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About the Author

Dave Taylor is president of Intuitive Systems, LLC, a consulting firm focused on online communications and marketing strategies. Founder of four Internet startups, he has been involved with Unix and the Internet since 1980, having created the popular Elm Mail System and Embot mail autoresponder. A prolific author, he has been published more than 1,000 times, and his most recent books include the best-selling Wicked Cool Shell Scripts and Learning Unix for Mac OS X.

A popular columnist for Linux Journal, he also writes a tech Q&A column for the Boulder Colorado Daily Camera newspaper. Previously, he was a research scientist at HP Palo Alto Laboratories. He has contributed software to the 4.4 release of Berkeley Unix (BSD), and his programs are found in all versions of Linux and other popular Unix variants.

Dave has a bachelor’s degree in computer science (University of California at San Diego), a master’s degree in educational computing (Purdue University), and an MBA (University of Baltimore), and he is a top-rated public speaker who frequently offers workshops on online marketing, blogging, and various technical topics. His official home page on the Web is http://www.DaveTaylorOnline.com, and his email address is d1taylor@gmail.com.

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Dedication

To the lights of my life: Ashley, Gareth, and Kiana.

Acknowledgments

However you slice it, you can’t write a book locked in a cave (even if there’s a high-speed Internet connection and fancy computer therein), and this book has evolved over many, many years, starting its life as an Interactive Unix tutorial I was writing for Sun Microsystems. In the interim, a number of people have added their spices to the stew, most notably my co-author for the first and second editions of Teach Yourself Unix in 24 Hours, James C. Armstrong, Jr.

In this new fifth edition, I’ve been delighted by the cooperative and talented team at Sams Publishing, again, and would like to specifically thank Mark Taber and Tonya Simpson, and my tech editors Brian Tiemann and Siddhartha Singh for all their ideas and commentary on how to make this book really superb. Any technical errors remaining are my own responsibility.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank my kids for letting me focus on updating this book, chapter by chapter, even when there were games and other activities that could have proven more fun. I wouldn’t trade them in, even for a 1THz PC! :-}
We Want to Hear from You!

As the reader of this book, you are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we’re doing right, what we could do better, what areas you’d like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you’re willing to pass our way.

We welcome your comments. You can email or write to let us know what you did or didn’t like about this book—as well as what we can do to make our books better.

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Visit our website and register this book at informit.com/register for convenient access to any updates, downloads, or errata that might be available for this book.
This page intentionally left blank
Welcome to the fifth edition of *Sams Teach Yourself Unix in 24 Hours*! This book has been designed to be helpful as a guide as well as a tutorial for both beginning users and those with previous Unix or Linux experience. The reader of this book is assumed to be intelligent, but no familiarity with Unix is expected or required.

**Does Each Chapter Take an Hour?**

You can learn the concepts in each of the 24 lessons in one hour. If you want to experiment with what you learn in each lesson, you might take longer than an hour. However, all the concepts presented here are straightforward. If you are familiar with Windows applications or the Macintosh, you will be able to progress more quickly through the lessons.

**What if I Take Longer Than 24 Hours?**

Since the publication of the first edition of this book, I’ve received a considerable amount of praise and positive feedback, but the one message that has always been a surprise is “I finished your book, but it took me a lot longer than 24 hours.” Now you can read here, directly from the author: That’s okay! Take your time and make sure you try everything as you go along. Learning and remembering are more important than speed. And if you do finish it all in 24 hours, let me know!

**How to Use This Book**

This book is designed to teach you topics in one-hour lessons. All the books in the *Sams Teach Yourself* series enable you to start working and become productive with a topic as quickly as possible. This book will do that for you!

Each hour, or lesson, starts with an overview of the topic to inform you of what to expect in that lesson. The overview helps you determine the nature of the lesson and whether the lesson is relevant to your needs.
**Main Section**

Each lesson has a main section that discusses the lesson topic in a clear, concise manner by breaking the topic down into logical components and explaining each component clearly.

Interspersed throughout each lesson are special elements, called tips, notes, and cautions, which provide additional information.

**NOTE**

Notes are designed to clarify the concept that is being discussed or elaborate on the subject. If you are comfortable with your understanding of the subject, you can bypass them without danger.

**TIP**

Tips inform you of tricks or elements that are easily missed by most computer users. You can skip them, but often tips show you an easier way to do a task.

**CAUTION**

A caution deserves at least as much attention as a tip because cautions point out problematic elements of the topic being discussed. Ignoring the information contained in a caution could have adverse effects on the task at hand. These are the most important special elements in this book.

**Tasks**

This book offers another special element called tasks. These step-by-step exercises are designed to walk you quickly through the most important skills you can learn in Unix.

**Workshops**

The Workshop section at the end of each lesson provides lists of key terms and exercises that reinforce concepts you learned in the lesson and help you apply them in new situations. You can skip the Workshop section, but we recommend that you go through the exercises to see how the concepts can be applied to other common tasks. The key terms also are compiled in one alphabetized list in the Glossary at the end of the book.
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In this hour, you will learn

- How to log in to and log out of the system
- How to change your password with the `passwd` command
- About choosing a memorable and secure password
- How to find out who the computer thinks you are
- How to find out who else is on the system
- How to find out what everyone is doing on the system
- About checking the current date and time

In this second Unix lesson, it's time for you to log in to the system and try some commands. This hour focuses on learning the basics of interacting with your Unix machine.

This hour introduces many commands, so it's very important that you have a Unix system available on which you can work through all the examples. Most examples have been taken from a PC running Solaris 11, a variant of Unix System V Release 4, and have been double-checked on both a BSD-based system and a Mac OS X command line. Any variance between the three is noted. If you have a Unix system available, odds are good that it's based on either AT&T System V or Berkeley Unix.

**Beginning Your Session**

Before you can start interacting with the Unix command shell of your choice, you need to learn how to log in to your account. The good news is that it's easy! Let's have a look.

**Task 2.1: Logging In to and Out of the System**

Because Unix is a multiuser system, user authentication is always enforced: You always need to provide credentials (generally a username and a password) to the system so that it knows who you are. Some modern user-friendly flavors of Unix (such as Mac OS X) allow you to bypass this
requirement by always booting into a single user’s desktop session, but this is just a convenience feature; under the hood, all Unix flavors are the same, and all require that you authenticate yourself at some stage of the process.

Old-school hardware terminals do still exist, or you might choose to boot a Linux or FreeBSD box directly to the textual console; but if you’re new to Unix, you’ll most likely need an application known as a terminal to access the command line. Most graphical operating systems include one. I use the Terminal app included with Mac OS X (in the Utilities folder) whether I’m accessing my local system or just opening an environment in which to connect to a remote system via ssh.

TIP
Most Linux flavors have a prominently available terminal program for your use; on a Windows PC, your best bet is the freeware program PuTTY, available at http://www.putty.org.

If you need to actually log in, the first thing you’ll see on the screen will look something like this:

GNU/Linux ado.aplonis.net 5:38pm on Tue, 8 Jul 2014
login:

The first line of this challenge prompt indicates what variant of Unix the system is running (GNU/Linux in this case), the hostname of the computer system, and the current time and date. The second line asks for your login, also known as your username or account name.

NOTE
If you connect to a Unix server via the network, using either telnet or ssh, you’ll see the same login prompt, though I strongly recommend that you always use ssh for security reasons. If you use a terminal program within a graphical environment, you won’t need to log in because you’ve already logged in to your GUI session.

1. Know your account name. It would be nice if computers could keep track of users by simply using full names so that I could enter Dave Taylor at the login prompt. Alas, like the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and many other agencies, Unix does not use names but instead assigns each user a unique identifier. This identifier, called an account name, has eight characters or fewer and is usually based on the user’s first or last name, although it can be any combination of letters and numbers. I have two account names, or logins, on the systems I use: taylor and, on another machine where someone already had that account name, dltaylor.

2. Know your password. Perhaps your account name is on a piece of paper with your initial password, both assigned by the Unix system administrator. If you do not have this information, you need to track it down before you can go further. Some accounts might not have an initial password; in that case, you won’t have to enter one the first time you log in
to the system. If that’s the case, create a password for your own security. In a few minutes, you will learn how you can give yourself the password of your choice by using the Unix command passwd.

Note that a lot of systems are accessible only through the ssh function, and so a common way to connect to a modern system is to open up a local terminal app on your Mac or PC and type in something like:

```bash
$ ssh taylor@intuitive.com
```

where taylor is the account name and intuitive.com is the name of the remote host. If that’s how you need to access your Unix system remotely, it’s actually easier than using the login/password sequence; you just need to make extra sure that you type in everything exactly as prompted.

3. At the login prompt, enter your account name if needed:

```plaintext
login: taylor
Password:
```

**Be particularly careful to use exactly what your administrator tells you to use** (for example, the accounts taylor, Taylor, and TAYLOR are all different to Unix). After you’ve entered your account name, the system moves the cursor to the next line and prompts you for your password. If you’re using the ssh sequence, then the prompt will include your account name, as shown here:

```plaintext
taylor@intuitive.com's password:
```

Either way, when you enter your password, the system won’t echo it (that is, won’t display it) on the screen. That’s okay. Lack of an echo doesn’t mean anything is broken; instead, this is a security measure to ensure that even if people are looking over your shoulder, they can’t learn your secret password by watching your screen. Be certain to type your password correctly because you won’t see what you’ve typed and have a chance to correct it.

**NOTE**

If you enter either your login or your password incorrectly, the system complains with an error message:

```plaintext
login: taylor
Password:
Login incorrect
login:
```

Most systems give you three or four attempts to get both your login and password correct, so try again. Don’t forget to enter your account name at the login prompt each time, as required. Be careful, though: Too many failed login attempts, and you might lock out your account and have to contact the administrator for help.
4. After you’ve successfully entered your account name and password, you are shown some information about the system, some news for users, perhaps a fortune, and an indication of whether you have electronic mail. The specifics will vary, but here’s an example of what I see when I log in to my account:

```
login: taylor
Password: 
Last login: Thu Jul 7 17:00:23 on ttyAe
You have mail. 
$
```

NOTE
The dollar sign prompt is Unix’s way of telling you that it’s ready for you to enter some commands. It is the equivalent of a soldier saluting and saying, “Ready for duty!” or an employee saying, “What shall I do now, boss?”

Your system might be configured so that you have a slightly different prompt here. The possibilities include a % for the C shell, your current location in the file system, the current time, the command-index number (which you’ll learn about when you learn how to teach the Unix command-line interpreter to adapt to your work style rather than vice versa), and the name of the computer system itself. Here are some examples:

```
[/users/taylor] :
(mentor) 33 :
taylor@mentor %
```

Your prompt might not look exactly like any of these, but you know you’re looking at a prompt because it’s at the beginning of the line on which your cursor sits, and it reappears each time you’ve completed working with any Unix program. That’s how you know the program has completed its task.

5. At this point, you’re ready to enter your first Unix command, `exit`, to sign off from the computer system. Try it. On my system, entering `exit` shuts down all my programs and quits the terminal app. On other systems, it returns you to the login prompt. Many Unix systems offer a pithy quote as you leave, too.

```
% exit
He who hesitates is lost.
login:
```

NOTE
You might be able to end your session by pressing Ctrl-D. Some shells will catch this and prompt you to determine whether you want to end your session; others will exit. Ctrl-D is actually an end-of-file character; it may be different on your system.
6. If you have a direct connection to the computer because you’re using a shared system in a computer center, library, or similar, odds are very good that logging out causes the system to prompt for another account name, enabling the next person to use the system. If you manually connected to the system via the Internet, you probably will see something more like the following example. After being disconnected from the remote system, you’ll then be able to safely shut down your local computer:

```
% exit
Did you lose your keys again?
```

Connection to 154.23.11.140 closed.

**NOTE**

Unix is case sensitive, so the `exit` command is not the same as EXIT. If you enter a command all in uppercase, the system won’t find any such program or command and instead will respond with the complaint `command not found`. Get in the habit of using all lowercase for commands and Unix input. Lowercase is the natural Unix style.

At this point, you’ve stepped through the toughest parts of getting started with Unix. You have an account, know the password, have logged in to the system, and have entered a simple command telling the computer what you want to do, and the computer has done it!

**Task 2.2: Changing Passwords with `passwd`**

Having logged in to a Unix system, you can clearly see that many differences exist between Unix and a PC or Macintosh personal computer. Certainly the style of interaction is different. With Unix command lines, the keyboard becomes the exclusive method of instructing the computer what to do, and the mouse sits idle. One of the greatest differences is that Unix is a multiuser system, as you learned in the preceding hour. As you learn more about Unix, you’ll find that this characteristic has an impact on various tasks and commands. The next Unix command you’ll learn about is one that exists because of the multiuser nature of Unix: `passwd`.

With the `passwd` command, you can change the password associated with your individual account name. As with your personal identification number (PIN) for automated-teller machines, the value of your password is directly related to how secret it remains.

**NOTE**

Unix is careful about the whole process of changing passwords. It requires you to enter your current password to prove you’re really you. Imagine that you are at a computer center and have to leave the room to make a quick phone call. Without much effort, a prankster could lean over and quickly change your environment or even delete some critical files! That’s why you should log out if you’re not going to be near your system, and that’s also why passwords are never echoed in Unix.
1. Consider what happens when I use the `passwd` command to change the password associated with my account:

```
% passwd
Changing password for taylor.
Old password:
New passwd:
Retype new passwd:
```

2. Notice that I never received any visual confirmation that the password I actually entered was the same as the password I thought I entered. This is not as dangerous as it seems, though, because if I had made any typographical errors, the password I entered the second time (when the system said `Retype new passwd:`) wouldn’t have matched the first. In a no-match situation, the system would have warned me that the information I supplied was inconsistent:

```
% passwd
Changing password for taylor.
Old password:
New passwd:
Retype new passwd:
Mismatch - password unchanged.
```

3. Smart systems will complain if you pick a really bad password or one that’s just obviously too short. I tried `cat` on my Oracle Solaris system, and the `passwd` command complained:

```
passwd: Password too short - must be at least 6 characters.
```

Oops. In the next section you’ll learn about how to pick good, hard-to-guess but easy-to-remember passwords.

After you change the password, don’t forget it. Resetting it to a known value if you don’t know the current password requires the assistance of a system administrator or other operator. Using a trick to remember your password can be a Catch-22, though: You don’t want to write down the password because that reduces its secrecy and you don’t want to make it too easy to remember because someone else can then guess it, but you don’t want to forget it, because that can be all sorts of hassle. You want to be sure that you pick a good password, too, as described in Task 2.3.

**Task 2.3: Picking a Secure Password**

If you’re an aficionado of old movies, you are familiar with the thrillers in which the hoods break into an office and spin the dial on the safe a few times, snicker a bit about how the boss shouldn’t have chosen his daughter’s birthday as the combination, and crank open the safe. (If you’re really familiar with the genre, you recall films in which the criminals rifle the desk drawers and find the combination of the safe taped to the underside of a drawer as a fail-safe,
or a failed safe, as the case may be. Hitchcock’s great film *Marnie* has just such a scene.) The moral is that even the best secret password is useful only if you keep it secret.

For computers, security is tougher because a fast computer system can test all the words in an English dictionary against your account password faster than you can say “don’t hack me, bro.” If your password is *kitten* or, worse yet, your account name, any semicompetent bad guy could be in your account and messing with your files in no time. This is called a *dictionary attack*.

Most modern Unix systems have some *heuristics*, or smarts, built in to the `passwd` command; the heuristics check to determine whether what you’ve entered is reasonably secure.

The tests performed typically answer these questions:

- Is the proposed password at least six characters long? (A longer password is more secure.)
- Does it have both digits and letters? (A mix of both is best.)
- Does it mix upper- and lowercase letters? (A mix is best.)
- Does it include at least one punctuation character? (adding a %, !, @, or even . is best)
- Is it in the online dictionary? (You should avoid common words.)
- Is it a name or word associated with the account? (Dave would be a bad password for my account taylor because my full name on the system is Dave Taylor).

Some versions of the `passwd` program are more sophisticated, and some less, but generally the following are good guidelines for picking a secure password:

1. An easy way to choose memorable and secure passwords is to think of them as small sentences rather than as a single word with some characters surrounding it. If you’re a fan of Alexander Dumas and *The Three Musketeers*, then “All for one and one for all!” is a familiar cry, but it’s also the basis for a couple of great passwords. Easily remembered derivations might be the punnish `awl4ONE?` or `a41&14A!`.

2. If you’ve been in the service, you might have the old U.S. Army jingle stuck in your head: “Be All You Can Be.” Try thinking of that phrase as a series of abbreviations and letters: `ballucanb`. Turn that into a good password with a few additional tweaks: `4ballu@canb`. You might have a self-referential password: `account4me` or `MySekrit` would work. If you’re ex-Vice President Dan Quayle, `1Potatoe` could be a memorable choice. (`potatoe` by itself wouldn’t be particularly secure because it lacks digits and lacks uppercase letters and because it’s a simple variation on a word in the online dictionary.)

3. Another way to choose passwords is to find acronyms that have special meaning to you. Don’t choose simple ones. Remember, short ones aren’t going to be secure. But if you have always heard that “Real programmers don’t eat quiche!” then `Rpdeq!` could be a complex password that you’ll easily remember.
4. Many systems you use every day require numeric passwords to verify your identity, including the automated-teller machine (with its PIN), government agencies (with the Social Security number), and the Department of Motor Vehicles (your driver’s license number or vehicle license). Each of these actually is a poor Unix password because it’s too easy for someone to find out your license number or Social Security number. And a series of nothing but numbers is a terrible password anyway!

NOTE
The important thing is to come up with a strategy of your own for choosing a password that is both memorable and secure. Then keep the password in your head rather than write it down.

Why be so paranoid? For a small Unix system that will sit on your desk and won’t have any other users, a high level of concern for security is, to be honest, unnecessary. As with driving a car, though, it’s never too early to learn good habits. Any system that has Internet access means that it’s probably accessible from the Internet, too, and that means it’s at risk of hackers trying to break in, a target for delinquents who relish the intellectual challenge of breaking into an account and then altering and destroying files and programs purely for amusement.

The best way to avoid trouble is to develop good security habits now, when you’re first learning about Unix. Learn how to recognize what makes a good, secure password, pick one for your account, and keep it a secret. Don’t write it down, or, if you must, keep that note secure too and notify your admin if it gets lost. A little prevention can be a lot easier than mopping up after a security breech.

With that in mind, log in again to your Unix system and try changing your password. First, change it to easy and see whether the program warns you that easy is too short or otherwise a poor choice. Then try entering two different secret passwords to see whether the program notices the difference. Finally, pick a good password, using the preceding guidelines and suggestions, and change your account password to be more secure.

Seeing What’s Going On Around You

You’re logged in, looking at the command prompt, and ready to delve into this Unix thing. Great! Let’s have a look.

Task 2.4: Who Are You?

While you’re logged in to the system, you can learn a few more Unix commands, including a couple that can answer a philosophical conundrum that has bothered men and women of thought for thousands of years: Who am I?
1. The easiest way to find out “who you are” is to enter the `whoami` command:

   ```bash
   % whoami
   taylor
   %
   ```

   Try it on your system. The command lists the account name associated with the current login.

2. Ninety-nine percent of the commands you type with Unix have a single specific spelling and will fail if you get creative. With `whoami`, however, adding spaces to transform the statement into proper English—that is, entering `who am I`—dramatically changes the result. On my system, I get the following results:

   ```bash
   % who am i
   taylor pts/2 Oct 27 10:11 (:0.0)
   %
   ```

   On a Mac system, it doesn’t show (:0.0) otherwise things work well.

   This tells me quite a bit about my identity on the computer, including my account name and where and when I logged in. Try the command on your system to see what results you get.

   In this example, my account name is `taylor`. The `pts/2` is the current communication line I’m using to access the system, and you can see that I logged in at 10:11 using a regular communications socket. (The :0.0 is relevant under the X Window System, something we won’t cover for quite a while in this book.)

   **NOTE**

   Unix is full of oddities that are based on historical precedent. One is `tty` or `pty` to describe a computer or terminal line. This comes from the earliest Unix systems, in which Digital Equipment Corporation teletypewriters were hooked up as interactive devices. The teletypewriters quickly received the nickname tty, and all these years later, when people wouldn’t dream of hooking up a teletypewriter, the line is still known as a `tty` (or `pty`, for “pseudo terminal”) line.

3. One of the most dramatic influences Unix systems have had on the computing community is the propensity for users to work together on a network, hooked up by telephone lines and modems (the predominant method until the middle to late 1980s) or by high-speed network connections to the Internet (a more common type of connection today). Regardless of the connection, however, you can see that each computer needs a unique identifier to distinguish it from others on the network. In the early days of Unix, systems had unique hostnames, but as hundreds of systems have grown into millions, this has proved to be an unworkable solution.
4. The alternative was what’s called a domain-based naming scheme, where systems are assigned unique names within specific subsets of the overall network. Here’s an example:

mentor.utech.edu

The computer I use is within the .edu domain (read the hostname and domain—mentor.utech.edu—from right to left), meaning that the computer is located at an educational institution. Then, within the educational institution subset of the network, utech is a unique descriptor, and, therefore, if other UTech universities existed, they couldn’t use the same top-level domain name. Finally, mentor is the name of the computer itself.

5. As with learning to read addresses on envelopes, learning to read domain names can unlock much information about a computer and its location. For example, lib.stanford.edu is the library computer at Stanford University, and ccgate.infoworld.com tells you that the computer is at InfoWorld, a commercial computer site, and that its hostname is ccgate. You’ll learn more about this later when you learn how to use electronic mail to communicate with people throughout the Internet.

6. Another way to find out who you are in Unix is to use the id command. The purpose of this command is to tell you what group or groups you’re in and the numeric identifier for your account name (known as your user ID number or user ID). Enter id and see what you get. I get the following result:

```
% id
uid=100(taylor) gid=10(staff)
%
```

NOTE

If you enter id and the computer returns a different result or indicates that you need to specify a filename, don’t panic. On many Berkeley-derived systems, the id command is used to obtain low-level information about files.

7. In this example, you can see that my account name is taylor and that the numeric equivalent, the user ID, is 100. (Here it’s abbreviated as uid—pronounce it “you-eye-dee” to sound like a Unix expert). Just as the account name is unique on a system, so also is the user ID. Fortunately, you rarely, if ever, need to know these numbers since they’re used by the OS internally, so focus on the account name and group name.

8. Next, you can see that my group ID (or gid) is 10 and that group number 10 is known as the staff group. It’s the only group to which I belong.

On another system, I am a member of two different groups:

```
% id
uid=103(taylor) gid=10(staff) groups=10(staff),44(ftp)
%
```
Although I have the same account name on this system (taylor), you can see that my user ID and group ID are both different from those in the earlier example. Note also that I’m a member of two groups: the staff group, with a group ID of 10, and the ftp group, with a group ID of 44.

You’ve now learned a couple different ways to have Unix give you some information about your account. Later, you’ll learn how to set protection modes on your files so that people in your group can read your files but so those not in your group are barred from access.

**Task 2.5: Finding Out What Other Users Are Logged In to the System**

The next philosophical puzzle that you can solve with Unix is “Who else is there?” The answer, however, is rather restricted, limited to only those people currently logged in to the same computer at the same time. Three commands are available to get you this information, and the one you choose depends on how much you’d like to learn about the other users: users, who, and w.

1. The simplest of the commands is the users command, which lists the account names of all people using the system:

   ```
   % users
david mark taylor
   %
   ```

   In this example, david and mark are also logged in to the system with me. Try this on your computer and see what other users—if any—are logged in to your computer system.

2. A command that you’ve encountered earlier in this hour can be used to find out who is logged on to the system, what line they’re on, and how long they’ve been logged in. That command is who:

   ```
   % who
taylor     vt/7         Oct 27 14:10    (:0)
david      pts/1        Dec 27 15:54    (:0.0)
mark       pts/2        Oct 27 11:51    (:0.0)
%
   ```

   Here, you can see that three people are logged in: taylor (me), david, and mark. Furthermore, you can now see that david is logged in by connection pts/1 and has been connected since December 27 at 3:54 p.m. You can see that mark has been connected since just before noon on October 27 on line pts/2. Note that I have been logged in since 14:10, which is 24-hour time for 2:10 p.m. Unix doesn’t always indicate a.m. or p.m.

   The user and who commands can tell you who is using the system at any particular moment, but how do you find out what they’re doing?
Task 2.6: What Is Everyone Doing on the Computer?

To find out what everyone else is doing, there’s a third command, w, that serves as a combination of “Who are they?” and “What are they doing?”

1. Consider the following output from the w command:

```
% w
2:12pm  up 7 days,  5:28,  3 users, load average: 0.33, 0.33, 0.02
User     tty           login@  idle   JCPU   PCPU  what
---------- ---------   ---------- ----------  ----------
taylor   vt/7         27Oct14         2:35   2:07   python2.6 /usr/lib/  system-config
                 
david    pts/1        3:54pm   2:04    15     33  bash
mark     pts/2        27Oct14     43               -csh
%```

This is a much more complex command than users or who, and it offers more information. Notice that the output is broken into different areas. The first line summarizes the status of the system and, rather cryptically, the number of programs that the computer is running at one time. Finally, for each user, the output indicates the username, the tty, when the user logged in to the system, how long it’s been since the user has done anything (in minutes and seconds), the combined CPU time of all jobs the user has run, and the amount of CPU time taken by the current job. The last field tells you what you wanted to know in the first place: What are the users doing?

In this example, the current time is 2:12 p.m., and the system has been up for 7 days, 5 hours, and 28 minutes. Currently three users are logged in, and the system is very quiet, with an average of 0.33 jobs submitted (or programs started) in the last minute; 0.33 jobs, on average, in the last 5 minutes; and 0.02 jobs in the last 15 minutes.

taylor is the only user actively using the computer (that is, who has no idle time) and is using the python command. User david is sitting in the bash shell, which has gone for quite awhile without any input from the user (2 hours and 11 minutes of idle time). The program already has used 15 seconds of CPU time and, overall, david has used 33 seconds of CPU time. User mark has a C shell running, as indicated by -csh. (The leading dash indicates that this is the program that the computer launched automatically when mark logged in. This is akin to how the system automatically launches the Finder on a Macintosh.) User mark hasn’t actually done anything yet: Notice that there is no accumulated computer time for that account.

2. Now it’s your turn. Try the w command on your system and see what kind of output you get. Try to interpret all the information based on the explanation here. One thing is certain: Your account should have the w command listed as what you’re doing.
On a multiuser Unix system, the `w` command gives you a quick and easy way to see what’s going on.

**Task 2.7: Checking the Current Date and Time**

You’ve learned how to orient yourself on a Unix system, and you are now able to figure out who you are, who else is on the system, and what everyone is doing. What about the current time and date?

1. Logic suggests that `time` shows the current time and `date` the current date; but this is Unix, and logic doesn’t always apply. In fact, consider what happens when I enter `time` on my system:

```bash
% time
real  0m0.000s
user  0m0.000s
sys   0m0.000s
%
```

The output is cryptic to the extreme and definitely not what you’re interested in finding out. The program is showing how much user time, system time, and CPU time has been used by the command interpreter itself, broken down by input/output operations and more. (The `time` command is more useful than it looks, particularly if you’re a programmer.)

On other Unixes, you might find `time` to be a missing command, a built-in shell function, or something completely different. In all cases, it won’t tell you the current time.

2. Well, `time` didn’t work, so what about `date`?

```bash
% date
Sat Jun 6 17:05:32 MST 2015
%
```

That’s more like it!

Try the `date` command on your computer and see whether the output agrees with your watch.

How do you think `date` keeps track of the time and date when you’ve turned off the computer? Does the computer know the correct time if you unplug it for a few hours? (I hope so. Almost all computers today have little batteries inside for just this situation.)
Summary

This hour focuses on giving you the skills required to log in to a Unix system, figure out who you are and what groups you’re in, change your password, and log out again. You also learned how to list the other users of the system, find out what Unix commands they’re using, and check the date and time.

Workshop

The Workshop summarizes the key terms you’ve learned and poses some questions about the topics presented in this lesson. It also provides you with a preview of what you will learn in the next hour.

Key Terms

account name This is the official one-word name by which the Unix system knows you; mine is taylor. (See also account in Hour 1, “What Is This Unix Stuff?”)

domain name Unix systems on the Internet, or any other network, are assigned a domain within which they exist. This is typically the company (for example, microsoft.com for Microsoft Corporation) or institution (for example, lsu.edu for Louisiana State University). The domain name is always the entire host address, except the hostname itself. (See also hostname.)

heuristic An approach or a procedure for accomplishing a specific task, not guaranteed of success but widely accepted as providing good results for relatively little effort. Think “rule of thumb.”

hostname Unix computers all have unique names assigned by the local administration team. The computers I use are limbo, well, netcom, and mentor, for example. Enter hostname to see what your system is called.

login A synonym for account name, this also can be a verb (when it’s two words: log in) that refers to the process of connecting to the Unix system and entering your account name and password for your account.

user ID (uid) This is the numeric equivalent of the account name, which the system uses for internal bookkeeping.

Exercises

1. Why can’t you have the same account name as another user? How about user ID? Can you have the same uid as someone else on the system?
2. Which of the following are good passwords, based on the guidelines you’ve learned in this hour?

- foobar
- 4myMUM
- Blk&Blu
- 234334
- Laurie
- Hi!
- 2cool.
- rolyat
- jj kim

3. Are the results of the two commands `who am i` and `whoami` different? If so, explain how. Which do you think you’d rather use when you’re on a new computer?

4. List the three Unix commands for finding out who is logged in to the system. Describe about the differences between the commands.

5. One of the commands in the answer to question 4 indicates how long the system has been running. (In the example, it had been running for seven days.) What value do you think there is for keeping track of this information?

6. If you can figure out what other people are doing on the computer, they can figure out what you’re doing, too. Does that bother you? Why or why not?

**Preview of the Next Hour**

The next hour focuses on the Unix hierarchical file system. You’ll learn about how the system is organized, how it differs from Windows and Macintosh hierarchical file systems, the difference between relative and absolute filenames, and the mysterious .. and . directories. You’ll also learn about the env, pwd, and cd commands, as well as the HOME and PATH environment variables.
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