

Command line starter kit

Eight useful tips for the command line

Commands. All commands are executed by typing the name of the command. Many commands also require the names of one or more files or directories; these are separated from the command and from each other by spaces.

Working directory. At the command line you are always “in” some directory; to print the name of the current working directory, type `pwd` and hit .

Home directory. The directory you start in is called the “home directory” (and its full name is usually of the form `/home/yourname`). You can always get back to it by typing `cd` and pressing . (Clicking your heels three times is purely optional.)

Navigating directories. To change to a different directory, type `cd` followed by the name of a directory. The special names `..` (meaning the “parent” or “up one” directory) and `.` (meaning the current working directory) can always be used wherever directory names are expected (although “`cd .`” isn’t very useful).

Modifying directories. To make a new directory, use `mkdir` with the name of the directory to make. To remove an empty directory, use `rmdir` with the name of the directory to remove.

Manipulating files. Four important commands are `cat`, `cp`, `mv`, and `rm`:

<code>cat file1 [file2...]</code>	Display contents of file(s) on the screen
<code>cp filename newname</code>	Copy existing file, with new name
<code>cp file1 [file2...] dirname</code>	Copy existing file(s) into directory
<code>mv oldname newname</code>	Rename file from old filename to new filename
<code>mv file1 [file2...] dirname</code>	Move file(s) to a directory
<code>rm file1 [file2...]</code>	Permanently remove (delete) file(s)

For all the versions that permit multiple filenames, you can use `*` as a filename wildcard, e.g. `rm *.o` to remove all the files ending in `.o`.

Repeating commands. If you need to type a command that is the same as another you’ve recently done, or similar, use the up arrow to see those commands again. You can edit the line if necessary, and then press  to run that command again.

Tab completion. If you press the  key while typing a filename, the command line can sometimes fill in some or all of it for you.