

# Laboratory Exercise 1

cpe 453 Winter 2026

A pipe gives a wise man time to think and a fool something  
to stick in his mouth.

— /usr/games/fortune

Due online at (or before) 11:59pm, Friday, January 9th.  
This laboratory exercises are to be done individually.

## Problems

There are no written exercises this week. Stay tuned for next week.

## Laboratory Exercises

Two small lab exercises: one for my benefit, one for yours.

### 1. Photograph

To help me with sorting out who's who in the class (and three years from now when you write me out of the blue asking for a recommendation) I am asking you to submit a digital photo of yourself to the `lab01` directory of the `pn-cs453` account. I will not be sharing these with anybody so it doesn't have to be glamorous, but it does need to be recognizable. That is, that great photo from last Halloween of you in your mummy costume really isn't the thing for this lab.

Please make the root of the file name your login name. E.g., mine would be `pnico.jpg`.

### 2. Program: `pipeit`

This quick program is intended to be a quick review of systems programming concepts, including `fork(2)`, `exec(2)`, pipes, and `make(1)`.

Your task is to write a program that launches the pipeline “`ls | sort -r > outfile`” and waits for it to terminate. When it is finished, `outfile` should consist of a listing of the files in the current directory in reverse alphabetical order.

For this lab, it is acceptable to hard-code all the steps necessary.

Your program must:

- create a pipe for interprocess communication;
- `fork()` two children, one for each program;
- set up each child's file descriptors appropriately;
- `exec()` the appropriate program in each child;
- terminate (the parent) with zero status on success, nonzero on failure;
- do appropriate error checking;
- check the exit status of the child processes and terminate with nonzero status in case of error, and;
- be appropriately documented.

## Tricks and Tools

This is not a large program, but it is designed to be a quick review of many systems programming concepts in preparation for studying Operating Systems. For reference, you may want to consider the functions listed in Table 1.

<code>fork(2)</code>	create a new process that is an exact copy of the current one.
<code>wait(2)</code> <code>waitpid(3)</code>	Wait for a process to terminate and retrieve its exit status (with <code>WIFEXITED()</code> and <code>WEXITSTATUS()</code> )
<code>execl(3)</code> <code>execvp(3)</code> <code>execle(3)</code> <code>execv(3)</code> <code>execvp(3)</code> <code>execve(2)</code>	loads a new program into the current process
<code>dup2(2)</code> <code>open(2)</code> <code>close(2)</code> <code>read(2)</code> <code>write(2)</code>	standard UNIX unbuffered IO system calls
<code>pipe(2)</code>	creates a UNIX pipe
<code>perror(3)</code> <code>strerror(3)</code>	standard error reporting functions.

Table 1: Some potentially useful system calls and library functions

**Note:** Because the order of execution of the children is nondeterministic it is possible for the output file to either appear in the listing of files or not. This is not incorrect behavior.

**Also Note:** On many assignments and labs I will publish a partial test harness in `~pn-cs453/demos` (In this case it's `~pn-cs453/demos/tryLab01`) that will try to build and run your program. This is intended to be helpful, but it is not at all a full test suite, nor is it a substitute for your testing on your own.

## Coding Standards and Make

See the pages on coding standards and make on the cpe 453 class web page.

## What to turn in

**For the Laboratory Exercises:** Submit, via handin, to the `lab01` directory of the `pn-cs453` account on the CSL machines:

- Your photograph named after your login name.
- Your reasonably well-documented source file(s).
- A makefile (called `Makefile`) that will build your program with `"make pipeit"`.
- A README file (called `"README"`, no extension) that contains:
  - Your name(s) (with login name(s) in parentheses, e.g. `"(pnico)"`).

- Any special instructions for running your program.
- Any other thing you want me to know while I am grading it.

The README file should be **plain text**, i.e, **not a Word document**, and should be named “README”, all capitals with no extension.

## Sample runs

```
% ls
Makefile  pipeit  pipeit.c  pipeit.o
% ./pipeit
% echo $status
0
% cat outfile
pipeit.o
pipeit.c
pipeit
Makefile
% rm outfile
% chmod u-w .
% ./pipeit
outfile: Permission denied
% echo $status
1
%
```

(Aside: `$status` is the way to get the exit status of the previous command in `tcsh`. In `bash`, it would be “`echo $?`”)