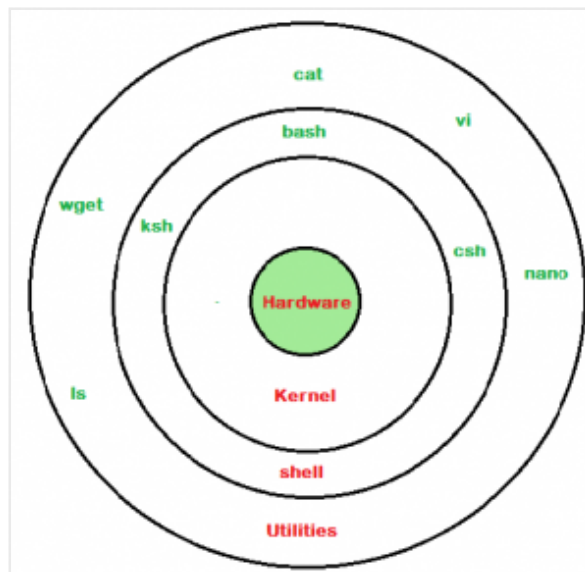


What is Shell?

A shell is a special user program that provides an interface for the user to use operating system services. Shell accepts human-readable commands from users and converts them into something which the kernel can understand. It is a command language interpreter that executes commands read from input devices such as keyboards or from files. The shell gets started when the user logs in or starts the terminal.



Linux Shell

Shell is broadly classified into two categories –

- Command Line Shell
- Graphical shell

Shell Scripting

Usually, shells are interactive, which means they accept commands as input from users and execute them. However, sometimes we want to execute a bunch of commands routinely, so we have to type in all commands each time in the terminal.

As a shell can also take commands as input from file, we can write these commands in a file and can execute them in shell to avoid this repetitive work. These files are called Shell Scripts or Shell Programs. Shell scripts are similar to the batch file in MS-DOS. Each shell script is saved with `.sh` file extension e.g., myscript.sh.

A shell script has syntax just like any other programming language. If you have any prior experience with any programming language like Python, C/C++ etc. It would be very easy to get started with it.

A shell script comprises the following elements –

- Shell Keywords – if, else, break etc.
- Shell commands – cd, ls, echo, pwd, touch etc.
- Functions
- Control flow – if..then..else, case and shell loops etc.

Why do we need shell scripts?

There are many reasons to write shell scripts:

- To avoid repetitive work and automation
- System admins use shell scripting for routine backups.
- System monitoring
- Adding new functionality to the shell etc.

Some Advantages of shell scripts

- The command and syntax are exactly the same as those directly entered in the command line, so programmers do not need to switch to entirely different syntax
- Writing shell scripts are much quicker
- Quick start
- Interactive debugging etc.

Some Disadvantages of shell scripts

- Prone to costly errors, a single mistake can change the command which might be harmful.
- Slow execution speed
- Design flaws within the language syntax or implementation
- Not well suited for large and complex task
- Provide minimal data structure unlike other scripting languages. etc.

Simple demo of shell scripting using Bash Shell