

Customizing the Command Line Prompt

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The default command line prompt is `$` for normal users and `#` for the root or superuser.

Customizing the command line prompt is as simple as modifying the value of the environment variable `PS1`. For example, to set it to display the hostname, user and current directory:

```
$ PS1="\h:\u:\w>"
```

```
c7:coop:/tmp>
```

Besides the aesthetic value of having a prettier prompt than the default value, embedding more information in the prompt can be quite useful. In the example given we have shown:

- The machine name - this is useful if you run command line windows on remote machines from your desktop; you can always tell where you are, and this can avoid many errors.
- The user name - this is particularly important if you are running as a superuser (root) and can help you avoid errors where you take what you think is a benign action and wind up crippling your system.
- The current directory - it is always important to know where you are. You certainly do not want to do something like `rm *` in the wrong directory.

Here is a table with some of the possible special characters that can be embedded in the `PS1` string:

Character	Meaning	Example Output
<code>\t</code>	Time in HH:MM:SS	08:43:40
<code>\d</code>	Date in "Weekday Month Date"	Fri Mar 12
<code>\n</code>	Newline	
<code>\s</code>	Shell name	bash
<code>\w</code>	Current working directory	/usr/local/bin
<code>\W</code>	Basename of current working directory	bin
<code>\u</code>	User	coop

Character	Meaning	Example Output
\h	Hostname	c7
\#	Command number (this session)	43
\!	History number (in history file)	1057

Note you can embed any other string you like in the prompt.