`[[ syntax:expansion:wordsplit ]]`

Word splitting

🔧 **Fix Me!** to be continued!

Word splitting occurs once any of the following expansions are done (and only then!)

- Parameter expansion
- Command substitution
- Arithmetic expansion

Bash will scan the results of these expansions for special `IFS` characters that mark word boundaries. This is only done on results that are **not double-quoted**!

Internal Field Separator IFS

The `IFS` variable holds the characters that Bash sees as word boundaries in this step. The default contains the characters

- <space>
- <tab>
- <newline>

These characters are also assumed when IFS is **unset**. When `IFS` is **empty** (nullstring), no word splitting is performed at all.

Behaviour

The results of the expansions mentioned above are scanned for `IFS`-characters. If **one or more** (in a sequence) of them is found, the expansion result is split at these positions into multiple words.

This doesn't happen when the expansion results were **double-quoted**.

When a null-string (e.g., something that before expanded to »nothing«) is found, it is removed, unless it is quoted (`' '` or `" "`).

Again note: Without any expansion beforehand, Bash won't perform word splitting! In this case, the initial token parsing is solely responsible.

See also

- Introduction to expansion and substitution
- Quoting and escaping

- WordSplitting (http://mywiki.wooledge.org/WordSplitting), IFS
(http://mywiki.wooledge.org/IFS), and DontReadLinesWithFor
(http://mywiki.wooledge.org/DontReadLinesWithFor) - Greg's wiki

🗩 Discussion