

Understanding & Troubleshooting PowerShell Parameter Binding



Understanding & Troubleshooting PowerShell Parameter Binding

Parameter binding is the process that PowerShell uses to determine which parameter set is being used and to associate (bind) values to the parameters of a command. These values can come from the command line and the pipeline.

This presentation covers the following topics:

- How to interpret command syntax
 - The purpose of parameter sets
 - The parameter binding process
 - The role of parameter attributes
 - How to troubleshoot parameter binding issues
 - How parameter binding works for native commands
-

Command syntax

Command syntax

```
PS D:\Git> Get-Command Get-Command -Syntax
Get-Command [[-ArgumentList] <Object[]>] [-Verb <string[]>] [-Noun <string[]>] [-Module <string[]>] [-FullyQualifiedModule <ModuleSpecification[]>] [-TotalCount <int>] [-Syntax] [-ShowCommandInfo] [-All] [-ListImported] [-ParameterName <string[]>] [-ParameterType <PSTypeName[]>] [<CommonParameters>]

Get-Command [[-Name] <string[]>] [[-ArgumentList] <Object[]>] [-Module <string[]>] [-FullyQualifiedModule <ModuleSpecification[]>] [- CommandType <CommandTypes>] [-TotalCount <int>] [-Syntax] [-ShowCommandInfo] [-All] [-ListImported] [-ParameterName <string[]>] [-ParameterType <PSTypeName[]>] [-UseFuzzyMatching] [-FuzzyMinimumDistance <uint>] [-UseAbbreviationExpansion] [<CommonParameters>]
```

- All parameters start with a hyphen (-)
- Outer brackets ([...]) mean optional item
- Inner brackets ([]) mean array type
- Angle brackets (<...>) specify the value type of the argument
- Curly braces ({}) list possible values for a parameter (Get-Help)

Syntax	Description
-Parameter <type>	Required named parameter
[-Parameter] <type>	Required positional parameter
-Parameter	Required switch parameter
[-Parameter <type>]	Optional named parameter
[[-Parameter] <type>]	Optional positional parameter
[-Parameter]	Optional switch parameter
<type>	Argument value type
<type[]>	Array of argument type

Before you can understand how parameter binding works, you need to understand how to interpret command syntax. The [Get-Help](#) and [Get-Command](#) cmdlets display syntax diagrams to help you use commands correctly.

Get-Help Get-Command

NAME

Get-Command

SYNOPSIS

Gets all commands.

SYNTAX

```
Get-Command [[-Name] <System.String[]>] [[-ArgumentList] <System.Object[]>] [-All]
[-CommandType {Alias | Function | Filter | Cmdlet | ExternalScript | Application | Script | Workflow | Configuration | All}] [-FullyQualifiedModule <Microsoft.PowerShell.Commands.ModuleSpecification[]>] [-ListImported] [-Module <System.String[]>] [-ParameterName <System.String[]>] [-ParameterType <System.Management.Automation.PSTypeName[]>] [-ShowCommandInfo] [-Syntax] [-TotalCount <System.Int32>] [-UseAbbreviationExpansion] [-UseFuzzyMatching] [<CommonParameters>]
```

```
Get-Command [[-ArgumentList] <System.Object[]>] [-All] [-FullyQualifiedModule <Microsoft.PowerShell.Commands.ModuleSpecification[]>] [-ListImported] [-Module
```

```
<System.String[]>] [-Noun <System.String[]>] [-ParameterName <System.String[]>]
[-ParameterType <System.Management.Automation.PSTypeName[]>] [-ShowCommandInfo]
[-Syntax] [-TotalCount <System.Int32>] [-Verb <System.String[]>]
[<CommonParameters>]
```

Notice the differences between the output from the two commands. [Get-Help](#) displays full type names, while [Get-Command](#) shows only short type names. The [Get-Help](#) output also shows possible values for some parameters.

```
Get-Command Get-Command -Syntax
```

```
Get-Command [[-ArgumentList] <Object[]>] [-Verb <string[]>] [-Noun <string[]>]
[-Module <string[]>] [-FullyQualifiedModule <ModuleSpecification[]>]
[-TotalCount <int>] [-Syntax] [-ShowCommandInfo] [-All] [-ListImported]
[-ParameterName <string[]>] [-ParameterType <PSTypeName[]>]
[<CommonParameters>]
```

```
Get-Command [[-Name] <string[]>] [[-ArgumentList] <Object[]>]
[-Module <string[]>] [-FullyQualifiedModule <ModuleSpecification[]>]
[- CommandType <CommandTypes>] [-TotalCount <int>] [-Syntax] [-ShowCommandInfo]
[-All] [-ListImported] [-ParameterName <string[]>]
[-ParameterType <PSTypeName[]>] [-UseFuzzyMatching]
[-FuzzyMinimumDistance <uint>] [-UseAbbreviationExpansion]
[<CommonParameters>]
```

Symbols in Syntax Diagrams

The syntax diagram lists the command name, the command parameters, and the parameter values.

The syntax diagrams use the following symbols:

- A hyphen `-` indicates a parameter name. In a command, type the hyphen immediately before the parameter name with no intervening spaces, as shown in the syntax diagram.
- Angle brackets `< >` indicate placeholder text. You don't type the angle brackets or the placeholder text in a command. Instead, you replace it with the item that it describes.

The placeholder inside the angle brackets identifies the .NET type of the value that a parameter takes.

For example, to use the **Name** parameter of [Get-Command](#), replace the `<string[]>` with one or more strings separated by commas (,).

- Brackets `[]` inside of the angle brackets indicate that the parameter can accept one or more values of that type. Enter the values as a comma-separated list.
- Parameters with no values

Some parameters don't accept input, so they don't have a parameter value. Parameters without values are *switch parameters*. Switch parameters are used like boolean values. They default to `$false`. When you use a switch parameter, the value is set to `$true`.

- Brackets [] around parameters indicate optional items. A parameter and its value can be optional. For example, the **CommandType** parameter of `Get-Command` and its value are enclosed in brackets because they're both optional.
- Braces {} indicate an *enumeration*, which is a set of valid values for a parameter.

The values in the braces are separated by vertical bars |. These bars indicate an *exclusive-OR* choice, meaning that you can choose only one value from the set of values that are listed inside the braces. For example, the **CommandType** parameter of `Get-Command` has a list of possible values in braces.

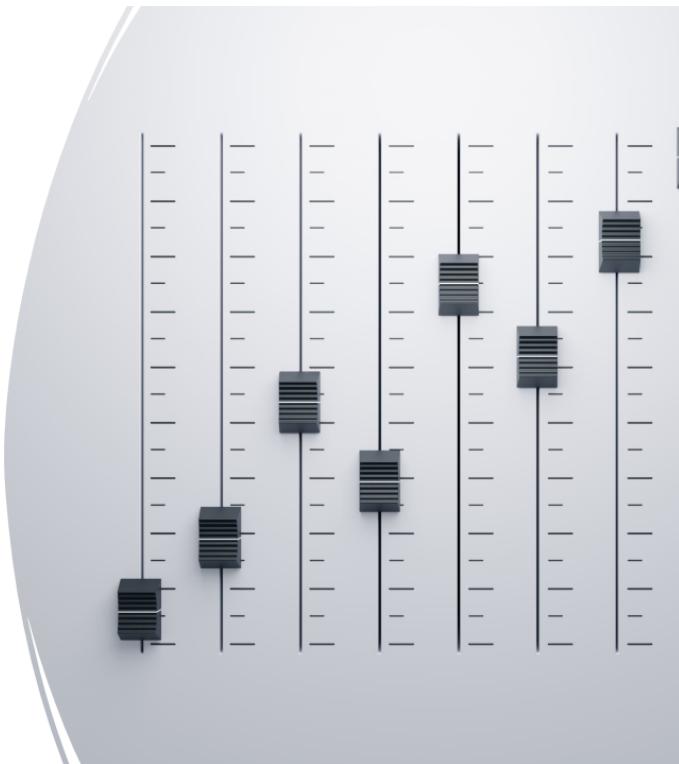
Related links

- [about_Command_Syntax](#)
- [Get-Command](#)
- [Get-Help](#)

Parameter sets

Parameter sets

-
- Parameter sets are like method overloads in C#.
 - Different parameter combinations allow for different input and potentially different output.
 - You can only use one parameter set at a time.
 - Max of 32 parameter sets



PowerShell uses parameter sets to allow a single command to accept varied input and, potentially, produce different output based on the input. Parameter sets are similar to function overloading in other programming languages, like C#.

Parameter set requirements

- There is a limit of 32 parameter sets.
- Each parameter set must have at least one unique parameter. If possible, make this parameter a mandatory parameter. However, the unique parameter can't be mandatory if the cmdlet is designed to run without any parameters.
- A parameter set that contains multiple positional parameters must define unique positions for each parameter. No two positional parameters can specify the same position.
- Only one parameter in a set can have the **ValueFromPipeline** attribute. Multiple parameters can have the **ValueFromPipelineByPropertyName** attribute.
- If no parameter set is specified for a parameter, the parameter belongs to all parameter sets.

Default parameter set

The PowerShell runtime uses the unique parameter to determine which parameter set is being used. PowerShell uses the default parameter set if it can't determine the parameter set to use based on the information provided by the command. The default parameter set is defined by setting the **DefaultParameterSetName** property of the **[CmdletBinding()]** attribute. You can avoid the need to define a default by making the unique parameter of each parameter set a mandatory parameter.

Related links

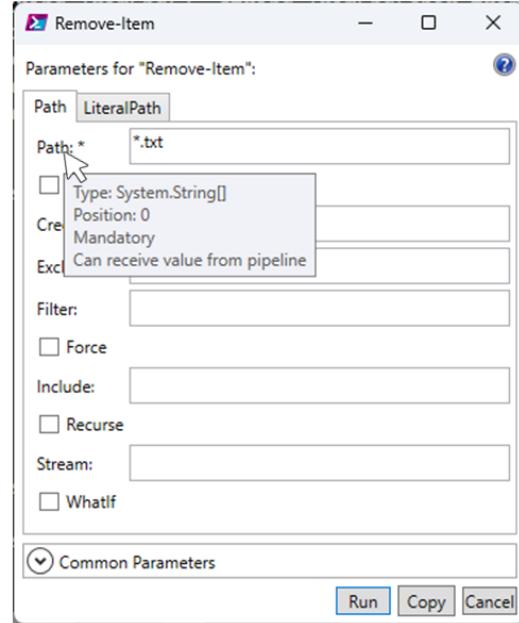
- [about_Parameter_Sets](#)
-

Parameter binding

Parameter binding

Parameter binding is the process that PowerShell uses to map (bind) input values to the parameters of a command.

The input values can come from the command line and the pipeline.



Parameter binding is the process that PowerShell uses to associate (bind) input values to the parameters of a command. The input values can come from the command line and the pipeline.

It's like filling in the blanks in a form, like the one shown in the slide. On Windows (only), the [Show-Command](#) cmdlet presents a form that you can use to fill in parameter values. The form shows a tab for each parameter set. If fill in the form and select **Run**, PowerShell runs the command with the values you provided. If you select **Copy**, PowerShell copies the command to the clipboard. You can then paste the command into a script or the console.

Related links

- [about_Parameter_Binding](#)
- [Show-Command](#)

Parameter attributes

Parameter attributes

- **ValueFromPipeline** binds the pipeline object to the parameter by matching the type
- **ValueFromPipelineByName** binds the pipeline object to the parameter by matching the name
- **ValueFromRemainingArguments** binds all unbound command-line arguments

```

PS D:\Git> (Get-Command Remove-Item).Parameters.Path
Name      : Path
ParameterType : System.String[]
ParameterSets : {[Path, System.Management.Automation.ParameterSetMetadata]}
IsDynamic   : False
Aliases     : {}
Attributes   : {Path}
SwitchParameter : False

PS D:\Git> (Get-Command Remove-Item).Parameters.Path.Attributes
ExperimentName          :
ExperimentAction         :
Position                : 0
ParameterSetName         :
Mandatory               : True
ValueFromPipeline        : True
ValueFromPipelineByPropertyName : True
ValueFromRemainingArguments : False
HelpMessage              :
HelpMessageBaseName      :
HelpMessageResourceId    :
DontShow                : False
TypeId                  : System.Management.Automation.ParameterAttribute

```

The **Get-Help** command tells you if a parameter accepts pipeline input or from remaining arguments. You can also use **Get-Command** to inspect the attributes of a parameter.

First, let's look at the properties of the **Path** parameter of the **Remove-Item** command.

```
(Get-Command Remove-Item).Parameters['Path']
```

From the output, you can see that the parameter belongs to the **Path** parameter set, accepts one or more strings, and doesn't have any aliases.

```

Name      : Path
ParameterType : System.String[]
ParameterSets : {[Path, System.Management.Automation.ParameterSetMetadata]}
IsDynamic   : False
Aliases     : {}
Attributes   : {Path}
SwitchParameter : False

```

By inspecting the **Attributes** property, you can see that the **Path** parameter is mandatory and accepts values from the pipeline by value or property name.

```
(Get-Command Remove-Item).Parameters['Path'].Attributes
```

```
Position          : 0
ParameterSetName : Path
Mandatory        : True
ValueFromPipeline : True
ValueFromPipelineByPropertyName : True
ValueFromRemainingArguments : False
HelpMessage      :
HelpMessageBaseName :
HelpMessageResourceId :
DontShow         : False
TypeId           : System.Management.Automation.ParameterAttribute
```

Next, let's compare that to the **LiteralPath** parameter. This parameter belongs to the **LiteralPath** parameter set, accepts one or more strings, and has an alias of **PSPath**.

```
(Get-Command Remove-Item).Parameters['LiteralPath']
```

```
Name          : LiteralPath
ParameterType : System.String[]
ParameterSets : {[LiteralPath,
  System.Management.Automation.ParameterSetMetadata]}
IsDynamic    : False
Aliases      : {PSPath}
Attributes    : {LiteralPath, System.Management.Automation.AliasAttribute}
SwitchParameter : False
```

By inspecting the **Attributes** property, you can see that the **LiteralPath** parameter is mandatory and accepts values from the pipeline by property name.

```
(Get-Command Remove-Item).Parameters['LiteralPath'].Attributes
```

```
Position          : -2147483648
ParameterSetName : LiteralPath
Mandatory        : True
ValueFromPipeline : False
ValueFromPipelineByPropertyName : True
ValueFromRemainingArguments : False
HelpMessage      :
HelpMessageBaseName :
HelpMessageResourceId :
DontShow         : False
TypeId           : System.Management.Automation.ParameterAttribute
```

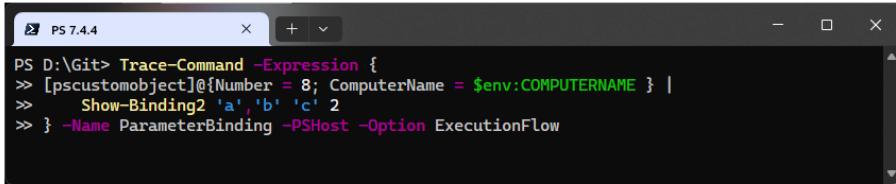
```
AliasNames : {PSPPath}
TypeId      : System.Management.Automation.AliasAttribute
```

Related links

- [about_Functions_Advanced_Parameters](#)

Order of operations

Order of operations



A screenshot of a PowerShell window titled "PS 7.4.4". The command entered is:

```
PS D:\Git> Trace-Command -Expression {
  >> [pscustomobject]@{Number = 8; ComputerName = $env:COMPUTERNAME } |
  >> Show-Binding2 'a','b' 'c' 2
  >> } -Name ParameterBinding -PSHost -Option ExecutionFlow
```

Order of binding

1. Command-line arguments
2. Pipeline input

Trace-Command

- Enables and displays trace events that show the parameter binding logic
- Supports tracing of many other event types in PowerShell

Binding order

First, PowerShell binds command-line arguments in the following order:

1. Named parameters
2. Positional parameters
3. **ValueFromRemainingArguments** parameters

After command-line arguments, PowerShell tries to bind pipeline input:

1. Match values by type to parameters that use **ValueFromPipeline**
2. Match values by name to parameters that use **ValueFromPipelineByPropertyName**

After binding all input, PowerShell calls the command with the bound parameters. The command outputs an error if it can't determine which parameter set is being used.

\$PSBoundParameters

This automatic variable contains a dictionary of the parameters and the values that were bound to them. The parameter names are the keys, and the argument values are the values. If a parameter wasn't bound, it isn't in the dictionary.

This variable has a value only in a scope where parameters are declared, such as a script or function. You can use it to determine which parameters were bound, display or change the values that were bound, and to pass parameter values to another script or function.

Trace-Command

[Trace-Command](#) is a great troubleshooting tool that helps you understand how PowerShell works internally. Use the [Get-TraceSource](#) command to see the available trace providers.

- Enables and displays trace events for a single scriptblock
- You can trace the following events from any of the 36 providers
 - ExecutionFlow: Constructor, Dispose, Finalizer, Method, Delegates, Events, Scope
 - Data: Constructor, Dispose, Finalizer, Property, Verbose, WriteLine
 - Errors: Error, Exception

Demo

In the [demo script](#), I show you how to use [Trace-Command](#) to see the parameter binding process in action and compare the trace information to the results in [\\$PSBoundParameters](#).

Related links

- [Trace-Command](#)
 - [Get-TraceSource](#)
 - [Visualize parameter binding](#)
-

Tracing native command binding

Tracing native command binding

- Introduced in PowerShell 7.3
- Must use echoargs.exe for older versions

The screenshot shows a PowerShell window titled 'PS 7.4.4' with the following content:

```

PS D:\Git> Trace-Command -Name ParameterBinding -Expression {
>>   echoargs -param this is 'a test' --verbose
>> } -PSHost -Option ExecutionFlow
DEBUG: 2024-08-06 14:24:23.1848 ParameterBinding Information: 0 : BIND NAMED native application line args [C:\Public\Toolbox\echoargs.exe]
DEBUG: 2024-08-06 14:24:23.1850 ParameterBinding Information: 0 : BIND cmd line arg [-param] to position [0]
DEBUG: 2024-08-06 14:24:23.1852 ParameterBinding Information: 0 : BIND cmd line arg [this] to position [1]
DEBUG: 2024-08-06 14:24:23.1854 ParameterBinding Information: 0 : BIND cmd line arg [is] to position [2]
DEBUG: 2024-08-06 14:24:23.1855 ParameterBinding Information: 0 : BIND cmd line arg [a test] to position [3]
DEBUG: 2024-08-06 14:24:23.1856 ParameterBinding Information: 0 : BIND cmd line arg [-verbose] to position [4]
DEBUG: 2024-08-06 14:24:23.1924 ParameterBinding Information: 0 : CALLING BeginProcessing
5 argument(s) received (enclosed in <...> for delineation):
<-param>
<this>
<is>
<a test>
<--verbose>

```

Starting in PowerShell 7.3, you can trace the binding of native commands. This feature is useful for troubleshooting issues with passing parameters native commands in PowerShell. There is no standard format for passing arguments to native commands. Each command-line tool has its own rules for parsing parameters and arguments. The way the PowerShell parses the command line is different from version to version and platform to platform.

The rules for parsing, quoting strings, and escaping characters are complex. For more information, see:

- [about_Parsing](#)
- [about_Quoting_Rules](#)
- [about_Special_Characters](#)

The output from [Trace-Command](#) shows how PowerShell parses the command-line arguments for a native command.

Parsing command-line arguments for native commands

Older versions of PowerShell you have to use a tool like [echoargs.exe](#) to see how PowerShell passes arguments to native commands. You can use the [make-echoargs.ps1](#) script to create the [echoargs.exe](#) tool for Windows.

The following examples shows the output from [Trace-Command](#) followed by the output from [echoargs](#).

```

Trace-Command -Name ParameterBinding -Expression {
  echoargs -param this is 'a test' --verbose
} -PSHost -Option ExecutionFlow

```

```
DEBUG: 2024-08-09 15:14:09.3088 ParameterBinding Information: 0 : BIND NAMED native application line args [C:\Public\Toolbox\echoargs.exe]
DEBUG: 2024-08-09 15:14:09.3098 ParameterBinding Information: 0 :      BIND cmd line arg [-param] to position [0]
DEBUG: 2024-08-09 15:14:09.3100 ParameterBinding Information: 0 :      BIND cmd line arg [this] to position [1]
DEBUG: 2024-08-09 15:14:09.3102 ParameterBinding Information: 0 :      BIND cmd line arg [is] to position [2]
DEBUG: 2024-08-09 15:14:09.3104 ParameterBinding Information: 0 :      BIND cmd line arg [a test] to position [3]
DEBUG: 2024-08-09 15:14:09.3105 ParameterBinding Information: 0 :      BIND cmd line arg [--verbose] to position [4]
DEBUG: 2024-08-09 15:14:09.3177 ParameterBinding Information: 0 : CALLING BeginProcessing
```

5 argument(s) received (enclosed in <...> for delineation):

```
<-param>
<this>
<is>
<a test>
<--verbose>
```

Summary

Understanding how PowerShell binds parameters is essential to writing effective scripts and functions or troubleshooting pipeline data problems. The binding process is complex, but it's also predictable. By understanding the rules, you can write commands that are easier to use and more reliable.

Tools

- [Script to create echoargs](#)
- [Demo script used in this presentation](#)

Documentation

- [about_Command_Syntax](#)
- [about_Functions_Advanced_Parameters](#)
- [about_Parameter_Binding](#)
- [about_Parameter_Sets](#)
- [about_Parsing](#)
- [about_Quoting_Rules](#)
- [about_Special_Characters](#)
- [Get-Command](#)

- [Get-Help](#)
- [Get-TraceSource](#)
- [Trace-Command](#)
- [Visualize parameter binding](#)