

head and tail usage and flags

The head and tail commands are essential tools in Linux and Unix-based systems for viewing the beginning and end of files, respectively.

head:

- **Purpose:** Displays the first part of a file.
- **Syntax:** head [options] [file_name]
- **Default:** Displays the first 10 lines of the file.
- **Common flags:**
 - -n <number>: Specify the number of lines to display (e.g., head -n 5 my_file.txt shows the first 5 lines).
 - -c <number>: Specify the number of bytes to display (e.g., head -c 100 my_file.txt shows the first 100 bytes).
 - -v: Display line numbers.

tail:

- **Purpose:** Displays the last part of a file.
- **Syntax:** tail [options] [file_name]
- **Default:** Displays the last 10 lines of the file.
- **Common flags:**
 - -n <number>: Specify the number of lines to display from the end (e.g., tail -n 5 my_file.txt shows the last 5 lines).
 - -c <number>: Specify the number of bytes to display from the end (e.g., tail -c 100 my_file.txt shows the last 100 bytes).
 - -f: Follow the file, continuously displaying newly added lines (useful for log files).

Additional notes:

- Both head and tail can handle multiple files.
- You can use pipes to combine the output of head and tail for specific line ranges.
- Both commands have options for displaying line numbers and specifying byte offsets.
- Consider using less or more for interactive viewing of large files.

Examples:

- Display the first 20 lines of a file: head -n 20 my_file.txt
- Display the last 50 bytes of a file: tail -c 50 my_file.txt
- Continuously monitor the end of a log file: tail -f /var/log/syslog
- Display lines 10 to 20 of a file: head -n 20 my_file.txt | tail -n +10

I hope this clarifies the usage and flags of head and tail!