

Linux - Finger Command To Find User Details

On Linux operating system, you can simply check the information of any user from remote or local command line interface. That is 'finger' command. To use this command, your Linux machine need have 'finger' utility installed on it. This feature is a very basic with Linux system, so you can easily find install package proper with you Linux system. This article will focus on usage of 'finger' command and its options with demonstration command run on Ubuntu Linux.

Syntax

```
finger [-lmsp] [user1 user2 ..... ]
```

Finger command with option -s

With option -s 'finger' displays the user's login name, real name, terminal name and write status (the asterisk before terminal name mean that you don't have write permission with that device), idle time, login time, office location and office phone number. The login time is displayed with format MM DD HH:mm. If the time exceeds six months, the year is displayed rather than the hours and minutes.

Unknown devices as well as nonexistent idle and login times are displayed as single asterisk.

```
harry@ubu1264: ~ ✕ harry@ubu1264: ~ ✕ root@ubu1264: ~ ✕ root@ubu1264: ~ ✕
harry@ubu1264:~$ finger -s harry root
Login      Name      Tty      Idle    Login Time   Office      Office Phone
harry      Harry Nguyen tty7      30      Apr 14 15:15
harry      Harry Nguyen pts/0     28      Apr 14 15:15 (:0)
harry      Harry Nguyen pts/2     16      Apr 14 15:18 (:0)
harry      Harry Nguyen pts/3     16      Apr 14 15:26 (:0)
harry      Harry Nguyen pts/5     14      Apr 14 15:29 (:0)
root       root      *pts/4    16      Apr 14 15:27 (localhost)
root       root      *pts/7    14      Apr 14 15:30 (localhost)
harry@ubu1264:~$
```

Finger command with option -l

The option `-l` follow the ‘finger’ command with produces a multi-line format displaying all of the information described for the `-s` option as well as the user's home directory, home phone number, login shell, mail status, and the contents of the files “.plan”, “.project”, “.pgpkey” and “.forward” from the user's home directory.

```
harry@ubu1264:~ ✕ harry@ubu1264:~ ✕ root@ubu1264:~ ✕ root@ubu1264:~ ✕
harry@ubu1264:~$ finger -s harry root
Login      Name      Tty      Idle   Login Time   Office   Office Phone
harry      Harry Nguyen tty7      30     Apr 14 15:15
harry      Harry Nguyen pts/0      28     Apr 14 15:15 (:0)
harry      Harry Nguyen pts/2      16     Apr 14 15:18 (:0)
harry      Harry Nguyen pts/3      14     Apr 14 15:26 (:0)
harry      Harry Nguyen pts/5      16     Apr 14 15:29 (:0)
root       root      *pts/4     14     Apr 14 15:27 (localhost)
root       root      *pts/7     14     Apr 14 15:30 (localhost)
harry@ubu1264:~$ finger -l harry root
Login: harry                                Name: Harry Nguyen
Directory: /home/harry                     Shell: /bin/bash
On since Sun Apr 14 15:15 (CST) on tty7      37 minutes 37 seconds idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:15 (CST) on pts/0 from :0
    34 minutes 55 seconds idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:18 (CST) on pts/2 from :0
On since Sun Apr 14 15:26 (CST) on pts/3 from :0
    23 minutes 36 seconds idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:29 (CST) on pts/5 from :0
    20 minutes 56 seconds idle
No mail.
No Plan.

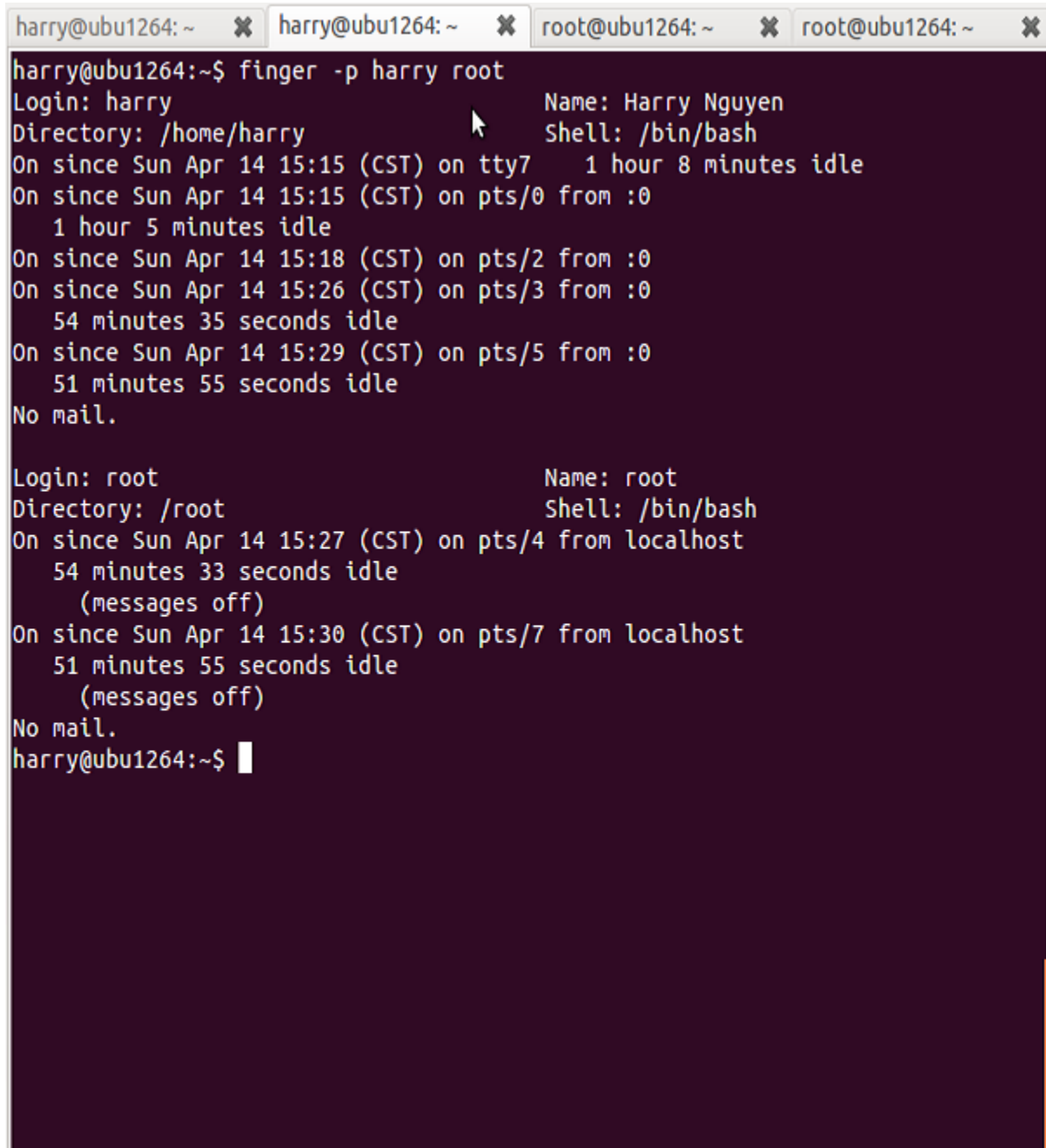
Login: root                                Name: root
Directory: /root                           Shell: /bin/bash
On since Sun Apr 14 15:27 (CST) on pts/4 from localhost
    23 minutes 34 seconds idle
    (messages off)
On since Sun Apr 14 15:30 (CST) on pts/7 from localhost
    20 minutes 56 seconds idle
    (messages off)
No mail.
No Plan.
harry@ubu1264:~$
```

The phrase “(messages off)” mean that user ‘harry’ don’t have write permission to ‘root’ on the devices pts/4 and pts/7. One entry per user is displayed with the -l option; if a user is logged on multiple times, terminal information is repeated once per login.

Mail status is shown as “No Mail.” if there is no mail at all, “Mail last read DDD MMM ## HH:MM YYYY (TZ)” if the person has looked at their mailbox since new mail arriving, or “New mail received ...”, “Unread since ...” if they have new mail.

Finger command with option -p

The option -p is completely same with option -l, except it doesn't include ".plan", ".project" and ".pgpkey" files of users in returned result.

A terminal window with four tabs at the top: 'harry@ubu1264: ~', 'harry@ubu1264: ~', 'root@ubu1264: ~', and 'root@ubu1264: ~'. The active tab is the first one. The terminal shows the command 'finger -p harry root' being executed. The output for 'harry' includes login name, directory, shell, and several idle sessions with timestamps and durations. The output for 'root' includes login name, directory, shell, and two idle sessions. The terminal ends with 'No mail.' for both users and the prompt 'harry@ubu1264:~\$' with a cursor.

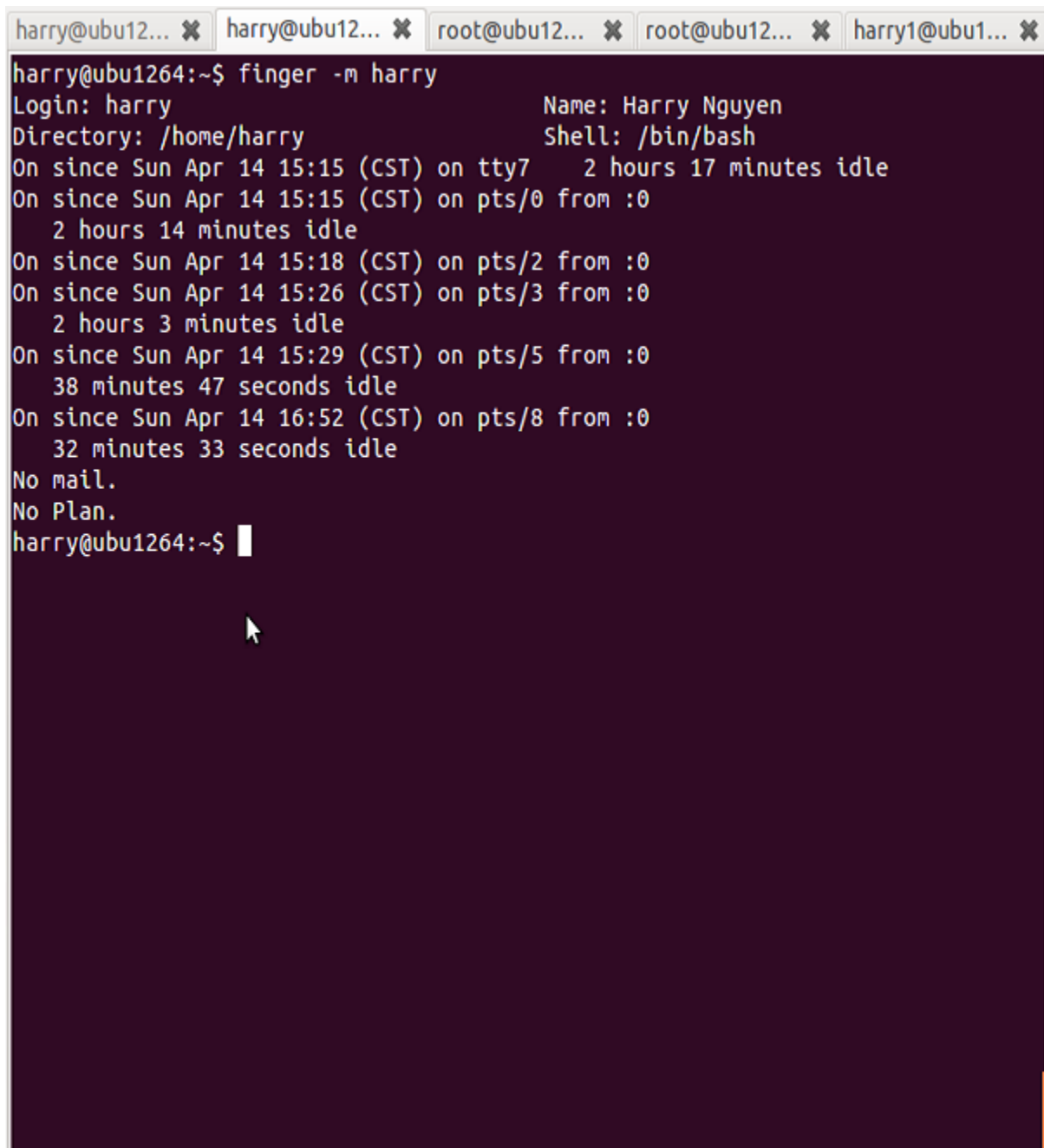
```
harry@ubu1264:~$ finger -p harry root
Login: harry                                Name: Harry Nguyen
Directory: /home/harry                      Shell: /bin/bash
On since Sun Apr 14 15:15 (CST) on tty7      1 hour 8 minutes idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:15 (CST) on pts/0 from :0
    1 hour 5 minutes idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:18 (CST) on pts/2 from :0
On since Sun Apr 14 15:26 (CST) on pts/3 from :0
    54 minutes 35 seconds idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:29 (CST) on pts/5 from :0
    51 minutes 55 seconds idle
No mail.

Login: root                                  Name: root
Directory: /root                            Shell: /bin/bash
On since Sun Apr 14 15:27 (CST) on pts/4 from localhost
    54 minutes 33 seconds idle
    (messages off)
On since Sun Apr 14 15:30 (CST) on pts/7 from localhost
    51 minutes 55 seconds idle
    (messages off)
No mail.
harry@ubu1264:~$
```

Finger command with option -m

With the option `-m` 'finger' will prevent matching of user names in returned result. User is usually a login name; however, matching will also be done on the users' real names, unless the `-m` option is supplied. All name matching performed by finger is case insensitive. For example, our system has two users named 'harry' and 'harry1'. Without option `-m`, 'finger' will return information of both users and only return information of user 'harry' if there `-m` follow.

With option '`-m`'



```
harry@ubu1264:~$ finger -m harry
Login: harry                                Name: Harry Nguyen
Directory: /home/harry                     Shell: /bin/bash
On since Sun Apr 14 15:15 (CST) on tty7      2 hours 17 minutes idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:15 (CST) on pts/0 from :0
      2 hours 14 minutes idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:18 (CST) on pts/2 from :0
On since Sun Apr 14 15:26 (CST) on pts/3 from :0
      2 hours 3 minutes idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:29 (CST) on pts/5 from :0
      38 minutes 47 seconds idle
On since Sun Apr 14 16:52 (CST) on pts/8 from :0
      32 minutes 33 seconds idle
No mail.
No Plan.
harry@ubu1264:~$
```

Without option '`-m`'

```
harry@ubu1264:~$ finger harry
Login: harry                                Name: Harry Nguyen
Directory: /home/harry                      Shell: /bin/bash
On since Sun Apr 14 15:15 (CST) on tty7      2 hours 14 minutes idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:15 (CST) on pts/0 from :0
    2 hours 11 minutes idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:18 (CST) on pts/2 from :0
On since Sun Apr 14 15:26 (CST) on pts/3 from :0
    2 hours idle
On since Sun Apr 14 15:29 (CST) on pts/5 from :0
    36 minutes 16 seconds idle
On since Sun Apr 14 16:52 (CST) on pts/8 from :0
    30 minutes 2 seconds idle
No mail.
No Plan.

Login: harry1                                Name: Harry Nguyen
Directory: /home/harry1                     Shell: /bin/bash
On since Sun Apr 14 16:58 (CST) on pts/9 from localhost
    29 minutes 59 seconds idle
No mail.
No Plan.
harry@ubu1264:~$
```

If no options are specified, finger defaults to the -l style output if operands are provided, otherwise to the -s style. Note that some fields may be missing, in either format, if information is not available for them.

If no arguments are specified, finger will print an entry for each user currently logged into the system.

harry@ubu12... ✕ harry@ubu12... ✕ root@ubu12... ✕ root@ubu12... ✕ harry1@ubu1... ✕

harry@ubu1264:~\$ finger -m

Login	Name	Tty	Idle	Login Time	Office	Office Phone
harry	Harry Nguyen	tty7	2:21	Apr 14 15:15		
harry	Harry Nguyen	pts/0	2:18	Apr 14 15:15 (:0)		
harry	Harry Nguyen	pts/2		Apr 14 15:18 (:0)		
harry	Harry Nguyen	pts/3	2:07	Apr 14 15:26 (:0)		
harry	Harry Nguyen	pts/5	43	Apr 14 15:29 (:0)		
harry	Harry Nguyen	pts/8	36	Apr 14 16:52 (:0)		
harry1	Harry Nguyen	pts/9	36	Apr 14 16:58 (localhost)		
root	root	*pts/4	2:07	Apr 14 15:27 (localhost)		
root	root	*pts/7	43	Apr 14 15:30 (localhost)		

harry@ubu1264:~\$