

Command line work in Linux



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Some people seem to think that working in Linux is always entering commands from the command line prompt as in the good old DOS days. This does not have to be so. You can work completely in the graphic desktop environment of your choice. There are only a few things like basic changes to the system that need to be done from the command line.

Windows has a command prompt too but most people don't use it. In Linux using a command line can be more powerful and even faster than clicking several times to run the program you want to run! For example, from the command line you can extract the contents of a whole directory full of zip files with a single command!

```
for i in `ls`; do unzip $i; done rm *.zip
```

Too hard to remember, you say? You can put this code in a script file, name it a short name you will remember, make it executable, move it into one of the directories in your command PATH, and enter the name of your script from the command line in the directory containing all your zip files. All the zip files in that directory will extract their contents and then be deleted after the extraction process is completed.

Moreover, you can put "switches" or "arguments" after the command to do certain things that the application is programmed to do. Some Windows

applications can do that too but most people don't know / care about it.

There are several command line terminal interfaces in Linux. I use Gnome Terminal. Pasting text with Ctrl + V into a Gnome Terminal window won't work, but Shift + the Insert key will. I found out later that Shift Insert works in Windows as well. Most of the keyboard shortcuts in Linux are the same as in Windows.

You can run handy little utilities from Terminal that cannot be run any other way.

For example, in Terminal enter the command:

```
cal
```

You get an immediate output of a calendar of the present month!

Now enter cal and follow it with the number of the month and the year.
Example:

```
cal 6 1960
```

You will see the month of June in 1960! What a handy way to determine the day of any date in either the past or the future!

To see a list of running processes, just enter the word top:

```
top
```

To exit top, press Ctrl + Z.

To see a list of all your hardware PCI devices, enter:

```
/sbin/lspci
```

Many Windows applications are installed in folders which are not necessarily included in the command PATH. This means that from the command prompt the only things you know you can run for sure are Windows system applications. In Linux however, all applications are installed in set directories that are included in the command PATH. This means that if I type the command of my favorite HTML editor "bluefish" at the command prompt, it will run! And so if I'm already working in the command line, it can be faster to run applications by just entering the command name of the application rather than hunt around for it in the Applications list Gnome.