

NAME

sort – sort or merge files

SYNOPSIS

sort [**-mubdfnr**] [**-tx**] [**+pos** [**-pos**]] ... [**-o** name] [name] ...

DESCRIPTION

Sort sorts lines of all the named files together and writes the result on the standard output. The name ‘–’ means the standard input. The standard input is also used if no input file names are given. Thus *sort* may be used as a filter.

The default sort key is an entire line. Default ordering is lexicographic by bytes in machine collating sequence. The ordering is affected by the following flags one or more of which may appear.

- b** Leading blanks (spaces and tabs) are not included in keys.
- d** ‘Dictionary’ order: only letters, digits and blanks are significant in comparisons.
- f** Fold lower case letters onto upper case.
- i** Ignore all nonprinting nonblank characters in nonnumeric comparisons.
- n** An initial numeric string, consisting of optional minus sign, digits and optionally included decimal point, is sorted by arithmetic value.
- r** Reverse the sense of comparisons.
- tx** Tab character between fields is *x*.

Selected parts of the line, specified by *+pos* and *-pos*, may be used as sort keys. *Pos* has the form *m.n* optionally followed by one or more of the flags **bdfrn**, where *m* specifies a number of fields to skip, *n* a number of characters to skip further into the next field, and the flags specify a special ordering rule for the key. A missing *n* is taken to be 0. *+pos* denotes the beginning of the key; *-pos* denotes the first position after the key (end of line by default). Later keys are compared only when all earlier keys compare equal.

When no tab character has been specified, a field consists of nonblanks and any preceding blanks. Under the **-b** flag, leading blanks are excluded from a field. When a tab character has been specified, fields are strings separated by tab characters.

Lines that otherwise compare equal are ordered with all bytes significant.

These flag arguments are also understood:

- m** Merge only, the input files are already sorted.
- o** The next argument is the name of an output file to use instead of the standard output. This file may be the same as one of the inputs, except under the merge flag **-m**.
- u** Suppress all but one in each set of contiguous equal lines. Ignored bytes and bytes outside keys do not participate in this comparison.

Examples. Print a list of all the distinct *tr off(I)* commands in a given document:

```
grep "^\" document | sort -u +0 -0.3
```

Print the password file *passwd(V)* sorted by user id:

```
sort -t: +2n /etc/passwd
```

FILES

/tmp/stm???