LET'S GO NIX

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GOALS

- Beginner-friendly intro to nix
- Introduce concepts and language
- Get you excited about nix!

EXPECTATIONS

- Familiarity with command line & shell
- Understand at least one programming language like javascript

BACKGROUND

- Been a developer for > 20 years
- Dealt with countless build/run dependency issues
- Have worked heavily with modernizing legacy systems
- Usually work in small agile teams

THE QUEST FOR REPRODUCIBLE DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENTS

- automake (and porting)
- ports/macports
- anisible
- chef
- puppet
- Language managers: (rvm, virtualenv, nvm)
- Docker

BUT THEY ALWAYS FALL SHORT

- System architecture woes (again!)
- Personal machine drift
- Working with multiple projects across teams

HOW NIX IS DIFFERENT

- Saves packages in isolation /nix/store
- Builds packages with a functional language
- Allows you to link to system, user, or shell environments these packages

FIRST STEPS - INSTALLING

\$ curl -fsSL https://install.determinate.systems/nix | sh -s -- install
--determinate

CREATING SHELL WITH CURL

```
$ nix-shell -p curl
these 9 paths will be fetched (0.99 MiB download, 4.14 MiB unpacked):
  /nix/store/9v2s5rbf6pb77vhagihl7dicpqkg3614-c-ares-1.34.5
  /nix/store/wznrhnlrvamvihizpnizjfh5hs55z98n-curl-8.14.1-dev
  /nix/store/48wm9h7wf8ds4wkwgzzcgfrp7l722dm8-krb5-1.21.3-dev
  /nix/store/i1j8dzchkv1p59bqzrr15585s8s4zvx0-libev-4.33
  /nix/store/kss6l466kl66x2bgzy9rv7nz4pjgc55c-libidn2-2.3.8-bin
  /nix/store/9j67k582x3vgcijfiyralx5bj1b33gdg-libidn2-2.3.8-dev
  /nix/store/y37r7yjyvnzzd648lpdqflynfj55hpns-libpsl-0.21.5-dev
  /nix/store/rg4pnjcjrkic79kxc2fg0g7hp78s8ypv-nghttp2-1.65.0
  /nix/store/9pn6y4zlszr9w26rg2h52l3sd0wvzjvd-nghttp2-1.65.0-dev
copying path '/nix/store/48wm9h7wf8ds4wkwgzzcgfrp7l722dm8-krb5-1.21.3-
        dev' from 'https://cache.nixos.org'...
copying path '/nix/store/9v2s5rbf6pb77vhagihl7dicpgkg3614-c-ares-1.34.5'
        from 'https://cache.nixos.org'...
copying path '/nix/store/y37r7yjyvnzzd648lpdgflynfj55hpns-libpsl-0.21.5-
        dev' from 'https://cache.nixos.org'...
```

CREATING SHELL WITH CURL

```
[nix-shell:~/workspace/nix-talk]$ curl --version
curl 8.14.1 (x86_64-pc-linux-gnu) libcurl/8.14.1 OpenSSL/3.4.1
        zlib/1.3.1 brotli/1.1.0 zstd/1.5.7 libidn2/2.3.8 libpsl/0.21.5
        libssh2/1.11.1 nghttp2/1.65.0

Release-Date: 2025-06-04

Protocols: dict file ftp ftps gopher gophers http https imap imaps ipfs
        ipns mqtt pop3 pop3s rtsp scp sftp smb smbs smtp smtps telnet
        tftp

Features: alt-svc AsynchDNS brotli GSS-API HSTS HTTP2 HTTPS-proxy IDN
        IPv6 Kerberos Largefile libz NTLM PSL SPNEGO SSL threadsafe TLS-
        SRP UnixSockets zstd

[nix-shell:~/workspace/nix-talk]$ which curl
/nix/store/wq4mwdypl1wmlhyrr69wggv8jdn2h9j9-curl-8.14.1-bin/bin/curl
```

SHOWING RUNTIME DEPENDENCIES (LINUX)

```
[nix-shell:~/workspace/nix-talk]$ ldd $(which curl)
       linux-vdso.so.1 (0x00007f0e95cfa000)
       libcurl.so.4 => /nix/store/frlckg2m2sf0gs8g5pqkryddbpy6qcz1-
        curl-8.14.1/lib/libcurl.so.4 (0x00007f0e95c12000)
       libnghttp2.so.14 => /nix/store/gwwbjkdd3rghq7x74561agq08f4jmh7p-
        nghttp2-1.65.0-lib/lib/libnghttp2.so.14 (0x00007f0e95be3000)
       libidn2.so.0 => /nix/store/ncdwsrgq6n6161l433m4x34057zq0hhf-
        libidn2-2.3.8/lib/libidn2.so.0 (0x00007f0e95bb2000)
       libssh2.so.1 => /nix/store/y6w3rwlym1mlpcysn6l7r5vbdmf9irf1-
        libssh2-1.11.1/lib/libssh2.so.1 (0x00007f0e95b67000)
       libpsl.so.5 => /nix/store/31fknicrbimbw6ivnxly9pdabsqqglk5-
        libpsl-0.21.5/lib/libpsl.so.5 (0x00007f0e95b53000)
       libssl.so.3 => /nix/store/byx7ahs386pskh8d5sdkrkpscfz9yyjp-
        openssl-3.4.1/lib/libssl.so.3 (0x00007f0e95a47000)
       libcrypto.so.3 => /nix/store/byx7ahs386pskh8d5sdkrkpscfz9yyjp-
        openssl-3.4.1/lib/libcrypto.so.3 (0x00007f0e95400000)
       libossapi krb5.so.2 =>
```

SHOWING RUNTIME DEPENDENCIES (MACOS)

```
[nix-shell:~]$ otool -L $(which curl)
/nix/store/bblr8ccnd4baxm4cf7q1iqfz6ya8v93m-curl-8.14.1-bin/bin/curl:
       /nix/store/6l3i3d58xr1r4qv49v1ln8wf309sb15x-curl-
        8.14.1/lib/libcurl.4.dylib (compatibility version 13.0.0,
        current version 13.0.0)
       /nix/store/jkdx2fgyj2lhma8xydrp6xkggv13a00g-nghttp2-1.65.0-
        lib/lib/libnghttp2.14.dylib (compatibility version 43.0.0,
        current version 43.4.0)
       /nix/store/8jfck34h4ayxq41lylz1aayjjjmy2qhw-libidn2-
        2.3.8/lib/libidn2.0.dylib (compatibility version 5.0.0, current
        version 5.0.0)
        /nix/store/4kk9xgcdga33k9h371p81svlam1aqa07-libssh2-
        1.11.1/lib/libssh2.1.dylib (compatibility version 2.0.0, current
        version 2.1.0)
       /nix/store/lvg9zfb2ig76821dmmpcdlb9xd6md1g5-libpsl-
        0.21.5/lib/libpsl.5.dylib (compatibility version 9.0.0, current
        version 9.5.0)
```

EXITING THE SHELL

[nix-shell:~/workspace/nix-talk]\$ exit
exit

CREATING A FLAKE

```
$ mkdir -p ~/workspace/nix-first-steps
$ cd ~/workspace/nix-first-steps
$ git init
$ nix flake init templates#utils-generic
```

LOADING THE FLAKE

•envrc:

use flake

OUR FIRST FLAKE

flake.nix:

```
inputs = {
  utils.url = "github:numtide/flake-utils";
};
outputs = { self, nixpkgs, utils }: utils.lib.eachDefaultSystem
      (system:
  let
    pkgs = nixpkgs.legacyPackages.${system};
  in
    devShell = pkgs.mkShell {
      buildInputs = with pkgs; [
      ];
```

NIX THE LANGUAGE

```
$ nix repl
Nix 2.29.0
Type :? for help.
nix-repl> 1 + 2
3
```

```
$ nix eval --expr '1+2'
3
```

```
$ echo "1+2" >> math.nix
$ nix eval -f math.nix
3
```

COMMENTS

```
# \mathsf{Text} that follows a 	ilde{}+	ilde{}+ is a comment!
```

STRINGS

```
# This is a string
"foo"
```

MULTI-LINE STRINGS

```
# This is a multi-line string
''I'm a mult-line
string
''
```

NUMBERS

```
# This is a number
5
```

LISTS

```
# This is a list of numbers and strings
[ 1 2 "foo" ]
```

```
# This is an empty "attribute set", which is also like a dictionary or
hash in other languages.
```

{}

```
# attribute sets can assign attributes
{
  foo = "bar";
  baz = "buzz";
}
```

```
# You can make nested attribute sets
{
  foo = {
    bar = "baz";
  };
}
```

```
# Or assign them with a "." for shorthand
{ foo.bar = "baz"; }
```

INPUTS EXAMPLE

```
# This is our inputs example
{
  inputs = {
    utils.url = "github:numtide/flake-utils";
  };
}
```

```
# This is our inputs example, but shorter
{
  inputs.utils.url = "github:numtide/flake-utils";
}
```

```
# You can call a function by applying an argument, but you may need to
    wrap in parenthesis
(x: x + 1) 2
```

```
# Most of the time you will see attributes as the function arguments
{ a, b }: a + b
```

```
# When calling this you pass an attribute set
({ a, b }: a + b) {
   a = 2;
   b = 3;
}
```

CURRYING

```
# Functions can also be `curried`
a: b: a + b
```

CURRYING

```
# Again, using parenthesis to apply
(a: b: a + b) 2 3
```

CURRYING

```
# Again, using parenthesis to apply
((a: b: a + b) 2) 3
```

OUTPUTS EXAMPLE

LET BLOCKS

```
# `let` blocks allow you to assign values you can use inside an
        `in`attribute set

let
    a = 10;
in
{
    x = a;
}
```

INTERPOLATION

SYSTEM EXAMPLE

INHERIT

INHERIT

ALMOST THERE!

```
# We have one last thing to learn before we understand all of our flake!
# You can do it!
```

WITH

```
# Sometimes repeating keys can get a bit cumbersome

let
    x = {
        a = 1;
        b = 3;
        c = 4;
    };
in
[
    x.a
    x.b
    x.c
]
```

WITH

```
# We can use `with` to automatically scope all of the attributes in x

let
    x = {
        a = 1;
        b = 3;
        c = 4;
    };
in
with x;
[
    a
    b
    c
]
```

NIX LANGUAGE COMPLETE

You did it! Great job!

REVIEWING OUR FLAKE

flake.nix:

```
inputs = {
  utils.url = "github:numtide/flake-utils";
};
outputs = { self, nixpkgs, utils }: utils.lib.eachDefaultSystem
      (system:
  let
    pkgs = nixpkgs.legacyPackages.${system};
  in
    devShell = pkgs.mkShell {
      buildInputs = with pkgs; [
      ];
```

MOVING NIXPKGS TO STABLE

We add an input for nixpkgs to 25.05 (overriding default)

```
inputs = {
  nixpkgs.url = "github:nixos/nixpkgs/nixos-25.05";
  utils.url = "github:numtide/flake-utils";
};
```

ADDING PACKAGES TO OUR DEVSHELL

These are for our rust app, but you can find more at _____

```
devShell = pkgs.mkShell {
        buildInputs = with pkgs; [
            cargo
            rustc
            rust-analyzer
            rustfmt
        ];
    };
}
```

ENTER THE DEVSHELL

We can use nix develop to get to the shell. # is a reference to the current flake.

```
$ nix develop .#
(nix:nix-shell-env) bash-5.2$ rustc --version
rustc 1.86.0 (05f9846f8 2025-03-31) (built from a source tarball)
(nix:nix-shell-env) bash-5.2$ cargo --version
cargo 1.86.0 (adf9b6ad1 2025-02-28)
(nix:nix-shell-env) bash-5.2$ exit
exit
```

DIRENV MAKES THIS BETTER

If you don't already have direnv installed, you can install to your profile via nix.

```
$ nix profile install nixpkgs#direnv
$ echo 'eval "$(direnv hook bash)"' >> ~/.bashrc
$ source ~/.bashrc
```

DIRENV MAKES THIS BETTER

Now the flake is evaluated when we enter the directory

```
$ direnv allow
direnv: loading ~/workspace/nix-first-steps/.envrc
direnv: using flake
warning: Git tree '/Users/scott/workspace/nix-first-steps' has
        uncommitted changes
direnv: export +AR +AS +CC +CONFIG SHELL +CXX +DEVELOPER DIR +HOST PATH
        +IN_NIX_SHELL +LD +LD_DYLD_PATH +MACOSX_DEPLOYMENT_TARGET
        +NIX APPLE SDK VERSION +NIX BINTOOLS
        +NIX_BINTOOLS_WRAPPER_TARGET_HOST_arm64_apple_darwin
        +NIX BUILD CORES +NIX BUILD TOP +NIX CC
        +NIX CC WRAPPER TARGET HOST arm64 apple darwin
        +NIX CFLAGS COMPILE +NIX DONT SET RPATH
        +NIX DONT SET RPATH FOR BUILD +NIX ENFORCE NO NATIVE
        +NIX_HARDENING_ENABLE +NIX_IGNORE_LD_THROUGH_GCC +NIX_LDFLAGS
        +NIX NO SELF RPATH +NIX STORE +NM +OBJCOPY +OBJDUMP +PATH LOCALE
        +RANLIB +SDKROOT +SIZE +SOURCE_DATE_EPOCH +STRINGS +STRIP +TEMP
        +TEMPDIR +TMP +ZERO AR DATE + darwinAllowLocalNetworking
```

DIRENV MAKES THIS BETTER

Now our packages are just in our path!

```
$ rustc --version
rustc 1.86.0 (05f9846f8 2025-03-31) (built from a source tarball)
```

BUILDING OUR APP

Now that we have our environment, we can build our app.

```
$ cd ~/workspace/nix-first-steps
$ cargo new hello-nix
$ cd hello-nix
```

BUILDING OUR APP

open up hello-nix/src/main rs and change to the following:

```
fn main() {
    println!("Hello from nix!");
}
```

BUILDING OUR APP

We can make sure this builds, tests, and runs.

```
$ cargo build
   Compiling hello-nix v0.1.0 (/Users/scott/workspace/nix-first-
        steps/hello-nix)
     Finished `dev` profile [unoptimized + debuginfo] target(s) in 0.77s
$ cargo test
   Compiling hello-nix v0.1.0 (/Users/scott/workspace/nix-first-
        steps/hello-nix)
     Finished `test` profile [unoptimized + debuginfo] target(s) in
        0.11s
       Running unittests src/main.rs (target/debug/deps/hello nix-
        c7e1c6d541507f78)
running 0 tests
test result: ok. 0 passed; 0 failed; 0 ignored; 0 measured; 0 filtered
        out; finished in 0.00s
$ cargo run
```

BUILDING WITH NIX

Let's make a new file, default nix and put it in the hello-nix directory.

```
{ pkgs ? import <nixpkgs> { } }:
pkgs.rustPlatform.buildRustPackage {
   pname = "hello-nix";
   version = "0.0.1";
   cargoLock.lockFile = ./Cargo.lock;
   src = pkgs.lib.cleanSource ./.;
}
```

NEW SYNTAX:?

```
# you can either apply without that name set.
({ foo ? "foo" }: foo) {}
```

```
# or with it
({ foo ? "foo" }: foo) { foo = "bar"; }
```

```
# `import` is a special builtin function for loading code.
# `./filename` is path variable relative by current directory.
# We can use this to import our new `default.nix` file
import ./default.nix
```

```
# <nixpkgs> is a special value that resolves lookup paths for $NIX_PATH
# This can be used to dynamically load whichever location nix is set to
# That means that the argument to our function takes an attribute set
    with
# an options pkgs that defaults to the imported version of `nixpkgs` if
    passed in.
{ pkgs ? import <nixpkgs> { } }: {}
```

back to our default.nix

```
{ pkgs ? import <nixpkgs> { } }:
pkgs.rustPlatform.buildRustPackage {
   pname = "hello-nix";
   version = "0.0.1";
   cargoLock.lockFile = ./Cargo.lock;
   src = pkgs.lib.cleanSource ./.;
}
```

BUILDING OUR PACKAGE

We can use the nix build command to build

\$ nix build -f default.nix

BUILDING OUR PACKAGE

And see the results...

ADDING PACKAGE TO OUR FLAKE

back up to our flake.nix, we provide this as the default package

```
{
  devShell = pkgs.mkShell {
    # ...
};
  packages.default = pkgs.callPackage ./hello-nix { inherit pkgs; }
}
```

ADDING PACKAGE TO OUR FLAKE

and rebuild it! Note the syntax again of •#

```
$ nix build .#
```

ERROR WITH BUILD

```
warning: Git tree '/Users/scott/workspace/nix-first-steps' has
        uncommitted changes
error:
 ... while evaluating a branch condition
   at «github:nixos/nixpkgs/a676066377a2fe7457369dd37c31fd2263b662f4?narHa
        zW/OFnotiz/ndPFdebpo3X0CrbVNf22n4DjN2vxlb58%3D»/nix/store/i56fkj8i
        source/lib/customisation.nix:305:5:
    3041
             in
             if missingArgs == { } then
    305 I
               makeOverridable f allArgs
    3061
 ... while calling the 'removeAttrs' builtin
   at «github:nixos/nixpkgs/a676066377a2fe7457369dd37c31fd2263b662f4?narHa
        zW/OFnotiz/ndPFdebpo3X0CrbVNf22n4DjN2vxlb58%3D»/nix/store/i56fkj8i
        source/lib/attrsets.nix:657:28:
    656
           */
```

CLEANING UP GIT

```
$ echo "target" >> .gitignore
$ echo ".direnv" >> .gitignore
$ git add "hello-nix"
```

BUILD SUCCESS

PORTABILITY OF PACKAGE

If we push this to github we could run this automatically!

```
$ nix run github:sentientmonkey/nix-first-steps
Hello from nix!
$ nix run .#
Hello from nix!
```

LET'S BUILD FOR DOCKER

Create a new file hello-nix/build-docker nix

```
{
  pkgs ? import <nixpkgs> { }
}:

pkgs.dockerTools.buildImage {
  name = "hello-nix";
  tag = "0.0.1";
  config = {
    Cmd = [ "${pkgs.hello}/bin/hello" ];
  };
}
```

BUILDING AND LOADING

ADDING DOCKERIMAGE TO OUR FLAKE

add to our top level flake nix

```
packages.default = pkgs.callPackage ./hello-nix { inherit pkgs; }
packages.dockerImage = pkgs.callPackage ./hello-nix/build-docker.nix {
   inherit pkgs;
}
```

RUN DOCKER BUILD WITH FLAKE

```
$ git add hello-nix/build-docker.nix
$ docker load < $(nix build .#dockerImage --no-link --print-out-paths)
Loaded image: hello-nix:0.0.1
$ docker run hello-nix:0.0.1
Hello, World!</pre>
```

SMALL REFACTOR IN OUR FLAKE

```
let
   pkgs = nixpkgs.legacyPackages.${system};
   helloNix = pkgs.callPackage ./hello-nix { inherit pkgs; };
in
   {
    # ...
   packages.default = helloNix;
   packages.dockerImage = pkgs.callPackage ./hello-nix/build-docker.nix {
      inherit pkgs;
   };
}
```

SMALL REFACTOR TO OUR FLAKE

```
packages.dockerImage = pkgs.callPackage ./hello-nix/build-docker.nix {
   inherit pkgs helloNix;
};
```

BACK TO OUR BUILD, WE CAN USE OUR PACKAGE

```
{
  helloNix,
  pkgs ? import <nixpkgs> { },
}:

pkgs.dockerTools.buildImage {
  name = "hello-nix";
  tag = helloNix.version
  config = {
    Cmd = [ "${helloNix}/bin/hello-nix" ];
  };
}
```

BUILDING AGAIN WITH OUR PACKAGE NOW

```
$ docker load < $(nix build .#dockerImage --no-link --print-out-paths)
Loaded image: hello-nix:0.0.1
$ docker run hello-nix
Hello from nix!</pre>
```

EXTENDING OUR DOCKER IMAGE WITH BASH

```
pkgs.dockerTools.buildImage {
  name = "hello-nix";
  tag = helloNix.version;
  copyToRoot = pkgs.buildEnv {
    name = "image-root";
    paths = with pkgs; [
      helloNix
      bashInteractive
      coreutils
    ];
    pathsToLink = [ "/bin" ];
  config = {
    Cmd = [ "/bin/hello-nix" ];
  };
```

EXTENDING OUR DOCKER IMAGE WITH BASH

```
$ docker load < $(nix build .#dockerImage --no-link --print-out-paths)
Loaded image: hello-nix:0.0.1
$ docker run -it /bin/bash
bash-5.2#</pre>
```

ADDING RUNTIME DEPENDENCIES

Back to our flake.nix

```
devShell = pkgs.mkShell {
   buildInputs = with pkgs; [
     cargo
     rustc
     rust-analyzer
     rustfmt
     figlet
     lolcat
   ];
};
```

TESTING PACKAGE DEPENDENCIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

USING MAKEWRAPPER

```
pkgs.rustPlatform.buildRustPackage {
    # ...

nativeBuildInputs = [ pkgs.makeWrapper ];

postInstall = ''
    wrapProgram $out/bin/hello-nix \
    --prefix PATH : ${pkgs.lolcat}/bin \
    --prefix PATH : ${pkgs.figlet}/bin \
    --add-flags "| figlet | lolcat"
    '';
}
```

USING MAKEWRAPPER

```
$ nix build .#
$ cat result/bin/hello-nix
PATH=${PATH:+':'$PATH':'}
PATH=${PATH/':''/nix/store/jjf7ym331wzp1jsyn05b7cscflk291bd-lolcat-
        100.0.1/bin'':'/':'}
PATH='/nix/store/jjf7ym331wzp1jsyn05b7cscflk291bd-lolcat-
        100.0.1/bin'$PATH
PATH=${PATH#':'}
PATH=${PATH%':'}
export PATH
PATH=${PATH:+':'$PATH':'}
PATH=${PATH/':''/nix/store/q00xb5g6hv24yc7r6k3r6jws226vw8rm-figlet-
        2.2.5/bin'':'/':'}
PATH='/nix/store/q00xb5g6hv24yc7r6k3r6jws226vw8rm-figlet-2.2.5/bin'$PATH
PATH=${PATH#':'}
PATH=${PATH%':'}
```

RUNNING OUR BUILD



RUNNING FROM DOCKER

RUNNING THE UNWRAPPED VERSION

```
$ docker run -it hello-nix:0.0.1 /bin/.hello-nix-wrapped
Hello from nix!
```

TAKE-AWAYS AND JUMPING OFF POINTS

Now that you've gotten a quick tour of how nix can be helpful in building out your de
environments, I encourage you to explore and learn more.
Some jumping off points:
for pinning languages and adding services (i.e. postgres, redis)
for building containers with nix
for more details about building flakes
to help build your own packages
to explore packages
to learn more about nix
hope this inspires you to learn more and experiment!

THANK YOU!

REPOS WITH SLIDES AND CODE

CONTACT INFO

- _swindsor on PDX DevOps Discord
- swindsor at gmail for email on github

Speaker notes