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## Pipe to/from Clipboard

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Is it possible to pipe to/from the clipboard in `bash` ? Whether it is piping to/from a device handle or using an auxiliary application, I can't find anything.

For example, if `/dev/clip` was a device linking to the clipboard we could do:

```
cat /dev/clip          # dump the contents of the clipboard
cat foo > /dev/clip    # dump the contents of "foo" into the clipboard
```

linux bash clipboard

edited Nov 13 '12 at 2:25



Yamaneko

1,653 1 14 33

asked Apr 14 '09 at 22:06



marcog

44.9k 26 133 167

### 11 Answers

You're a little ambiguous. I expect you're probably a Linux user inside X who wants to put stuff in the X PRIMARY clipboard.

It's important to understand that `bash` doesn't have a clipboard. There is no such thing as "the" clipboard, because `bash` can run on Windows, Mac OS X, lots of other OSes, inside X, outside X, ... Not to mention that X itself has three different clipboards itself. There's a wealth of clipboards you could be dealing with. Usually the clipboard you want to talk to has a utility that lets you talk to it.

In case of X, yes, there's `xclip` (and others). `xclip -selection c` will send data to the clipboard that works with Ctrl-C, Ctrl-V in most applications.

If you're trying to talk to the Mac OS X clipboard, there's `pbcopy`.

If you're in Linux terminal mode (no X) then maybe you need to look into `gpm`.

There's also [GNU screen](#) which has a clipboard. To put stuff in there, look at the `screen` command "readreg".

Under Windows/cygwin, use `/dev/clipboard`.

edited Mar 2 at 13:23



Daniel Darabos

4,662 9 28

answered Apr 15 '09 at 5:57



lhunath

34.1k 7 41 66

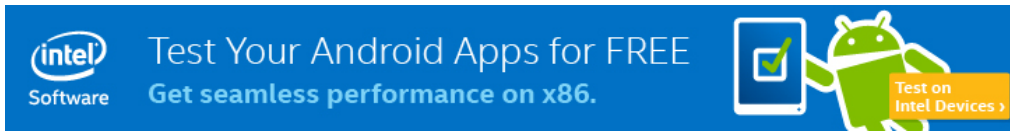
13 [cygwin: /dev/clipboard](#) – [glenn jackman](#) May 31 '11 at 13:48

5 [on Windows, /dev/clipboard also works for Msys/MinGW bash shells](#) – [Mihai Rotaru](#) Jun 7 '11 at 12:43

40 [Note that xclip -selection c will send data to the clipboard that works with ^C, ^V in most applications](#) – [Klaas van Schelven](#) Aug 14 '11 at 15:23

13 [on newer windows versions you can just use clip like this: dir | clip](#) – [maep](#) Nov 8 '11 at 12:43

1 [Under X11, there is also xsel which operates on the X selection by default. So you can echo hello | xsel or xsel|wc and so on without using a command-line switch.](#) – [mike](#) Sep 29 '14 at 3:10



Make sure you are using alias `xclip="xclip -selection c"` otherwise you can't just use to `Ctrl` + `v` to paste it back in a different place.

```
echo test | xclip
```

```
Ctrl + v === test
```

edited Nov 13 '12 at 2:25



Yamaneko

1,653 1 14 33

answered Nov 17 '10 at 19:14



doug

1,358 1 7 8

1 How would one go about pasting it *without* that command argument? – [Jonah](#) Dec 17 '13 at 18:25

7 `xclip -selection clipboard -o` – [doug](#) Dec 18 '13 at 19:14

4 since I go back and forth between osx and linux a lot I have the following in my dotfiles. alias `pbcopy="xclip -selection c"` alias `pbpaste="xclip -selection clipboard -o"` Hope that helps. – [doug](#) Dec 18 '13 at 19:14

When I use this method it always adds in a newline character at the end of the copied text. Do you know of a way to disable or block that newline character? – [ApockofFork](#) Mar 19 '14 at 13:36

6 @ApockofFork, `xclip` isnt adding a newline, `echo` is. Try `printf test | xclip -i -selection clipboard`. (`printf` doesnt add a newline unless you write `'test\n'`.) – [David X](#) Apr 27 '14 at 20:53

Try

`xclip`

`xclip` - command line interface to X selections (clipboard)

[man](#)

edited May 13 '13 at 0:30



Steven Penny

24.2k 10 90 151

answered Apr 14 '09 at 22:33



Zoredache

10k 5 28 47

On Mac OS X you might find these command line tools handy

[pbcopy](#) [pbpaste](#)

answered Mar 5 '11 at 17:24



jtruelove

758 2 11 25

On Windows (with Cygwin) try `cat /dev/clipboard` or `echo "foo" > /dev/clipboard` as mentioned in [this](#) article.

answered May 31 '11 at 13:33



Norman H

1,450 12 23

1 This works with msys/mingw as well. – [Jimothy](#) Aug 27 '12 at 22:01

## Linux:

```
sudo apt-get install xclip
```

In your `.bashrc` / `.bash_aliases`, put:

```
alias setclip='xclip -selection c'
alias getclip='xclip -selection clipboard -o'
```

You can now use setclip and getclip, e.g:

```
$ echo foo | setclip
$ getclip
foo
```

answered Dec 13 '14 at 8:32



forever

450 2 10

Here is a ready to use bash script for reading the clipboard which works on multiple platforms. Please edit the script here if you add functionality (e.g. more platforms).

```
#!/bin/bash
# WF 2013-10-04
# multi platform clipboard read access
# supports
#   Mac OS X
#   git shell / Cygwin (Windows)
#   Linux (e.g. Ubuntu)

#
# display an error
#
error() {
    echo "error: $1" 1>&2
    exit 1
}

#
# getClipboard
#
function getClipboard() {
    os=`uname`
    case $os in
        # git bash (Windows)
        MINGW32_NT-6.1)
            cat /dev/clipboard;;
        # Mac OS X
        Darwin*)
            pbpaste;;
        # Linux
        Linux*)
            # works only for X clipboard - a check that X is running might be due
            xclip -o;;
        *)
            error "unsupported os $os";;
    esac
}

tmp=/tmp/clipboard$$
getClipboard >$tmp
cat $tmp
# comment out for debugging
rm $tmp
```

edited Mar 14 at 16:35

answered Oct 4 '13 at 15:39



Wolfgang Fahl

2,420 1 14 40

There are different clipboards in linux, the X server has one, the window manager might have another one, etc. There is no standard device.

Oh, yes, on CLI, the screen program has its own clipboard as well, as do some other applications like emacs and vi.

In X, you can use [xclip](#).

You can check this thread for other possible answers:

<http://unix.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/comp.unix.shell/2004-07/0919.html>

edited Apr 14 '09 at 22:29

answered Apr 14 '09 at 22:12



Sunny Milenov

11.9k 3 41 82

1 It sounds like creating /dev/clip would be a good project for someone. – [T.E.D.](#) Apr 14 '09 at 22:21

1 I am perfectly aware of the multiple clipboards. How does this make my question any more difficult to answer? – [marcog](#) Apr 14 '09 at 22:23

Check the edits, I needed time to get the resources. – [Sunny Milenov](#) Apr 14 '09 at 22:33

It would make sense if clipboards were standardized, probably wouldn't hurt if you could use `/dev/clip1`, `/dev/clip2` .. `/dev/clip<n>` to access them, the only issue is that they are user specific and devices are system-wide. But if you make a kernel device driver that masks according to the accessing UID, it should work as expected. – [A.Danischewski](#) Mar 14 at 15:00

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Copy and paste to clipboard in Windows (Cygwin):

see:

`$ clip.exe -?`

CLIP Description: Redirects output of command line tools to the Windows clipboard. This text output can then be pasted into other programs. Parameter List: `/?` Displays this help message. Examples: `DIR | CLIP` Places a copy of the current directory listing into the Windows clipboard. `CLIP < README.TXT` Places a copy of the text from `readme.txt` on to the Windows clipboard.

Also exists `getclip` (can be used instead of `shift+ins!`), `putclip` (`echo oaeuoa | putclip.exe` to put it into clip)

answered Jun 21 '13 at 5:46



[Stenemo](#)

164 1 8

For mac only..

`echo "Hello World" |pbcopy`

`pbpaste`

These are located `/usr/bin/pbcopy` and `/usr/bin/pbpaste`

answered Aug 22 '14 at 18:46



[nyitguy](#)

41 3

A few windows programs I wrote years ago. They allow you dump, push, append and print the clipboard. Works like this:

`dumpclip | perl -pe "s/monkey/chimp/g;" | pushclip`

Includes source code: [cmd\\_clip.zip](#)

answered Jun 8 '14 at 14:38



[jeng](#)

11 3