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How do you put date and time in a file name?

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I'm trying to execute a command and would like to put the date and time in the output file name.

Here is a sample command I'd like to run.


```
md5sum /etc/mtab > 2016_4_25_10_30_AM.log
```

The date time format can be anything sensible with underscores. Even UTC if the AM and PM can't be used.

text-processing · filenames · date


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edited Mar 17 '17 at 11:12

 Jeff Schaller ♦

49k · 11 · 72 · 162

asked Apr 25 '16 at 14:24

 visc

219 · 1 · 3 · 9

- If not Bash, then what shell are you using? – Ryan Apr 25 '16 at 14:25
- Oh it is bash... I meant bash script\* – visc Apr 25 '16 at 14:26
- You're not piping, you're redirecting. And the question would be the same if you weren't redirecting. Updating title. – Mikel Apr 25 '16 at 14:27

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1 Answer

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If you want to use the current datetime as a filename, you can use `date` and [command substitution](#).

```
$ md5sum /etc/mtab > "$(date +%Y_%m_%d_%I_%M_%p)".log
```

This results in the file `2016_04_25_10_30_AM.log` (although, with the current datetime) being created with the md5 hash of `/etc/mtab` as its contents.

Please note that filenames containing 12-hour format timestamps will probably not sort by name the way you want them to sort. You can avoid this issue by using 24-hour format timestamps instead.

If you don't have a requirement to use that specific date format, you might consider using an ISO 8601 compliant datetime format. Some examples of how to generate valid ISO 8601 datetime representations include:

```
$ date +%FT%T
2016-04-25T10:30:00

$ date +%FT%H%M%S
2016-04-25T103000

$ date +%FT%H%M
2016-04-25T1030

$ date +%Y%m%dT%H%M
20160425T1030
```

If you want "safer" filenames (e.g., for compatibility with Windows), you can omit the colons from the time portion.

Please keep in mind that the above examples all assume local system time. If you need a time representation that is consistent across time zones, you should specify a time zone offset or UTC. You can get an ISO 8601 compliant time zone offset by using "%z" in the format portion of your `date` call like this:

```
$ date +%FT%H%M%Z
2016-04-25T1030-0400
```


You can get UTC time in your `date` call by specifying the `-u` flag and adding "Z" to the end of the datetime string to indicate that the time is UTC like this:

```
$ date -u +%FT%H%MZ
2016-04-25T1430Z
```

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edited Mar 10 '17 at 18:25

answered Apr 25 '16 at 14:28







 Ryan

851 · 8 · 14


- @Mikel Did you and I cross-edit? – Ryan Apr 25 '16 at 14:32
- Possibly. I just changed "subshell" to "command substitution". I'm done now, so please edit as you like. – Mikel Apr 25 '16 at 14:33 ↗
- @Mikel No problem. I've resubmitted my edit now. – Ryan Apr 25 '16 at 14:35
- @Mikel No worries! I should've remembered to call it "command substitution" anyhow. Thanks for improving the answer! – Ryan Apr 25 '16 at 14:36
- 3 Underscore is a weird character. It is preferred to use ISO-8601 like `$(date +%FT%T)` which will give `2016-04-25T10:30:00`. – hschou Mar 9 '17 at 10:29


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