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## 2.3.1.1 Quoting

Arguments that contain unusual characters like spaces or non-alphanumeric characters will usually need to be *quoted*, either by enclosing them within double quotes or single quotes. *Double quotes* will prevent the shell from interpreting *some* of these special characters; *single quotes* prevent the shell from interpreting *any* special characters.

In most cases, single quotes are considered safer and should probably be used whenever you have an argument that contains characters that aren't alphanumeric.

To understand the importance of quotes, consider the `echo` command. The `echo` command displays text to the terminal and is used extensively in shell scripting.

```
echo [STRING]...
```

Consider the following scenario in which you want to list the contents of the current directory using the `ls` command and then use the `echo` command to display the string `hello world!!` on the screen.

You might first try the `echo` command without any quotes, unfortunately without success:

```
sysadmin@localhost:~$ ls
sysadmin@localhost:~$ echo hello world!!
echo hello worldls
hello worldls
```

Using no quotes failed because the shell interprets the `!!` characters as special shell characters; in this case, they mean "replace the `!!` with the last command that was executed". In this case, the last command was the `ls` command, so `ls` replaced `!!` and then the `echo` command displayed `hello`