

# Using Commands



## UNIX/IP preparation course

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# The format of a command

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`command [options] parameters`

“Traditionally, UNIX command-line options consist of a dash, followed by one or more lowercase letters. The GNU utilities added a double-dash, followed by a complete word or compound word.”

Two very typical examples are:

`-h`

`--help`

and

`-v`

`--version`

# Command parameters

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The ***parameter*** is what the command ***acts on***.

Often there are multiple parameters.

In Unix UPPERCASE and lowercase for both options and parameters matter.

**Spaces** \_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_ critical \_\_\_\_ .

“- - help” is wrong.



“- -help” is right.

# Some command examples

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Let's start simple:

Display a **list** of files:

```
ls
```

Display a **list** of files in a **long** listing format:

```
ls -l
```

Display a **list** of **all** files in a **long** listing format  
with **human-readable** file sizes:

```
ls -alh
```

# Some command examples cont.

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Some equivalent ways to do “`ls -alh`”:

```
ls -lah
```

```
ls -l -a -h
```

```
ls -l -all --human-readable
```

Note that there is no double-dash option for “`-l`”.

You can figure this out by typing:

```
man ls
```

Or by typing:

```
ls --help
```

# Where's the parameter?

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We typed the “ls” command with several options, but no parameter. Do you think “ls” uses a parameter?

What is the parameter for “ls -l”?

It is “.” -- our current directory.

“ls -l” and “ls -l .” are the same.

We'll discuss files and directories later.

# A disconcerting Unix feature

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If a command executes successfully there is no output returned from the command execution.  
*this is normal.*

That is, if you type:

```
cp file1 file2
```

The result is that you get your command prompt back. *Nothing means success.*

Let's give this a try...

# A disconcerting Unix feature cont.

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Try doing the following on your machine:

```
$ cd [cd = change dir]
$ touch file1 [touch = create/update]
$ cp file1 file2 [cp = copy]
```

- The “\$” indicates the command prompt for a normal user.
- A “#” usually means you are the *root* user.



# Using pipes

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In Unix it is very easy to use the result of one command as the input for another.

To do this we use the pipe symbol “|”. For example:

```
ls -l /sbin | sort
```

```
ls -l /sbin | sort | more
```

What will these commands do?

# Take advantage of the command line

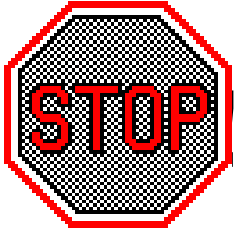
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The command line in Unix is *much more powerful* than what you may be used to in Windows. ***You can...***

- ...easily edit long commands
- ...find and recover past commands
- ...quickly copy and paste commands.
- ...auto-complete commands using the tab key (in *bash* shell).

# Edit long commands

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Don't touch that keyboard!  
Arrow keys are sloooooow...

Use *Home* and *End* instead (ctrl-a, shift-a)

Delete with *Backspace* not *Delete*.

Press <ENTER> *as soon as the command is correct*. You *do not* need to go to the end of the command.

Use “`history | grep string`”, then  
!NN instead of lots of up-arrows.

# Find and recover past commands

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As noted on the previous slide. Use:

```
$ history | grep "command string"
```

Find command number in resulting list.

Execute the command by typing:

```
$ !number
```

So, to find any command you typed “many” commands ago you can do:

```
$ history | grep command
```

# Quickly copy and paste commands

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In Unix/Linux once you highlight something it is *already* in your copy buffer.

## To copy/paste do:

- Highlight text with left mouse cursor. It is now copied (like *ctrl-c* in Windows).
- Move mouse/cursor where you want (any window), and press the *middle* mouse button. This is paste (like *ctrl-v*).

Doesn't work on a Mac...

# Auto-complete commands using tab

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## Very, very, very powerful

“The tab key is good”, “the tab key is my friend”, “press the tab key”, “press it again”  
- This is your mantra.

Tab works in the *bash* shell. Note, the *root* user might not use the *bash* shell by default.

# Auto-complete commands using tab

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## Core concept:

Once you type something unique, press TAB. If nothing happens, press TAB twice.

If text was unique text will auto-complete.

A command will complete, directory name, file name, command parameters will all complete.

If not unique, press TAB twice. All possibilities will be displayed.

Works with file types based on command!

# Your mission

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Should you choose to accept it...

Pay close attention to options and parameters.

Use “`man command`” or “`command --help`” to figure out how each command works.

Use command line magic to save lots and lots and lots and lots of time.

A command acts upon its parameters based on the options you give to the command...