

Last updated on: 2020/01/30 03:28

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@centos7 ~]# 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@centos7 ~]# 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 0 byte rather than 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@centos7 ~]# type --help
-bash: 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@centos7 ~]# 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@centos7 ~]# help | more
GNU bash, version 4.2.46(1)-release (x86_64-redhat-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 [-lpvsPVS] [-m keymap] [-f filename] [-q>
break [n]
builtin [shell-builtin [arg ...]]
caller [expr]
case WORD in [PATTERN [| PATTERN]...) COMMAND>
cd [-L|[-P [-e]]] [dir]
command [-pVv] command [arg ...]
--More--
history [-c] [-d offset] [n] or history -anr>
if COMMANDS; then COMMANDS; [ elif COMMANDS;>
jobs [-lnprs] [jobspec ...] or jobs -x comma>
kill [-s sigspec | -n signum | -sigspec] pid>
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 readon>

```

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

```

[root@centos7 ~]# 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.

typeset: typeset [-aAfFgilrtux] [-p] name[=value] ...

Set variable values and attributes.

Obsolete. See `help declare'.

The man command

The **man** command is used to consult the manual of the command passed as an argument, for example **man help**:

BASH_BUILTINS(1)

General Commands Manual

BASH_BUILTINS(1)

NAME

bash, :, ., [, alias, bg, bind, break, builtin, caller, cd, command, compgen, complete, compopt, continue, declare, dirs, disown, echo, enable, eval, exec, exit, export, false, fc, fg, getopts, hash, help, history, jobs, kill, let, local, logout, mapfile, popd, printf, pushd, pwd, read, readonly, return, set, shift, shopt, source, suspend, test, times, trap, true, type, typeset, ulimit, umask, unalias, unset, wait - bash built-in commands, see bash(1)

BASH BUILTIN COMMANDS

Unless otherwise noted, each builtin command documented in this section as accepting options preceded by - accepts -- to signify the end of the options. The :, true, false, and test builtins do not accept options and do not treat -- specially. The exit, logout, break, continue, let, and shift builtins accept and process arguments beginning with - without requiring --. Other builtins that accept arguments but are

```
not specified as accepting options interpret arguments beginning with - as invalid
options and require -- to prevent this interpretation.
```

```
: [arguments]
```

```
    No effect; the command does nothing beyond expanding arguments and performing
    any specified redirections. A zero exit code is returned.
```

```
. filename [arguments]
```

```
Manual page help(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 makewhatis command, the name sections are inputted into the whatis 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

Key	Function
↑	Move up one line
↓	Move down one line
Page ↑	Move up (backwards) one half screen
Page ↓	Move down (forward) one half screen
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@centos7 ~]# whereis passwd
passwd: /usr/bin/passwd /etc/passwd /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@centos7 ~]# man -k passwd
chpasswd (8)          - update passwords in batch mode
fgetpwent_r (3)       - get passwd file entry reentrantly
getpwent_r (3)       - get passwd file entry reentrantly
gpasswd (1)          - administer /etc/group and /etc/gshadow
grub2-mkpasswd-pbkdf2 (1) - Generate a PBKDF2 password hash.
kpasswd (1)          - change a user's Kerberos password
lpasswd (1)          - Change group or user password
lppasswd (1)         - add, change, or delete digest passwords.
pam_localuser (8)    - require users to be listed in /etc/passwd
passwd (1)           - update user's authentication tokens
sslpaswd (1ssl)      - compute password hashes
passwd (5)           - password file
passwd2des (3)       - RFS password encryption
pwhistory_helper (8) - Helper binary that transfers password hashes from passwd or shadow to ...
smbpasswd (5)        - The Samba encrypted password file
smbpasswd (8)        - change a user's SMB password
userpasswd (1)       - A graphical tool to allow users to change their passwords.
vncpasswd (1)        - change the VNC password
```

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@centos7 ~]# 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 elinks 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.

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@centos7 ~]# apropos passwd
chpasswd (8)          - update passwords in batch mode
fgetpwent_r (3)       - get passwd file entry reentrantly
getpwent_r (3)        - get passwd file entry reentrantly
gpasswd (1)           - administer /etc/group and /etc/gshadow
grub2-mkpasswd-pbkdf2 (1) - Generate a PBKDF2 password hash.
kpasswd (1)           - change a user's Kerberos password
lpasswd (1)           - Change group or user password
lppasswd (1)          - add, change, or delete digest passwords.
pam_localuser (8)     - require users to be listed in /etc/passwd
passwd (1)            - update user's authentication tokens
sslpaswd (1ssl)       - compute password hashes
passwd (5)            - password file
passwd2des (3)        - RFS password encryption
pwhistory_helper (8)  - Helper binary that transfers password hashes from passwd or shadow to ...
smbpasswd (5)         - The Samba encrypted password file
smbpasswd (8)         - change a user's SMB password
userpasswd (1)        - A graphical tool to allow users to change their passwords.
vncpasswd (1)         - change the VNC password
```

Command Line Switches

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

```
[root@centos7 ~]# 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.

The makewhatis and whatis Commands under RHEL/CentOS 6

Each manual page has a short description available within it. These descriptions as well as the name of the manual are stored in the **whatis** database. The **whatis** database is created by **/usr/sbin/makewhatis**.

The use of **makewhatis** is extremely simple:

```
[root@centos6 ~]# makewhatis
```

The **whatis** command can now be used to identify the man sections available for the **passwd** command:

```
[root@centos6 ~]# whatis passwd
passwd          (1)  - update user's authentication tokens
passwd          (5)  - password file
passwd [sslpwds] (1ssl) - compute password hashes
```

Command Line Switches

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

```
[root@centos6 ~]# makewhatis --help
Usage: makewhatis [-s sections] [-u] [-v] [-w] [manpath] [-c [catpath]] [-o whatisdb]
This will build the whatis database for the man pages
found in manpath and the cat pages found in catpath.
-s: sections (default: 1 lp 8 2 3 3p 4 5 6 7 9 0p n l p o 1x 2x 3x 4x 5x 6x 7x 8x)
-u: update database with pages added today
-U: update database with pages added since last makewhatis run
-v: verbose
-o: location of whatis database (default: /var/cache/man/whatis)
-w: use manpath obtained from `man --path`
[manpath]: man directories (default: /usr/share/man)
[catpath]: cat directories (default: the first existing
        directory in /usr/share/man)
```

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

```
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, --section=SECTION	search only this section
?, --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.

The mandb and whatis commands with RHEL/CentOS 7

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

The use of **mandb** is very simple:

```
[root@centos7 ~]# mandb
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man...
mandb: warning: /usr/share/man/man8/fsck.fat.8.manpage-fix.gz: ignoring bogus filename
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man...
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man/ca...
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man/ca...
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man/cs...
```

```
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man/cs...
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man/da...
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man/da...
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man/de...
Processing manual pages under /usr/share/man/de...
Purging old database entries in /usr/share/man/en...
...
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@centos7 ~]# whatis passwd
sslpaswd (1ssl)      - compute password hashes
passwd (1)           - update user's authentication tokens
passwd (5)           - password file
```

Command Line Switches

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

```
[root@centos7 ~]# 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.

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

```
[root@centos7 ~]# 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.

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@centos7 ~]# 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 topic, etc.

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

* Menu:

Archiving

- * Cpio: (cpio). Copy-in-copy-out archiver to tape or disk.
- * Tar: (tar). Making tape (or disk) archives.

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.

-----Info: (dir)Top, 2027 lines --Top-----
Welcome to Info version 5.1. Type h for help, m for menu item.

Note that the version of the info command differs from one distribution to another:

```
[root@centos7 ~]# info -0 --version
info (GNU texinfo) 5.1
```

Copyright (C) 2013 Free Software Foundation, Inc.
License GPLv3+: GNU GPL version 3 or later <<http://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>>
This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.
There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.

Command Line Switches

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

```
[root@centos7 ~]# info --help
Usage: info [OPTION]... [MENU-ITEM...]
```

Read documentation in Info format.

Options:

-k, --apropos=STRING	look up STRING in all indices of all manuals.
-d, --directory=DIR	add DIR to INFOPATH.
--dribble=FILENAME	remember user keystrokes in FILENAME.
-f, --file=FILENAME	specify Info file 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=FILENAME	output selected nodes to FILENAME.
-R, --raw-escapes	output "raw" ANSI escapes (default).
--no-raw-escapes	output escapes as literal text.
--restore=FILENAME	read initial keystrokes from FILENAME.
-0, --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.
--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.

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,
general questions and discussion to help-texinfo@gnu.org.
Texinfo home page: <http://www.gnu.org/software/texinfo/>

<html>

Copyright © 2004-2019 Hugh Norris.

</html>