

Get Help in the Command Line

Skills acquired:

- Get a short description of a command
- Display the man pages for a command
- Find commands based on keywords about their function

Scenario:

In this scenario, you have to find more information about commands that you need to use. You also need to discover which command to use to perform a certain task.

Task 1. Learn more about commands

In this task, you need to explore a few commands you can use in the shell to learn more about the functionality of other commands.

First, imagine you can't quite remember what the cat command does and want a quick reminder.

1. Run the `whatis` command to get a short description of `cat`.

```
analyst@a923d549c38f:~$ whatis cat
cat (1)                  - concatenate files and print on the standard output
```

Next, imagine that you want more details about `cat` and all of its options.

2. Use the man command to get more details about cat.

```
analyst@a923d549c38f:~$ man cat
CAT(1)                                User Commands                                CAT(1)

NAME
    cat - concatenate files and print on the standard output

SYNOPSIS
    cat [OPTION]... [FILE]...

DESCRIPTION
    Concatenate FILE(s) to standard output.

    With no FILE, or when FILE is -, read standard input.

    -A, --show-all
        equivalent to -vET

    -b, --number-nonblank
        number nonempty output lines, overrides -n

    -e
        equivalent to -vE

    -E, --show-ends
        display $ at end of each line

    -n, --number
        number all output lines

    -s, --squeeze-blank
        suppress repeated empty output lines

    -t
        equivalent to -vT

    -T, --show-tabs
        display TAB characters as ^I
```

3. Press **Q** to exit this manual page.

Now, imagine you've remembered there's a command that prints just the first part of a file, but you can't remember the exact command. The apropos command is useful in these instances. You can use keywords with apropos to find a command.

4. Use apropos to find a command that returns the first part of a file:

apropos -a first part file

```
analyst@a923d549c38f:~$ apropos -a first part file
head (1)          - output the first part of files
analyst@a923d549c38f:~$
```

Task 2. Explore the useradd command

In this task, imagine that you want to set the expiration date for a temporary user account. You know that you need to use the `useradd` command for this, but you're not quite sure how to complete the task. You realize it might involve adding an option to the command.

1. Use the most appropriate Linux command to get help on the `useradd` command and learn more about all of its options.

```
analyst@a923d549c38f:~$ man useradd
```

2. Press **Q** to exit this manual page.

Task 3. Explore the rm and rmdir commands

In this task, you need to determine the difference between the rm and rmdir commands.

Imagine that you've used these commands before, but you can't remember how they're different.

- Use the most appropriate Linux command to quickly remind yourself what each command does.

```
analyst@a923d549c38f:~$ whatis rm
rm (1)                - remove files or directories
analyst@a923d549c38f:~$ whatis rmdir
rmdir (1)             - remove empty directories
rmdir (2)             - delete a directory
```

Task 4. Determine which command to use

In this task, imagine that you need to create a new group but you can't remember what command to use. You need to identify a command that will do this by searching for it through keywords. In this case, use the keywords create new group.

- Use the most appropriate Linux command with these keywords to identify what command to use.

```
analyst@a923d549c38f:~$ apropos -a create a new group
groupadd (8)          - create a new group
```