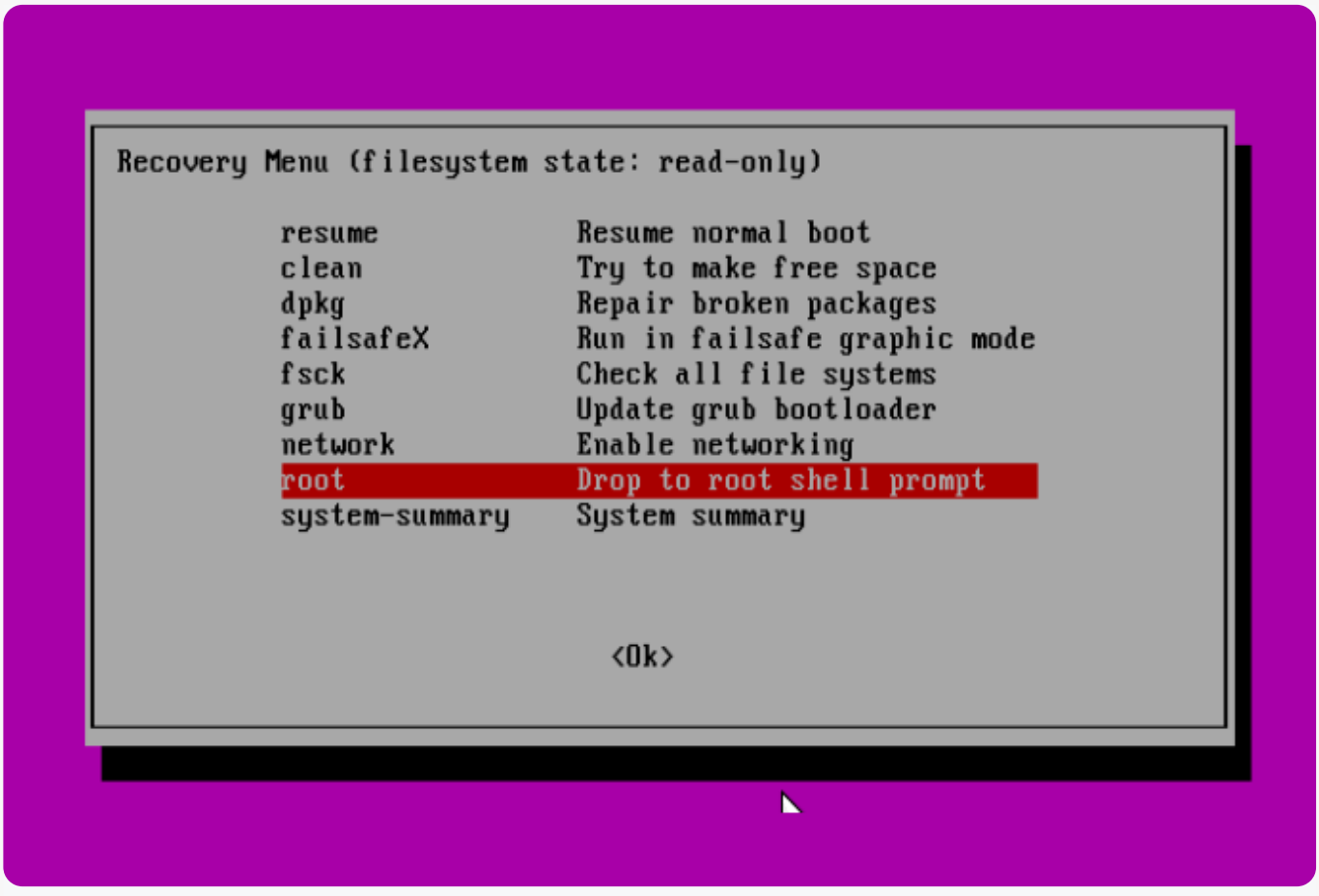
Using the `Down Arrow`, select "**Advanced options for Ubuntu**" and press **Enter**.

Ubuntu Grub Menu

You will be at the interface below, select the kernel with "**recovery mode**" option as below and press **Enter** to advance to the "**Recovery menu**".

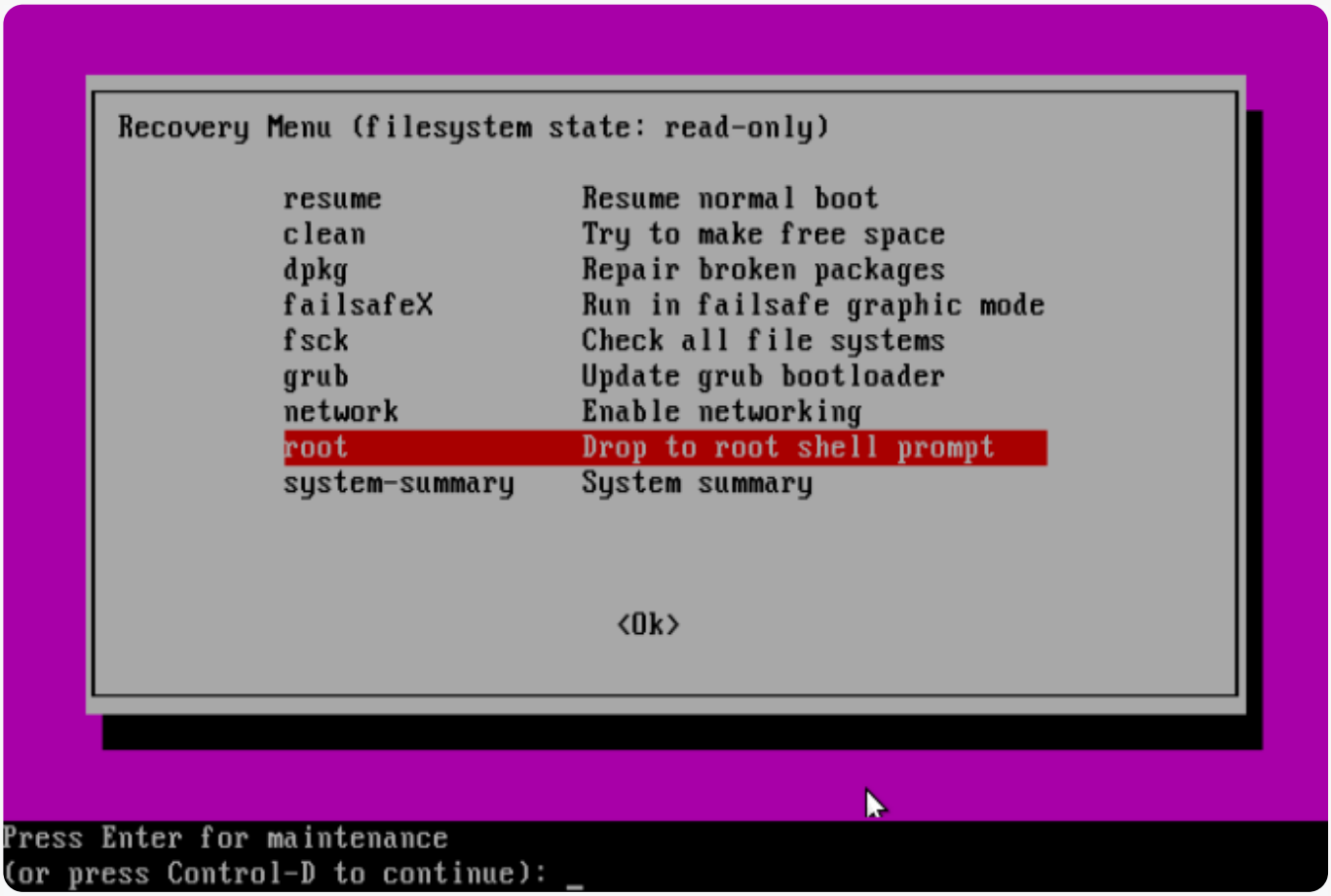
Ubuntu Recovery Mode

Below is the "**Recovery menu**", indicating that the root filesystem is mounted as read-only. Move over to the line "**root Drop to root shell prompt**", then hit **Enter**.



Ubuntu Recovery Menu – Drop to root Shell Prompt

Next, press **Enter** for maintenance:



Ubuntu Maintenance

At this point, you should be at the **root** shell prompt. As we had seen before, the filesystem is mounted as read-only, therefore, to make changes to the system we need to remount is as read/write by running the command below:

```
# mount -o rw,remount /
```

Solving Case #1 – Add User to sudo or admin Group

Assuming that a user has been removed from the sudo group, to add user back to sudo group issue the command below:

```
# adduser username sudo
```

Note: Remember to use the actual username on the system, for my case, it is **aaronkilik**.

Or else, under the condition that a user has been removed from the admin group, run the following command:

```
# adduser username admin
```

Solving Case #2 – Granting sudo Privileges to Users

On the assumption that the `/etc/sudoers` file was altered to prevent users in **sudo** or **admin** group from elevating their privileges to that of a super user, then make a backup of the **sudoers** files as follows:

```
# cp /etc/sudoers /etc/sudoers.orginal
```

Subsequently, open the **sudoers** file.

```
# visudo
```

and add the content below:

```
#
# This file MUST be edited with the 'visudo' command as root.
#
# Please consider adding local content in /etc/sudoers.d/ instead of
# directly modifying this file.
#
# See the man page for details on how to write a sudoers file.
#
Defaults        env_reset
Defaults        mail_badpass
Defaults        secure_path="/usr/local/sbin:/usr/local/bin:/usr/sbi$

# Host alias specification

# User alias specification

# Cmnd alias specification
```

```
# User privilege specification
root    ALL=(ALL:ALL) ALL

# Members of the admin group may gain root privileges
%admin ALL=(ALL) ALL

# Allow members of group sudo to execute any command
%sudo   ALL=(ALL:ALL) ALL

# See sudoers(5) for more information on "#include" directives:

#includedir /etc/sudoers.d
```

Solving Case #3 – Setting Correct Permission on sudoers File

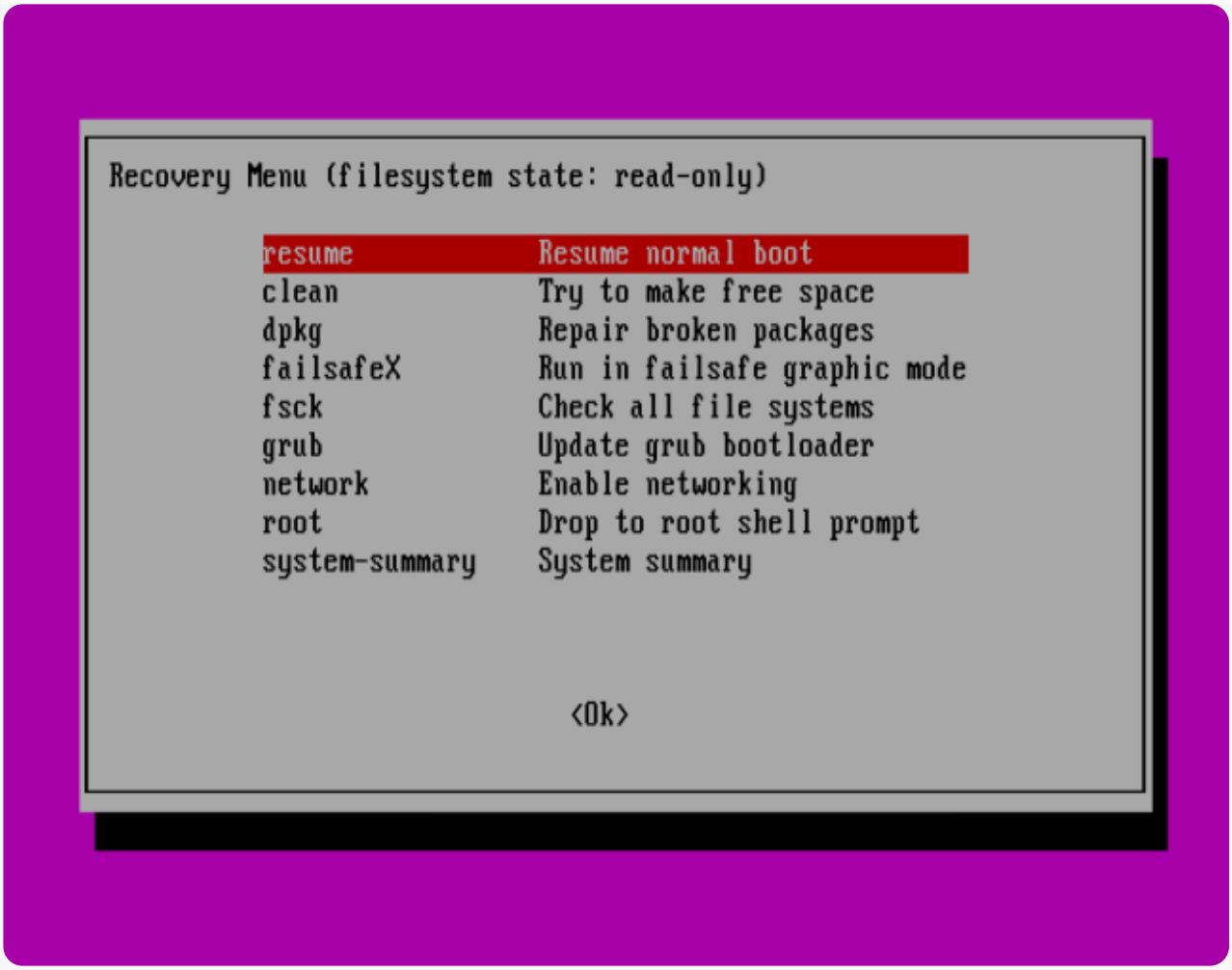
Supposing that the permission on **/etc/sudoers** file is not set to **0440**, then run following command to make it right:

```
# chmod  0440  /etc/sudoers
```

Last but not least, after running all the necessary commands, type the `exit` command to go back to the "**Recovery menu**":

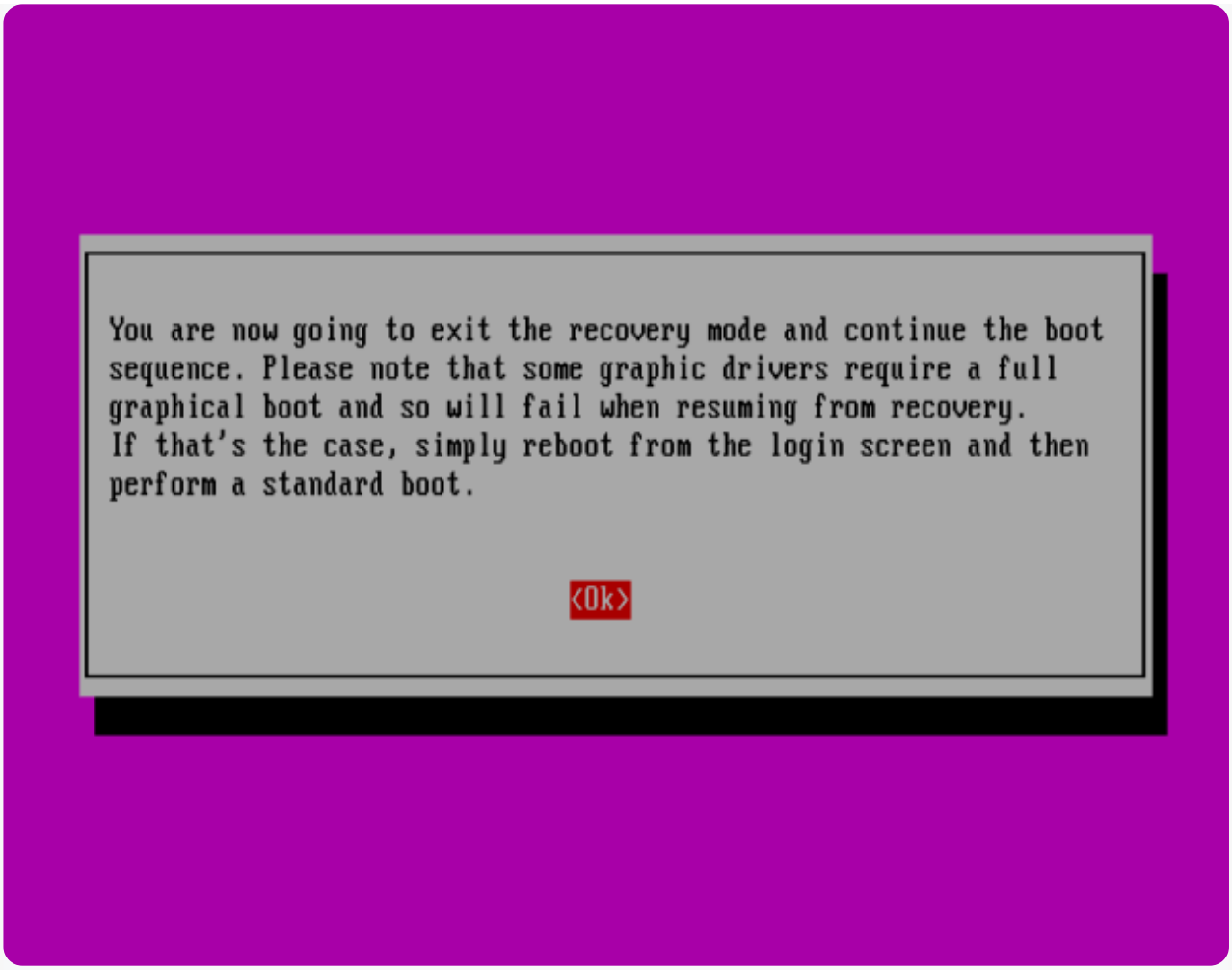
```
# exit
```

Use the `Right Arrow` to select `<Ok>` and hit **Enter**:



Ubuntu Recovery Menu – Resume Normal Boot

Press `<Ok>` to continue with normal boot sequence:



Confirm Ubuntu Normal Boot

Summary

This method should work just fine especially when it is an administrative user account involved, where there is no other option but to use the recovery mode.

However, if it fails to work for you, try to get back to us by expressing your experience via the feedback section below. You can as well offer any suggestions or other possible ways to solve the issue at hand or improve this guide altogether.