
Chapter 3. Running QPDF

This chapter describes how to run the qpdf program from the command line.

3.1. Basic Invocation

When running qpdf, the basic invocation is as follows:

```
qpdf [ options ] infilename [ outfilename ]
```

This converts PDF file **infilename** to PDF file **outfilename**. The output file is functionally identical to the input file but may have been structurally reorganized. Also, orphaned objects will be removed from the file. Many transformations are available as controlled by the options below. In place of **infilename**, the parameter **--empty** may be specified. This causes qpdf to use a dummy input file that contains zero pages. The only normal use case for using **--empty** would be if you were going to add pages from another source, as discussed in [Section 3.5, “Page Selection Options”](#), page 10.

If **@filename** appears anywhere in the command-line, it will be read line by line, and each line will be treated as a command-line argument. The **@-** option allows arguments to be read from standard input. This allows qpdf to be invoked with an arbitrary number of arbitrarily long arguments. It is also very useful for avoiding having to pass passwords on the command line.

outfilename does not have to be seekable, even when generating linearized files. Specifying “-” as **outfilename** means to write to standard output. However, you can't specify the same file as both the input and the output because qpdf reads data from the input file as it writes to the output file. QPDF attempts to detect this case and fail without overwriting the output file.

Most options require an output file, but some testing or inspection commands do not. These are specifically noted.

3.2. Shell Completion

Starting in qpdf version 8.3.0, qpdf provides its own completion support for zsh and bash. You can enable bash completion with **eval \$(qpdf --completion-bash)** and zsh completion with **eval \$(qpdf --completion-zsh)**. If **qpdf** is not in your path, you should invoke it above with an absolute path. If you invoke it with a relative path, it will warn you, and the completion won't work if you're in a different directory.

3.3. Basic Options

The following options are the most common ones and perform commonly needed transformations.

--help

Display command-line invocation help.

--version

Display the current version of qpdf.

--copyright

Show detailed copyright information.

--completion-bash

Output a completion command you can eval to enable shell completion from bash.