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# Help and Documentation

## Help on external commands

External commands are binary executables or scripts generally found in /bin, /sbin, /usr/bin ou /usr/sbin :

```
root@debian8:~# type ifconfig
ifconfig is /sbin/ifconfig
```

Help for an external command can generally be obtained by using the **-help** option with the command in question :

```
root@debian8:~# du --help | more
Usage: du [OPTION]... [FILE]...
  or:  du [OPTION]... --files0-from=F
Summarize disk usage of each FILE, recursively for directories.

Mandatory arguments to long options are mandatory for short options too.
  -0, --null                end each output line with NUL, not newline
  -a, --all                 write counts for all files, not just directories
  --apparent-size          print apparent sizes, rather than disk usage; although
                           the apparent size is usually smaller, it may be
                           larger due to holes in ('sparse') files, internal
                           fragmentation, indirect blocks, and the like
  -B, --block-size=SIZE    scale sizes by SIZE before printing them; e.g.,
                           '-BM' prints sizes in units of 1,048,576 bytes;
                           see SIZE format below
  -b, --bytes              equivalent to '--apparent-size --block-size=1'
  -c, --total              produce a grand total
  -D, --dereference-args   dereference only symlinks that are listed on the
```

```
command line
-d, --max-depth=N    print the total for a directory (or file, with --all)
                     only if it is N or fewer levels below the command
                     line argument; --max-depth=0 is the same as
                     --summarize
--files0-from=F      summarize disk usage of the
--More--
```

Use with certain commands, the **-help** option is not valid:

```
root@debian8:~# type --help
-su: type: --: invalid option
type: usage: type [-afptP] name [name ...]
```

## Help on built-in commands

Commands such as **type**, **cd** or **umask** are internal to the shell:

```
root@debian8:~# type type
type is a shell builtin
```

One of the internal Bash commands is **help**. Used with no argument, this command shows a list of all the internal commands:

```
root@debian8:~# help | more
GNU bash, version 4.3.30(1)-release (x86_64-pc-linux-gnu)
These shell commands are defined internally. Type `help' to see this list.
Type `help name' to find out more about the function `name'.
Use `info bash' to find out more about the shell in general.
Use `man -k' or `info' to find out more about commands not in this list.
```

A star (\*) next to a name means that the command is disabled.

```

job_spec [&]
(( expression ))
. filename [arguments]
:
[ arg... ]
[[ expression ]]
alias [-p] [name[=value] ... ]
bg [job_spec ...]
bind [-lpsvPSVX] [-m keymap] [-f filename] >
break [n]
builtin [shell-builtin [arg ...]]
caller [expr]
case WORD in [PATTERN [| PATTERN]...) COMMA>
cd [-L|[-P [-e]] [-@]] [dir]
command [-pVv] command [arg ...]
--More--
history [-c] [-d offset] [n] or history -a>
if COMMANDS; then COMMANDS; [ elif COMMAND>
jobs [-lnprs] [jobspec ...] or jobs -x com>
kill [-s sigspec | -n signum | -sigspec] p>
let arg [arg ...]
local [option] name[=value] ...
logout [n]
mapfile [-n count] [-O origin] [-s count] >
popd [-n] [+N | -N]
printf [-v var] format [arguments]
pushd [-n] [+N | -N | dir]
pwd [-LP]
read [-ers] [-a array] [-d delim] [-i text>
readarray [-n count] [-O origin] [-s count>
readonly [-aAf] [name[=value] ...] or read>

```

To get help concerning a given internal command, help is invoked with the given command as an argument:

```

root@debian8:~# help type
type: type [-afptP] name [name ...]
  Display information about command type.
  For each NAME, indicate how it would be interpreted if used as a
  command name.
  Options:
    -a    display all locations containing an executable named NAME;
          includes aliases, builtins, and functions, if and only if
          the '-p' option is not also used
    -f    suppress shell function lookup
    -P    force a PATH search for each NAME, even if it is an alias,
          builtin, or function, and returns the name of the disk file
          that would be executed
    -p    returns either the name of the disk file that would be executed,
          or nothing if `type -t NAME' would not return `file'.

```

```
-t    output a single word which is one of `alias', `keyword',  
      `function', `builtin', `file' or `', if NAME is an alias, shell  
      reserved word, shell function, shell builtin, disk file, or not  
      found, respectively
```

Arguments:

NAME Command name to be interpreted.

Exit Status:

Returns success if all of the NAMEs are found; fails if any are not found.

## The man command

The **man** command is used to consult the manual of the command passed as an argument. For example **man passwd** produces the following output:

PASSWD(1)

User Commands

PASSWD(1)

NAME

passwd - change user password

SYNOPSIS

passwd [options] [LOGIN]

DESCRIPTION

The passwd command changes passwords for user accounts. A normal user may only change the password for his/her own account, while the superuser may change the password for any account. passwd also changes the account or associated password validity period.

Password Changes

The user is first prompted for his/her old password, if one is present. This password is then encrypted and compared against the stored password. The user

has only one chance to enter the correct password. The superuser is permitted to bypass this step so that forgotten passwords may be changed.

After the password has been entered, password aging information is checked to see if the user is permitted to change the password at this time. If not, passwd refuses to change the password and exits.

The user is then prompted twice for a replacement password. The second entry is compared against the first and both are required to match in order for the password to be changed.

Then, the password is tested for complexity. As a general guideline, passwords should consist of 6 to 8 characters including one or more characters from each of the following sets:

- lower case alphabets
- digits 0 thru 9
- punctuation marks

Care must be taken not to include the system default erase or kill characters. passwd will reject any password which is not suitably complex.

#### Hints for user passwords

The security of a password depends upon the strength of the encryption algorithm and the size of the key space. The legacy UNIX System encryption method is based on the NBS DES algorithm. More recent methods are now recommended (see ENCRYPT\_METHOD). The size of the key space depends upon the randomness of the password which is selected.

Compromises in password security normally result from careless password selection or handling. For this reason, you should not select a password which appears in a dictionary or which must be written down. The password should also not be a proper name, your license number, birth date, or street address.

Any of these may be used as guesses to violate system security.

You can find advices on how to choose a strong password on [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Password\\_strength](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Password_strength)

## OPTIONS

Manual page passwd(1) line 1 (press h for help or q to quit)

Each manual page can contain several sections:

Section	Contents
NAME	This section is required and has a standardized format consisting of a comma-separated list of program or function names, followed by a dash, followed by a short description of the functionality the program (or function, or file) is supposed to provide. By using the <b>makewhatis</b> command, the name sections are inputted into the <b>whatis</b> database files.
SYNOPSIS	This section gives a short overview on available program options. For functions this section lists corresponding include files and the prototype so the programmer knows the type and number of arguments as well as the return type.
DESCRIPTION	This section describes how to use the command or function and what each argument does.
OPTIONS	This section gives a description of how each option affects program behaviour.
FILES	This section lists files the program or function uses.
EXAMPLE	This section gives examples of how to use the command or function.
ENVIRONMENT	This section lists all environment variables that affect the program or function and explains how they do so.
CONFORMING TO	This section lists the eventual standards that the command or function conforms to.
BUGS / TO DO	This section describes the limitations and known inconveniences of the command or function.
EXIT STATUS / RETURN VALUE	This section lists the exit status codes and their meaning.
SEE ALSO	This section provides a list of related man pages in alphabetical order.

Navigation within a manual is accomplished using the following keys:

Key	Function
Space Bar	Move forward one screen
↵ Enter	Move down one line
↑	Move up one line
↓	Move down one line
Page ↑	Move up (backwards) one half screen
Page ↓	Move down (forward) one half screen

Key	Function
Home	Move to the beginning of the manual
End	Move to the end of the manual
/	Search for the string that follows the / key. The n key then searches for the next occurrence whilst the N searches for the previous occurrence
Q	Quit the manual

A complete Linux manual is comprised of up to 9 sections:

Section	Contents
1	Executable programs or shell commands
2	System calls (functions provided by the kernel)
3	Library calls (functions within program libraries)
4	Special files (usually found in /dev)
5	File formats and conventions eg /etc/passwd
6	Games
7	Miscellaneous (including macro packages and conventions), e.g. man(7), groff(7)
8	System administration commands (usually only for root)
9	Kernel routines [Non standard]

The available section for a specific command are given by the output of the **whereis** command:

```
root@debian8:~# whereis passwd
passwd: /usr/bin/passwd /etc/passwd /usr/share/man/man1/passwd.1ssl.gz /usr/share/man/man1/passwd.1.gz
/usr/share/man/man5/passwd.5.gz
```

To consult a specific section of a manual, the section number must be supplied as an argument to the man command:

```
$ man 5 passwd [Enter]
```

The **-k** option of the man command searches for the string supplied as an argument within the list of available manuals:

```
root@debian8:~# man -k passwd
```

```
chgpaswd (8)      - update group passwords in batch mode
chpaswd (8)       - update passwords in batch mode
exim4_paswd (5)   - Files in use by the Debian exim4 packages
exim4_paswd_client (5) - Files in use by the Debian exim4 packages
gpaswd (1)        - administer /etc/group and /etc/gshadow
grub-mkpaswd-pbkdf2 (1) - generate hashed password for GRUB
lppaswd (1)       - add, change, or delete digest passwords.
mkpaswd (1)       - Overfeatured front end to crypt(3)
pam_localuser (8) - require users to be listed in /etc/passwd
paswd (1)         - change user password
paswd (1ssl)      - compute password hashes
paswd (5)         - the password file
update-paswd (8)  - safely update /etc/passwd, /etc/shadow and /etc/groupword
```

The output is a list of the available manuals complete with their description. The number between parentheses indicates the manual section number.

## Command Line Switches

The switches associated with the **man** command are:

```
root@debian8:~# man --help
Usage: man [OPTION...] [SECTION] PAGE...

  -C, --config-file=FILE      use this user configuration file
  -d, --debug                  emit debugging messages
  -D, --default                reset all options to their default values
      --warnings[=WARNINGS]   enable warnings from groff

Main modes of operation:
  -f, --whatis                 equivalent to whatis
  -k, --apropos                equivalent to apropos
  -K, --global-apropos         search for text in all pages
  -l, --local-file             interpret PAGE argument(s) as local filename(s)
```



```
-w, --where, --path, --location      print physical location of man page(s)
-W, --where-cat, --location-cat      print physical location of cat file(s)

-c, --catman                        used by catman to reformat out of date cat pages
-R, --recode=ENCODING              output source page encoded in ENCODING

Finding manual pages:
-L, --locale=LOCALE                define the locale for this particular man search
-m, --systems=SYSTEM              use manual pages from other systems
-M, --manpath=PATH                 set search path for manual pages to PATH

-S, -s, --sections=LIST           use colon separated section list

-e, --extension=EXTENSION          limit search to extension type EXTENSION

-i, --ignore-case                  look for pages case-insensitively (default)
-I, --match-case                   look for pages case-sensitively

    --regex                        show all pages matching regex
    --wildcard                     show all pages matching wildcard

    --names-only                   make --regex and --wildcard match page names only,
                                   not descriptions

-a, --all                          find all matching manual pages
-u, --update                       force a cache consistency check

    --no-subpages                  don't try subpages, e.g. 'man foo bar' => 'man
                                   foo-bar'
```

#### Controlling formatted output:

```
-P, --pager=PAGER                  use program PAGER to display output
```

```
-r, --prompt=STRING      provide the `less' pager with a prompt

-7, --ascii              display ASCII translation of certain latin1 chars
-E, --encoding=ENCODING  use selected output encoding
    --no-hyphenation, --nh turn off hyphenation
    --no-justification,   --nj turn off justification
-p, --preprocessor=STRING STRING indicates which preprocessors to run:
                        e - [n]eqn, p - pic, t - tbl,
g - grap, r - refer, v - vgrind

-t, --troff              use groff to format pages
-T, --troff-device[=DEVICE] use groff with selected device

-H, --html[=BROWSER]     use www-browser or BROWSER to display HTML output
-X, --gxditview[=RESOLUTION] use groff and display through gxditview
                        (X11):
                        -X = -TX75, -X100 = -TX100, -X100-12 = -TX100-12
-Z, --ditroff            use groff and force it to produce ditroff

-?, --help               give this help list
    --usage              give a short usage message
-V, --version            print program version
```

Mandatory or optional arguments to long options are also mandatory or optional for any corresponding short options.

Report bugs to [cjwatson@debian.org](mailto:cjwatson@debian.org).

## The apropos command

**apropos** searches the **whatis** database for instances of a keyword passed to the command as an argument. With no further options, the output is identical to **man -k**:

```
root@debian8:~# apropos passwd
chpasswd (8)          - update group passwords in batch mode
chpasswd (8)          - update passwords in batch mode
exim4_passwd (5)      - Files in use by the Debian exim4 packages
exim4_passwd_client (5) - Files in use by the Debian exim4 packages
gpasswd (1)           - administer /etc/group and /etc/gshadow
grub-mkpasswd-pbkdf2 (1) - generate hashed password for GRUB
lppasswd (1)          - add, change, or delete digest passwords.
mkpasswd (1)          - Overfeatured front end to crypt(3)
pam_localuser (8)     - require users to be listed in /etc/passwd
passwd (1)            - change user password
passwd (1ssl)         - compute password hashes
passwd (5)            - the password file
update-passwd (8)     - safely update /etc/passwd, /etc/shadow and /etc/group
```

## Command Line Switches

The switches associated with the **apropos** command are:

```
root@debian8:~# apropos --help
Usage: apropos [OPTION...] KEYWORD...

  -d, --debug                emit debugging messages
  -v, --verbose              print verbose warning messages
  -e, --exact                search each keyword for exact match
  -r, --regex                interpret each keyword as a regex
  -w, --wildcard             the keyword(s) contain wildcards
  -a, --and                  require all keywords to match
  -l, --long                 do not trim output to terminal width
  -C, --config-file=FILE    use this user configuration file
  -L, --locale=LOCALE       define the locale for this search
  -m, --systems=SYSTEM      use manual pages from other systems
```

```
-M, --manpath=PATH      set search path for manual pages to PATH
-s, --sections=LIST, --section=LIST
                        search only these sections (colon-separated)
-?, --help              give this help list
  --usage               give a short usage message
-V, --version           print program version
```

Mandatory or optional arguments to long options are also mandatory or optional for any corresponding short options.

The `--regex` option is enabled by default.

Report bugs to [cjwatson@debian.org](mailto:cjwatson@debian.org).

## The mandb and whatis commands

The **whatis** database is maintained by root by using the `/bin/mandb` or `/usr/bin/mandb` command.

Once again, the use of **mandb** is very simple:

```
root@debian8:~# mandb
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man...
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man...
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man/ug...
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man/ug...
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man/tr...
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man/tr...
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man/el...
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man/el...
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man/ja...
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man/ja...
...
```

```
0 man subdirectories contained newer manual pages.
0 manual pages were added.
0 stray cats were added.
0 old database entries were purged.
```

Now the **whatis** command can be used to check which manual sections are available for a specific command:

```
root@debian8:~# whatis passwd
passwd (1)          - change user password
passwd (5)          - the password file
passwd (1ssl)       - compute password hashes
```

## Command Line Switches

The switches associated with the **mandb** command are:

```
root@debian8:~# mandb --help
Usage: mandb [OPTION...] [MANPATH]

  -c, --create          create dbs from scratch, rather than updating
  -C, --config-file=FILE use this user configuration file
  -d, --debug          emit debugging messages
  -f, --filename=FILENAME update just the entry for this filename
  -p, --no-purge       don't purge obsolete entries from the dbs
  -q, --quiet          work quietly, except for 'bogus' warning
  -s, --no-straycats   don't look for or add stray cats to the dbs
  -t, --test          check manual pages for correctness
  -u, --user-db        produce user databases only
  -?, --help          give this help list
  --usage             give a short usage message
  -V, --version        print program version
```

Mandatory or optional arguments to long options are also mandatory or optional

for any corresponding short options.

Report bugs to [cjwatson@debian.org](mailto:cjwatson@debian.org).

The switches associated with the **whatis** command are:

```
root@debian8:~# whatis --help
Usage: whatis [OPTION...] KEYWORD...
```

-d, --debug	emit debugging messages
-v, --verbose	print verbose warning messages
-r, --regex	interpret each keyword as a regex
-w, --wildcard	the keyword(s) contain wildcards
-l, --long	do not trim output to terminal width
-C, --config-file=FILE	use this user configuration file
-L, --locale=LOCALE	define the locale for this search
-m, --systems=SYSTEM	use manual pages from other systems
-M, --manpath=PATH	set search path for manual pages to PATH
-s, --sections=LIST, --section=LIST	search only these sections (colon-separated)
-?, --help	give this help list
--usage	give a short usage message
-V, --version	print program version

Mandatory or optional arguments to long options are also mandatory or optional for any corresponding short options.

Report bugs to [cjwatson@debian.org](mailto:cjwatson@debian.org).

## The info command

In addition to the man system, information regarding programs and commands can also be found using the **info system**. Background information,

tutorials, and detailed information on using the program in question are sometimes lacking in man pages and as a result the info system was created to resolve that issue.

Within the info system, multiple individual pages of information make up the entire set of info pages for each specific application. These pages of information are referred to as nodes. You can page through nodes one at a time, or you can jump to specific pages through the use of hypertext links.

To help node navigation, info pages all display a header across the top of the page. This header includes information such as the current node, next and previous nodes, and information regarding the parent node. Navigation is accomplished using the following keys :

Key	Function
n	Next node.
p	Previous node.
u	Parent node.
Space	Scroll down one page at a time.
Del	Scroll up one page at a time.
b	Return to the beginning of the current node.
Tab ↹	Select next hypertext link.
m <link text>	Performs a direct jump to the specified subnode. Pressing Tab displays all available subnodes.
↵ Enter	Follow current hypertext link. Hypertext links are designated by an asterisk * at the beginning of the link, and a colon : at the end of the link.
q	Quit the info system.

To access the top node of the info system, use the following command :

```
root@debian8:~# info
...
File: dir,      Node: Top      This is the top of the INFO tree

This (the Directory node) gives a menu of major topics.
Typing "q" exits, "?" lists all Info commands, "d" returns here,
"h" gives a primer for first-timers,
"mEmacs<Return>" visits the Emacs manual, etc.
```

In Emacs, you can click mouse button 2 on a menu item or cross reference to select it.

\* Menu:

#### Basics

- \* Common options: (coreutils)Common options.
- \* Coreutils: (coreutils). Core GNU (file, text, shell) utilities.
- \* Date input formats: (coreutils)Date input formats.
- \* File permissions: (coreutils)File permissions.  
Access modes.
- \* Finding files: (find). Operating on files matching certain criteria.

#### Compression

- \* Gzip: (gzip). General (de)compression of files (lzw).
- Info: (dir)Top, 197 lines --Top-----  
Welcome to Info version 5.2. Type h for help, m for menu item.

## Command Line Switches

The switches associated with the **info** command are:

```
root@debian8:~# info --help
Usage: info [OPTION]... [MENU-ITEM...]
```

Read documentation in Info format.

#### Options:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| -a, --all            | use all matching manuals.                     |
| -k, --apropos=STRING | look up STRING in all indices of all manuals. |
| -d, --directory=DIR  | add DIR to INFOPATH.                          |
| --dribble=FILE       | remember user keystrokes in FILENAME.         |
| -f, --file=MANUAL    | specify Info manual to visit.                 |



-h, --help	display this help and exit.
--index-search=STRING	go to node pointed by index entry STRING.
-n, --node=NODENAME	specify nodes in first visited Info file.
-o, --output=FILE	output selected nodes to FILE.
-R, --raw-escapes	output "raw" ANSI escapes (default).
--no-raw-escapes	output escapes as literal text.
--restore=FILE	read initial keystrokes from FILE.
-O, --show-options, --usage	go to command-line options node.
--strict-node-location	(for debugging) use Info file pointers as-is.
--subnodes	recursively output menu items.
-v, --variable VAR=VALUE	assign VALUE to Info variable VAR.
--vi-keys	use vi-like and less-like key bindings.
--version	display version information and exit.
-w, --where, --location	print physical location of Info file.
-x, --debug=NUMBER	set debugging level (-1 for all).

The first non-option argument, if present, is the menu entry to start from; it is searched for in all `dir' files along INFOPATH.

If it is not present, info merges all `dir' files and shows the result.

Any remaining arguments are treated as the names of menu items relative to the initial node visited.

For a summary of key bindings, type h within Info.

#### Examples:

info	show top-level dir menu
info info	show the general manual for Info readers
info info-stdn	show the manual specific to this Info program
info emacs	start at emacs node from top-level dir
info emacs buffers	start at buffers node within emacs manual
info --show-options emacs	start at node with emacs' command line options
info --subnodes -o out.txt emacs	dump entire manual to out.txt
info -f ./foo.info	show file ./foo.info, not searching dir

Email bug reports to [bug-texinfo@gnu.org](mailto:bug-texinfo@gnu.org),  
general questions and discussion to [help-texinfo@gnu.org](mailto:help-texinfo@gnu.org).  
Texinfo home page: <http://www.gnu.org/software/texinfo/>

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