

It's FOSS

20 Linux Command Tips and Tricks That Will Save You A Lot of Time

Last updated October 7, 2019 By [Abhishek Prakash](https://itsfoss.com/author/abhishek/) (<https://itsfoss.com/author/abhishek/>).

***Brief:** Here are some tiny but useful Linux commands, terminal tricks and shortcuts that will save you a lot of time while working with Linux command line.*

Have you ever encountered a moment when you see your colleague using some simple Linux commands for tasks that took you several keystrokes? And when you saw that you were like, “Wow! I didn’t know it could have been done that easily”.

In this article, I’ll show you some pro Linux command tricks that will save you a lot of time and in some cases, from plenty of frustration. Not only your friends or colleagues will ‘wow’ at you, it will also help you increase your productivity and even fewer mouse clicks.

It’s not that these are Linux tips for beginners only. Chances are that even experienced Linux users were not aware despite using Linux for all these years.



In any case, you learned something new. If you’re looking for more such tips, check out our [20 Linux Command Tips and Tricks That Will Save You A Lot of Time](#).

Cool Linux te





You might already know a few of these Linux command tips or perhaps all of it. In either case, you can always add more to your repertoire. Share your favorite Linux command tips in the comment section.



Powered by  [PR](#)

Get the FX you need in one place. [TRY NOW](#)

Ubuntu 19.04



Ubuntu 19.04...
Hey folks, take a quick look at the upcoming Ubuntu... [Watch Video](#)



Solus 4.0 Fortitude...
Independent Linux distribution, Solus 4.0 codenamed... [Watch Video](#)



How to Add App...
Fan of application

Some of these tips also depend on how the shell is configured. Let's begin!

0. Using tab for autocomplete

I'll start with something really obvious and yet really important: tab completion.

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games

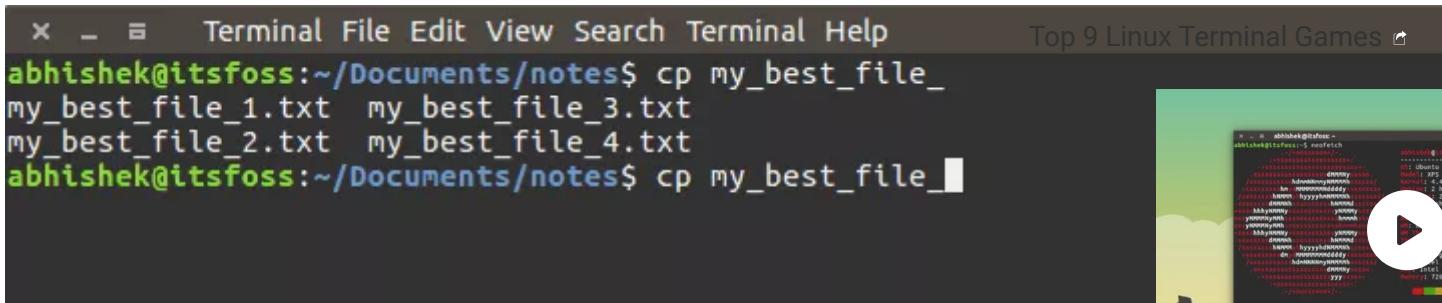
When you are starting to type something in Linux terminal, you can hit the tab key and it will suggest with string you have typed so far.



TRY NOW

← Ads by
Stop se
Why t

For example, if you are trying to copy a file named `my_best_file_1.txt`, you can just type `'cp m'` and hit tab to see the possible options.



```
x - Terminal File Edit View Search Terminal Help
abhishek@itsfoss:~/Documents/notes$ cp my_best_file_
my_best_file_1.txt my_best_file_3.txt
my_best_file_2.txt my_best_file_4.txt
abhishek@itsfoss:~/Documents/notes$ cp my_best_file_
```

Use tab for auto-completion



TRY NOW


```
cd ~
```

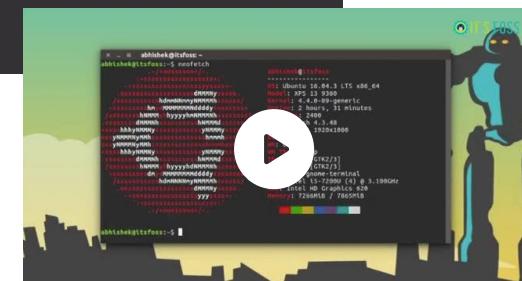
However, you can also use just cd to go back to home directory:

```
cd
```

Most modern Linux distributions have the shell pre-configured for this command. Saves you at least two keystrokes here.

```
x _ = Terminal File Edit View Search Terminal Help
abhishek@itsfoss:~/Pictures/Wallpapers$ pwd
/home/abhishek/Pictures/Wallpapers
abhishek@itsfoss:~/Pictures/Wallpapers$ cd
abhishek@itsfoss:~$
```

Move to Home as quickly as possible



3. List the contents of a directory

You must be guessing what's the trick in the command for listing the contents of a directory. Everyone knows to use the ls -l for this



TRY NOW

And that's the thing. Most people use `ls -l` to list the contents of the directory, whereas the same can be done with the following command:

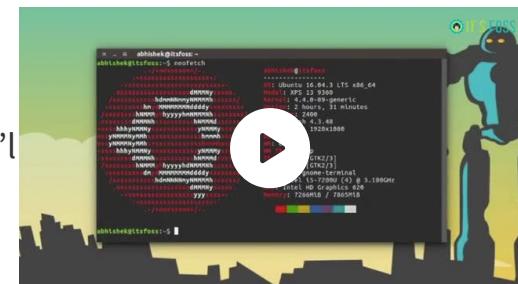
11

Open a live

Trade with
winning broke

Ope

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



Again, this depends on the Linux distributions and shell configuration, but chances are that you'll find something similar in your distribution.



TRY NOW

```
x - Terminal File Edit View Search Terminal Help
abhishek@itsfoss:~/Documents/Tools$ ll
total 333176
drwxrwxr-x 2 abhishek abhishek 4096 Dec 17 2016 .
drwxr-xr-x 6 abhishek abhishek 4096 Aug 13 00:06 ..
-rw-rw-r-- 1 abhishek abhishek 115752067 Dec 14 2016 Hiri.tar.gz
-rw-rw-r-- 1 abhishek abhishek 53900 Dec 12 2016 neofetch_2.0.2-1ubuntu1_all.deb
-rw-rw-r-- 1 abhishek abhishek 225333480 Dec 15 2016 seopowersuite.tar.gz
abhishek@itsfoss:~/Documents/Tools$
```

Using `ll` instead of `ls -l`

4. Running multiple commands in one single command

Suppose, you have to run several commands one after another. Do you wait for the first command to finish running and then execute the next one?

You can use the ‘;’ separator for this purpose. This way, you can run a number of commands in one go, without waiting for the previous commands to finish their business.

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



command_1; command_2; command_3



All



Single command only if the previous command was

TRY NOW

In the previous command, you saw how to run several commands in one single command to save time. But what if you have to make sure that commands don't fail?

Imagine a situation where you want to build a code and then if the build was successful, run the make?

You can use `&&` separator for this case. `&&` makes sure that the next command will only run when the previous command was successful.

```
command_1 && command_2
```

A good example of this command is when you use `sudo apt update && sudo apt upgrade` to upgrade your system.

6. Easily search and use the commands that you had used in the past

Imagine a situation where you used a long command couple of minutes/hours ago and you have cannot remember the exact command anymore.

Reverse search is your savior here. You can search for the command in the history using a search



All



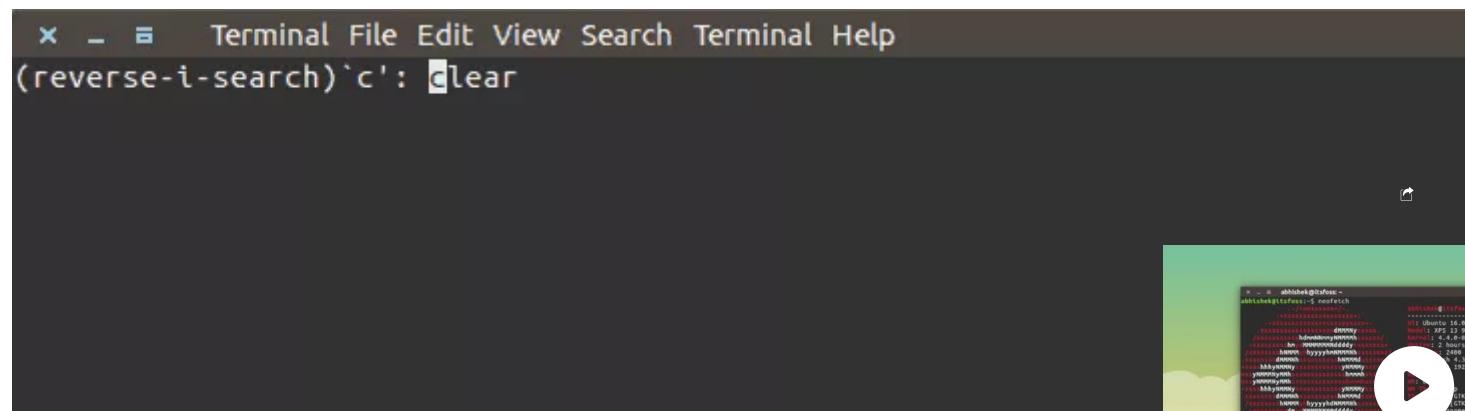
TRY NOW

i X

Just use the keys **ctrl+r** to initiate reverse search and type some part of the command. It will look up into the history and will show you the commands that matches the search term.

```
ctrl+r search_term
```

By default, it will show just one result. To see more results matching your search term, you will have to use **ctrl+r** again and again. To quit reverse search, just use **Ctrl+C**.



```
x - Terminal File Edit View Search Terminal Help
(reverse-i-search)`c': clear
```

Reverse search in command history



Allidental Ctrl+S

TRY NOW

You probably are habitual of using Ctrl+S for saving. But if you use that in Linux terminal, you'll have a frozen terminal.

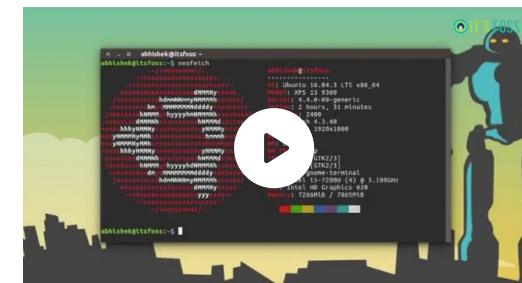
Don't worry, you don't have to close the terminal, not anymore. Just use Ctrl+Q and you can use the terminal again.

ctrl+Q

8. Move to beginning or end of line

Suppose you are typing a long command and midway you realize that you had to change something at the beginning. You would use several left arrow keystrokes to move to the start of the line. And similarly for going to the end of the line.

You can use Home and End keys here of course but alternatively, you can use Ctrl+A to go to the beginning of the line and Ctrl+E to go to the end.



TRY NOW

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



Move to the beginning or end of the line



Alt

keys, especially on my laptop

TRY NOW



9. Reading a log file in real time

In situations where you need to analyze the logs while the application is running, you can use the tail command with -f option.

```
tail -f path_to_Log
```

You can also use the regular grep options to display only those lines that are meaningful to you:

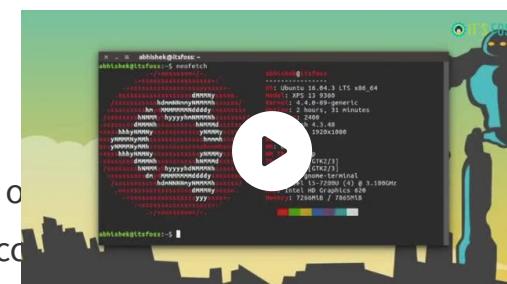
```
tail -f path_to_log | grep search_term
```

You can also use the option F here. This will keep the tail running even if the log file is deleted. So if the log file is created again, tail will continue logging.

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games

10. Reading compressed logs without extracting

Server logs are usually gzip compressed to save disk space. It creates an issue for the developer as they might have to [scp](http://www.hypexr.org/linux_scp_help.php) (http://www.hypexr.org/linux_scp_help.php) it to your local and then extract it to access it. You don't have write permission to extract the logs.



command; provide alternatives of the regular commands that you use to deal with

TRY NOW



So you get zless, zcat, zgrep etc and you don't even have to explicitly extract the compressed files. Please refer to my earlier article about using z commands to real compressed logs (<https://itsfoss.com/read-compressed-log-files-linux/>) in detail.

This was one of the secret finds that won me a coffee from my colleague.

11. Use less to read files

To see the contents of a file, cat is not the best option especially if it is a big file. cat command will display the entire file on your screen.

You can use Vi, Vim or other terminal based text editors but if you just want to read a file, less command is a far better choice.

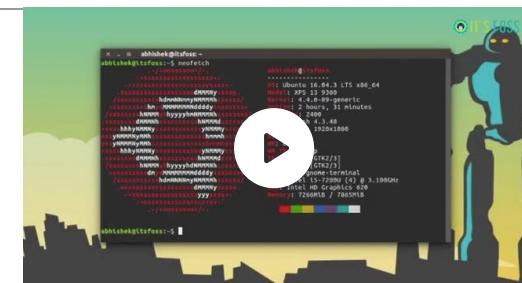
```
less path_to_file
```

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games

You can search for terms inside less, move by page, display with line numbers etc.

12. Reuse the last item from the previous command with !\$

Using the argument of the previous command comes handy in many situations.

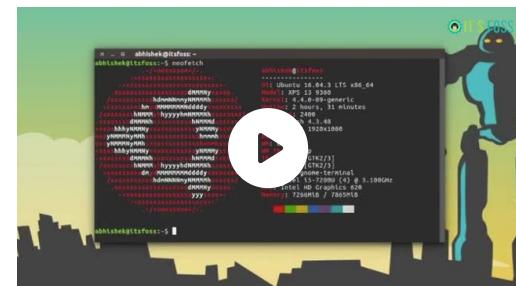


All

newly created directory. There you  use the !\$ options.

TRY NOW

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



TRY NOW

Use !\$ to use the argument of last command

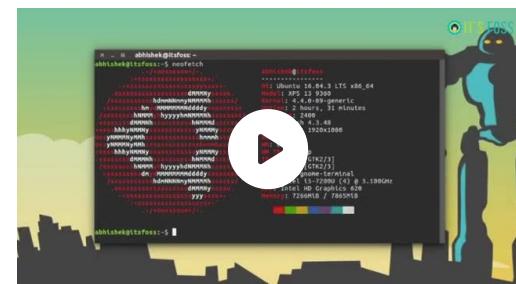
A better way to do the same is to use alt+.. You can use . a number times to shuffle between the options of the last commands.

13. Reuse the previous command in present command with !!

You can call the entire previous command with !!. This comes particularly useful when you have to run a command and realize that it needs root privileges.

A quick sudo !! saves plenty of keystrokes here.

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



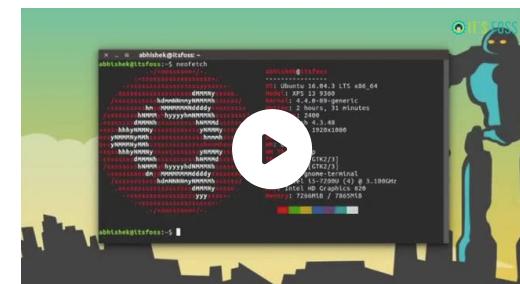
TRY NOW

Use !! to use last command as an argument



TRY NOW

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



You probably already know what is an alias command in Linux. What you can do is, to use them to fix typos.

For example, you might often mistype grep as gerp. If you put an alias in your bashrc in this fashion:

```
alias gerp=grep
```

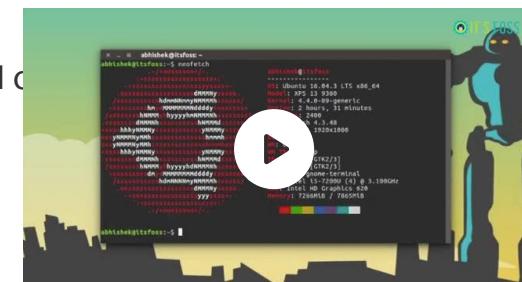
This way you won't have to retype the command again.

15. Copy Paste in Linux terminal

This one is slightly ambiguous because it depends on Linux distributions and terminal applications. But in general, you should be able to copy paste commands with these shortcuts:

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games

- Select the text for copying and right click for paste (works in Putty and other Windows SSH clients)
- Select the text for copying and middle click (scroll button on the mouse) for paste
- Ctrl+Shift+C for copy and Ctrl+Shift+V for paste



16. Kill a running command/process



and running in the foreground and  want to exit it, you can press Ctrl+C to stop

TRY NOW

17. Using yes command for commands or scripts that need interactive response

If there are some commands or scripts that need user interaction and you know that you have to enter Y each time it requires an input, you can use Yes command.

Just use it in the below fashion:

```
yes | command_or_script
```

18. Empty a file without deleting it

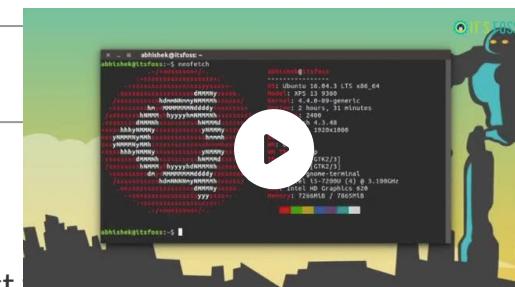
If you just want to empty the contents of a text file without deleting the file itself, you can use a command similar to this:

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games

```
> filename
```

19. Find if there are files containing a particular text

There are multiple ways to search and find in Linux command line. But in the case when you just want to see if there are files that contain a particular text, you can use this command:



All



TRY NOW

I highly advise mastering find command though.

20. Using help with any command

I'll conclude this article with one more obvious and yet very important 'trick', using help with a command or a command line tool.

Almost all command and command line tool come with a help page that shows how to use the command. Often using help will tell you the basic usage of the tool/command.

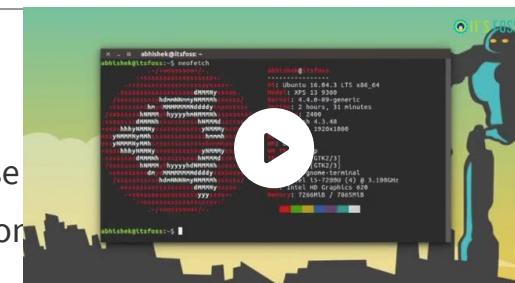
Just use it in this fashion:

```
command_tool --help
```

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games

Your favorite Linux command line tricks?

I have deliberately not included commands like fuck (<https://github.com/nvbn/thefuck>) because you'll find everywhere. The tricks discussed here should be usable almost in all Linux distributions without installing a new tool.



is



All

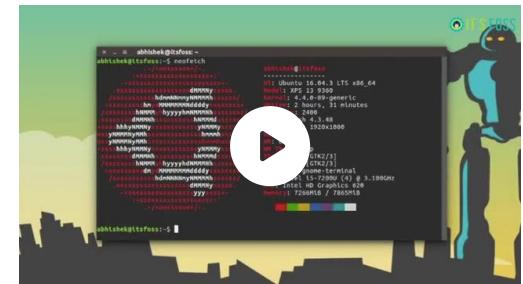
<https://linuxhandbook.com/linux-alias-command/>) to replace complicated



TRY NOW

I know that there are more Linux command tricks to save time in the terminal. Why not share some of your experiences with Linux and do share your best trick with rest of the community here? The comment section below is at your disposal.

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



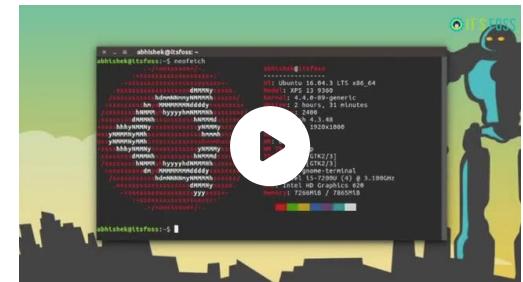
TRY NOW

About Abhishek Prakash

I am a professional software developer, and founder of *It's FOSS*. I am an avid Linux lover and open source enthusiast. I use Ubuntu and believe in sharing knowledge. Apart from Linux, I love classic detective mysteries. I'm a huge fan of Agatha Christie's work.

[_\(https://twitter.com/itsfoss2\)](https://twitter.com/itsfoss2)

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



TRY NOW

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



TRY NOW

[Meet the team](https://itsfoss.com/its-foss-team/) (<https://itsfoss.com/its-foss-team/>).

[We Donate to FOSS Projects](https://itsfoss.com/donations-foss/) (<https://itsfoss.com/donations-foss/>).

Contact Pages

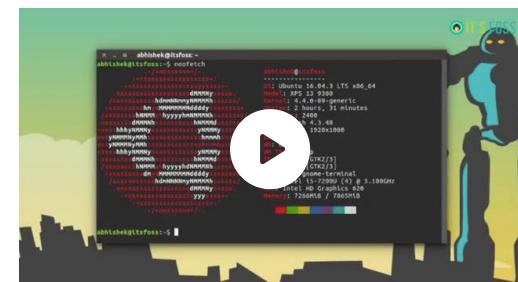
[Contact Us](https://itsfoss.com/contact-us/) (<https://itsfoss.com/contact-us/>).

[Get Featured on It's FOSS](https://itsfoss.com/get-featured-on-its-foss/) (<https://itsfoss.com/get-featured-on-its-foss/>).

[Request a tutorial](https://itsfoss.com/request-tutorial/) (<https://itsfoss.com/request-tutorial/>).

[Copyright](https://itsfoss.com/copyright/) (<https://itsfoss.com/copyright/>).

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



TRY NOW

Stay in Touch with It's FOSS

[Follow us on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/itsfoss/) (<https://www.facebook.com/itsfoss/>).

[Follow us on Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/itsfoss/) (<https://www.instagram.com/itsfoss/>).

[Follow us on LBRY](https://lbry.tv/$/invite/@itsfoss:0) ([https://lbry.tv/\\$/invite/@itsfoss:0](https://lbry.tv/$/invite/@itsfoss:0)).

[Follow us on Mastodon](https://mastodon.social/@itsfoss) (<https://mastodon.social/@itsfoss>).

[Follow us on Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.fr/its_foss/) (https://www.pinterest.fr/its_foss/).

[Follow us on Twitter](https://twitter.com/itsfoss2) (<https://twitter.com/itsfoss2>).

[Follow us via RSS Feed](https://itsfoss.com/feed/) (<https://itsfoss.com/feed/>).

[Subscribe to Newsletter](https://itsfoss.com/subscribe-to-newsletter/) (<https://itsfoss.com/subscribe-to-newsletter/>).

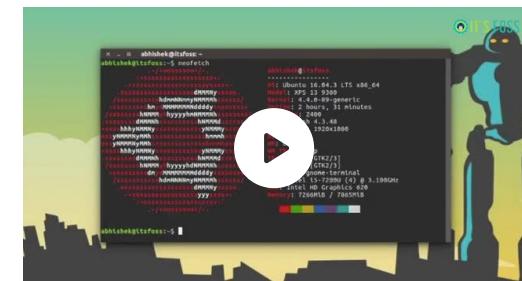
Top 9 Linux Terminal Games

[Subscribe to YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/c/itsfoss?sub_confirmation=1) (https://www.youtube.com/c/itsfoss?sub_confirmation=1).

Communities

[Exclusive Telegram Channel](https://t.me/joinchat/AAAAAEPRGUJrEE1itjpH6A) (<https://t.me/joinchat/AAAAAEPRGUJrEE1itjpH6A>).

[It's FOSS Forum](https://itsfoss.community/) (<https://itsfoss.community/>).



All



TRY NOW

[Linux Users Group on Reddit \(https://www.reddit.com/r/LinuxUsersGroup/\).](https://www.reddit.com/r/LinuxUsersGroup/)

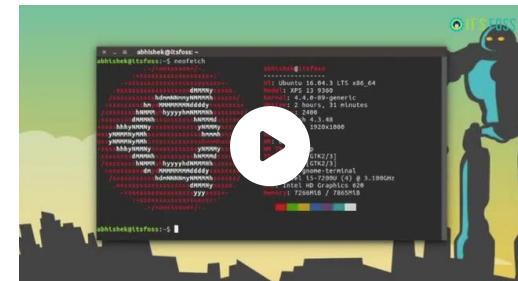
Policies

[Affiliate Policy \(https://itsfoss.com/affiliate-policy/\).](https://itsfoss.com/affiliate-policy/)

[Privacy Policy \(https://itsfoss.com/privacy-policy/\).](https://itsfoss.com/privacy-policy/)

It's F.O.S.S is Part of chmod777 Media Tech (OPC) Pvt Ltd. Built on [Genesis Framework \(https://www.shareasale.com/r.cfm?b=346198&u=747593&m=28169&urllink=&afftrack=\)](https://www.shareasale.com/r.cfm?b=346198&u=747593&m=28169&urllink=&afftrack=) and Powered by [UpCloud \(https://www.upcloud.com/register/?promo=itsfoss\)](https://www.upcloud.com/register/?promo=itsfoss).

Top 9 Linux Terminal Games



TRY NOW