

Matthew Helmke

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Ubuntu Linux

UNLEASHED



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Matthew Helmke

with Andrew Hudson
and Paul Hudson

Ubuntu Linux

UNLEASHED

2021 Edition

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Ubuntu Linux Unleashed 2021 Edition

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Contents at a Glance

Introduction	xxxi
Part I Getting Started	
1 Installing Ubuntu and Post-Installation Configuration	1
2 Background Information and Resources	23
Part II Desktop Ubuntu	
3 Foundations of the Linux GUI	31
4 Ubuntu Desktop Options	41
5 On the Internet	51
6 Productivity Applications	55
7 Multimedia Applications	63
8 Games	79
Part III System Administration	
9 Managing Software	91
10 Command-Line Beginner's Class	105
11 Command-Line Master Class, Part 1	141
12 Command-Line Master Class, Part 2	167
13 Managing Users	201
14 Automating Tasks and Shell Scripting	225
15 The Boot Process	271
16 System-Monitoring Tools	281
17 Backing Up	301
18 Networking	325
19 Remote Access with SSH and VNC	371
20 Securing Your Machines	379
21 Performance Tuning	393
22 Kernel and Module Management	401
Part IV Ubuntu as a Server	
23 Sharing Files and Printers	421
24 Common Web Server Stacks	437
25 Apache Web Server Management	443

26	Nginx Web Server Management.....	467
27	Other HTTP Servers.....	479
28	Administering Relational Database Services.....	483
29	NoSQL Databases.....	509
30	Virtualization on Ubuntu.....	521
31	Containers and Ubuntu.....	531
32	Ubuntu and Cloud Computing.....	535
33	Managing Sets of Servers.....	543
34	Handling Email.....	547
35	Proxying, Reverse Proxying, and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs).....	563
36	Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP).....	579
37	Name Serving with the Domain Name System (DNS).....	587
Part V	Programming Linux	
38	Using Programming Tools.....	597
39	Using Popular Programming Languages.....	621
40	Helping with Ubuntu Development.....	635
41	Helping with Ubuntu Testing and QA.....	645
	Index.....	649

NOTE

Bonus Chapters 42–44 can be accessed online at informit.com/title/9780136778851.

Part VI Bonus Online Chapters

42	Using Perl.....	Web:1
43	Using Python.....	Web:21
44	Using PHP.....	Web:39

Table of Contents

Introduction

xxxi

Part I Getting Started

1	Installing Ubuntu and Post-Installation Configuration	1
	Before You Begin the Installation	1
	Researching Your Hardware Specifications	2
	Installation Options	2
	32-Bit Versus 64-Bit Ubuntu	4
	Planning Partition Strategies	5
	The Boot Loader	5
	Installing from DVD or USB Drive	6
	Step-by-Step Installation	6
	Installing	7
	First Update	11
	Shutting Down	11
	Finding Programs and Files	12
	Software Updater	12
	The <code>sudo</code> Command	14
	Configuring Software Repositories	15
	System Settings	17
	Detecting and Configuring a Printer	18
	Configuring Power Management in Ubuntu	18
	Setting the Time and Date	19
	Configuring Wireless Networks	20
	Troubleshooting Post-Installation Configuration Problems	21
	References	22
2	Background Information and Resources	23
	What Is Linux?	23
	Why Use Linux?	25
	What Is Ubuntu?	27
	Ubuntu for Business	27
	Ubuntu in Your Home	28
	Getting the Most from Linux and Ubuntu Documentation	28
	Linux	29
	Ubuntu	30

Part II Desktop Ubuntu

3	Foundations of the Linux GUI	31
	Foundations and the X Server	31
	Basic X Concepts	32
	Using X	33
	Elements of the <code>xorg.conf</code> File	34
	Starting X	39
	Using a Display Manager	39
	Changing Window Managers	39
	References	40
4	Ubuntu Desktop Options	41
	Desktop Environment	41
	Using GNOME: A Primer	42
	KDE and Kubuntu	45
	Xfce and Xubuntu	46
	LXDE and Lubuntu	47
	MATE and Ubuntu MATE	48
	Ubuntu Budgie	49
	Ubuntu Kylin	50
	References	50
5	On the Internet	51
	Getting Started with Firefox	52
	Checking Out Google Chrome and Chromium	53
	References	54
6	Productivity Applications	55
	Introducing LibreOffice	56
	Other Useful Productivity Software	58
	Working with PDFs	58
	Writing Scripts	59
	Working with XML and DocBook	59
	Working with LaTeX	60
	Creating Mind Maps	61
	Productivity Applications Written for Microsoft Windows	61
	References	61
7	Multimedia Applications	63
	Sound and Music	63
	Sound Cards	64
	Sound Formats	65
	Listening to Music	65

Graphics Manipulation	66
The GNU Image Manipulation Program	66
Using Scanners in Ubuntu	67
Working with Graphics Formats	67
Capturing Screen Images	69
Other Graphics Manipulation Options	70
Using Digital Cameras with Ubuntu	70
Handheld Digital Cameras	70
Using Shotwell Photo Manager	71
Burning CDs and DVDs in Ubuntu	71
Creating CDs and DVDs with Brasero	71
Creating CDs from the Command Line	72
Creating DVDs from the Command Line	73
Viewing Video	75
Video Formats	75
Viewing Video in Linux	76
Recording and Editing Audio	76
Editing Video	77
References	77
8 Games	79
Ubuntu Gaming	79
Installing Proprietary Video Drivers	80
Online Game Sources	81
Steam	81
GOG.com	82
Humble	82
itch.io	82
LGDB	82
Game Jolt	82
Installing Games from the Ubuntu Repositories	82
<i>Warsow</i>	82
<i>Scorched 3D</i>	83
<i>Frozen Bubble</i>	84
<i>SuperTux</i>	84
<i>Battle for Wesnoth</i>	85
<i>Frets on Fire</i>	85
<i>FlightGear</i>	87
<i>Speed Dreams</i>	87
Games for Kids	88
Commercial Games	88
Playing Windows Games	88
References	89

Part III System Administration

9	Managing Software	91
	Ubuntu Software	91
	Using Synaptic for Software Management	92
	Staying Up to Date	94
	Working on the Command Line	95
	Day-to-Day APT Usage	95
	Finding Software	98
	Using <code>apt-get</code> Instead of <code>apt</code>	99
	Compiling Software from Source	100
	Compiling from a Tarball	100
	Compiling from Source from the Ubuntu Repositories	101
	Configuration Management	102
	dotdeb	102
	Ubuntu Core	103
	Using the Snappy Package Manager	103
	References	104
10	Command-Line Beginner's Class	105
	What Is the Command Line?	106
	Accessing the Command Line	107
	Text-Based Console Login	107
	Logging Out	108
	Logging In and Out from a Remote Computer	108
	User Accounts	109
	Reading Documentation	111
	Using Man Pages	111
	Using <code>apropos</code>	112
	Using <code>whereis</code>	112
	Understanding the Linux File System Hierarchy	112
	Essential Commands in <code>/bin</code> and <code>/sbin</code>	114
	Configuration Files in <code>/etc</code>	114
	User Directories: <code>/home</code>	115
	Using the Contents of the <code>/proc</code> Directory to Interact with or Obtain Information from the Kernel	115
	Working with Shared Data in the <code>/usr</code> Directory	117
	Temporary File Storage in the <code>/tmp</code> Directory	117
	Accessing Variable Data Files in the <code>/var</code> Directory	117
	Navigating the Linux File System	117
	Listing the Contents of a Directory with <code>ls</code>	118
	Changing Directories with <code>cd</code>	120
	Finding Your Current Directory with <code>pwd</code>	120

Working with Permissions	120
Assigning Permissions	121
Directory Permissions	122
Altering File Permissions with <code>chmod</code>	123
File Permissions with <code>umask</code>	124
File Permissions with <code>chgrp</code>	125
Changing File Permissions with <code>chown</code>	125
Understanding Set User ID, Set Group ID, and Sticky Bit Permissions	125
Setting Permissions with Access Control Lists	127
Working with Files	128
Creating a File with <code>touch</code>	128
Creating a Directory with <code>mkdir</code>	129
Deleting a Directory with <code>rmdir</code>	129
Deleting a File or Directory with <code>rm</code>	130
Moving or Renaming a File with <code>mv</code>	131
Copying a File with <code>cp</code>	131
Displaying the Contents of a File with <code>cat</code>	132
Displaying the Contents of a File with <code>less</code>	132
Using Wildcards and Regular Expressions	133
Working as Root	133
Understanding and Fixing <code>sudo</code>	134
Creating Users	136
Deleting Users	137
Shutting Down the System	137
Rebooting the System	138
Commonly Used Commands and Programs	139
References	139

11 Command-Line Master Class, Part 1 141

Why Use the Command Line?	142
Using Basic Commands	143
Printing the Contents of a File with <code>cat</code>	144
Changing Directories with <code>cd</code>	145
Changing File Access Permissions with <code>chmod</code>	147
Copying Files with <code>cp</code>	147
Printing Disk Usage with <code>du</code>	148
Using <code>echo</code>	148
Finding Files by Searching with <code>find</code>	149
Searches for a String in Input with <code>grep</code>	151
Paging Through Output with <code>less</code>	152
Creating Links Between Files with <code>ln</code>	154

Finding Files from an Index with <code>locate</code>	156
Listing Files in the Current Directory with <code>ls</code>	156
Listing System Information with <code>lsblk</code> , <code>lshw</code> , <code>lsmod</code> , <code>lspci</code> , and <code>neofetch</code>	158
Reading Manual Pages with <code>man</code>	159
Making Directories with <code>mkdir</code>	160
Moving Files with <code>mv</code>	161
Renaming Files with <code>rename</code>	161
Deleting Files and Directories with <code>rm</code>	161
Sorting the Contents of a File with <code>sort</code>	162
Printing the Last Lines of a File with <code>tail</code>	163
Printing the Location of a Command with <code>which</code>	164
Downloading Files with <code>wget</code>	164
References	165
12 Command-Line Master Class, Part 2	167
Redirecting Output and Input	167
<code>stdin</code> , <code>stdout</code> , <code>stderr</code> , and Redirection	169
Comparing Files	170
Finding Differences in Files with <code>diff</code>	170
Finding Similarities in Files with <code>comm</code>	170
Limiting Resource Use and Job Control	171
Listing Processes with <code>ps</code>	171
Listing Jobs with <code>jobs</code>	173
Running One or More Tasks in the Background	173
Moving Jobs to the Background or Foreground with <code>bg</code> and <code>fg</code>	174
Printing Resource Usage with <code>top</code>	175
Setting Process Priority with <code>nice</code>	177
Combining Commands	178
Pipes	178
Combining Commands with Boolean Operators	180
Running Separate Commands in Sequence	180
Process Substitution	181
Executing Jobs in Parallel	181
Using Environment Variables	182
Using Common Text Editors	185
Working with <code>nano</code>	186
Working with <code>vi</code>	187
Working with <code>emacs</code>	188
Working with <code>sed</code> and <code>awk</code>	189
Working with Compressed Files	191
Using Multiple Terminals with <code>byobu</code>	192
Doing a Polite System Reset Using <code>REISUB</code>	194

Fixing an Ubuntu System That Will Not Boot	195
Checking BIOS	195
Checking GRUB	195
Reinstalling GRUB	195
Using Recovery Mode	196
Reinstalling Ubuntu	196
Tips and Tricks	196
Running the Previous Command	196
Running Any Previous Command	197
Running a Previous Command That Started with Specific Letters	197
Running the Same Thing You Just Ran with a Different First Word	197
Viewing Your History and More	197
Doing Two or More Things	198
Using Shortcuts	198
Confining a Script to a Directory	198
Using Coreutils	199
Reading the Contents of the Kernel Ring Buffer with <code>dmesg</code>	200
References	200
13 Managing Users	201
User Accounts	201
The Super User/Root User	202
User IDs and Group IDs	204
File Permissions	204
Managing Groups	205
Group Listing	205
Group Management Tools	206
Managing Users	207
User Management Tools	208
Adding New Users	209
Monitoring User Activity on the System	211
Managing Passwords	212
System Password Policy	212
The Password File	212
Shadow Passwords	214
Managing Password Security for Users	216
Changing Passwords in a Batch	216
Granting System Administrator Privileges to Regular Users	217
Temporarily Changing User Identity with the <code>su</code> Command	217
Granting Root Privileges on Occasion: The <code>sudo</code> Command	219

Disk Quotas	222
Implementing Quotas	222
Manually Configuring Quotas	223
Related Ubuntu Commands	223
References	224
14 Automating Tasks and Shell Scripting	225
What Is a Shell?	225
Scheduling Tasks	226
Using <code>at</code> and <code>batch</code> to Schedule Tasks for Later	227
Using <code>cron</code> to Run Jobs Repeatedly	229
Using <code>rtcwake</code> to Wake Your Computer from Sleep Automatically	231
Basic Shell Control	233
The Shell Command Line	233
Shell Pattern-Matching Support	235
Redirecting Input and Output	236
Piping Data	237
Background Processing	237
Writing and Executing a Shell Script	237
Running the New Shell Program	239
Storing Shell Scripts for System-wide Access	240
Interpreting Shell Scripts Through Specific Shells	240
Using Variables in Shell Scripts	242
Assigning a Value to a Variable	242
Accessing Variable Values	243
Positional Parameters	243
A Simple Example of a Positional Parameter	243
Using Positional Parameters to Access and Retrieve Variables from the Command Line	244
Using a Simple Script to Automate Tasks	244
Built-in Variables	246
Special Characters	247
Comparison of Expressions in <code>pdksh</code> and <code>bash</code>	250
Comparing Expressions with <code>tcsh</code>	255
The <code>for</code> Statement	259
The <code>while</code> Statement	261
The <code>until</code> Statement	263
The <code>repeat</code> Statement (<code>tcsh</code>)	263
The <code>select</code> Statement (<code>pdksh</code>)	264
The <code>shift</code> Statement	264
The <code>if</code> Statement	265

	The <code>expr</code> Statement	266
	The <code>case</code> Statement	267
	The <code>break</code> and <code>exit</code> Statements	269
	Using Functions in Shell Scripts	269
	References	270
15	The Boot Process	271
	Running Services at Boot	271
	Beginning the Boot Loading Process	272
	Loading the Linux Kernel	274
	Starting and Stopping Services with <code>systemd</code>	275
	Controlling Services at Boot with Administrative Tools	278
	Troubleshooting Runlevel Problems	278
	Boot-Repair	278
	References	279
16	System-Monitoring Tools	281
	Console-Based Monitoring	281
	Using the <code>kill</code> Command to Control Processes	283
	Using Priority Scheduling and Control	285
	Displaying Free and Used Memory with <code>free</code>	286
	Disk Space	286
	Disk Quotas	287
	Checking Log Files	287
	Rotating Log Files	289
	Graphical Process- and System-Management Tools	292
	System Monitor	292
	Conky	292
	Other Graphical Process- and System-Monitoring Tools	297
	KDE Process- and System-Monitoring Tools	298
	Enterprise Server Monitoring	298
	References	299
17	Backing Up	301
	Choosing a Backup Strategy	301
	Why Data Loss Occurs	302
	Assessing Your Backup Needs and Resources	303
	Evaluating Backup Strategies	304
	Making the Choice	308
	Choosing Backup Hardware and Media	308
	External Hard Drive	308
	Network Storage	308

Tape Drive Backups	309
Cloud Storage	309
Using Backup Software	309
tar: The Most Basic Backup Tool	310
The GNOME File Roller	312
The KDE ark Archiving Tool	312
Déjà Dup	313
Back In Time	314
Unison	315
Amanda	315
Alternative Backup Software	316
Copying Files	316
Copying Files Using tar	317
Compressing, Encrypting, and Sending tar Streams	318
Copying Files Using cp	318
Using rsync	319
Version Control for Configuration Files	320
System Rescue	323
The Ubuntu Rescue Disc	323
Restoring the GRUB2 Boot Loader	323
Saving Files from a Nonbooting Hard Drive	324
References	324
18 Networking	325
Laying the Foundation: The localhost Interface	326
Checking for the Availability of the Loopback Interface	326
Configuring the Loopback Interface Manually	327
Checking Connections with ping, traceroute, and mtr	328
Networking with TCP/IP	330
TCP/IP Addressing	331
Using IP Masquerading in Ubuntu	332
Ports	333
IPv6 Basics	334
Network Organization	337
Subnetting	337
Subnet Masks	337
Broadcast, Unicast, and Multicast Addressing	338
Hardware Devices for Networking	338
Network Interface Cards	338
Network Cable	340
Hubs and Switches	342
Routers and Bridges	343
Initializing New Network Hardware	343

Using Network Configuration Tools	345
Command-Line Network Interface Configuration	346
Network Configuration Files	350
Using Graphical Configuration Tools	355
Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol	355
How DHCP Works	356
Activating DHCP at Installation and Boot Time	357
DHCP Software Installation and Configuration	358
Using DHCP to Configure Network Hosts	359
Other Uses for DHCP	361
Wireless Networking	361
Support for Wireless Networking in Ubuntu	361
Choosing from Among Available Wireless Protocols	363
Beyond the Network and onto the Internet	363
Common Configuration Information	364
Configuring Digital Subscriber Line Access	365
Understanding PPP over Ethernet	366
Configuring a PPPoE Connection Manually	366
Configuring Dial-up Internet Access	367
Troubleshooting Connection Problems	368
References	369
19 Remote Access with SSH and VNC	371
Setting Up an SSH Server	371
SSH Tools	372
Using <code>scp</code> to Copy Individual Files Between Machines	372
Using <code>sftp</code> to Copy Many Files Between Machines	373
Using <code>ssh-keygen</code> to Enable Key-Based Logins	373
Virtual Network Computing	375
Guacamole	377
References	377
20 Securing Your Machines	379
Understanding Computer Attacks	379
Assessing Your Vulnerability	381
Protecting Your Machine	382
Securing a Wireless Network	382
Passwords and Physical Security	383
Configuring and Using Tripwire	384
Securing Devices	385
Viruses	385
Configuring Your Firewall	386

AppArmor	388
Forming a Disaster Recovery Plan	390
References	391
21 Performance Tuning	393
Storage Disk	394
Linux File Systems	394
The <code>hdparm</code> Command	395
File System Tuning	396
The <code>tune2fs</code> Command	396
The <code>e2fsck</code> Command	397
The <code>badblocks</code> Command	397
Disabling File Access Time	397
Kernel	398
Tuned	399
References	400
22 Kernel and Module Management	401
The Linux Kernel	402
The Linux Source Tree	403
Types of Kernels	405
Managing Modules	406
When to Recompile	408
Kernel Versions	409
Obtaining the Kernel Sources	409
Patching the Kernel	410
Compiling the Kernel	412
Using <code>xconfig</code> to Configure the Kernel	414
Creating an Initial RAM Disk Image	418
When Something Goes Wrong	418
Errors During Compile	418
Runtime Errors, Boot Loader Problems, and Kernel Oops	419
References	419
Part IV Ubuntu as a Server	
23 Sharing Files and Printers	421
Using Network File System	422
Installing and Starting or Stopping NFS	422
NFS Server Configuration	422
NFS Client Configuration	423

Putting Samba to Work	424
Manually Configuring Samba with <code>/etc/samba/smb.conf</code>	426
Testing Samba with the <code>testparm</code> Command	429
Starting, Stopping, and Restarting the <code>smbd</code> Daemon	429
Mounting Samba Shares	430
Network and Remote Printing with Ubuntu	431
Creating Network Printers	431
Using the CUPS GUI	433
Avoiding Printer Support Problems	434
References	435
24 Common Web Server Stacks	437
LAMP	437
LEMP	439
MEAN	440
References	441
25 Apache Web Server Management	443
About the Apache Web Server	443
Installing the Apache Server	444
Starting and Stopping Apache	444
Runtime Server Configuration Settings	446
Runtime Configuration Directives	446
Editing <code>apache2.conf</code>	447
Apache Multiprocessing Modules	449
Using <code>.htaccess</code> Configuration Files	450
File System Authentication and Access Control	452
Restricting Access with <code>Require</code>	452
Authentication	453
Final Words on Access Control	455
Apache Modules	455
<code>mod_access</code>	456
<code>mod_alias</code>	456
<code>mod_asis</code>	456
<code>mod_auth</code>	457
<code>mod_auth_anon</code>	457
<code>mod_auth_dbm</code>	457
<code>mod_auth_digest</code>	457
<code>mod_autoindex</code>	458
<code>mod_cgi</code>	458
<code>mod_dir</code> and <code>mod_env</code>	458
<code>mod_expires</code>	458

mod_headers.....	458
mod_include.....	459
mod_info and mod_log_config.....	459
mod_mime and mod_mime_magic.....	459
mod_negotiation.....	459
mod_proxy.....	459
mod_rewrite.....	459
mod_setenvif.....	460
mod_speling.....	460
mod_status.....	460
mod_ssl.....	460
mod_unique_id.....	460
mod_userdir.....	460
mod_usertrack.....	460
mod_vhost_alias.....	460
Virtual Hosting.....	461
Address-Based Virtual Hosts.....	461
Name-Based Virtual Hosts.....	461
Logging.....	463
HTTPS.....	464
References.....	466
26 Nginx Web Server Management.....	467
About the Nginx Web Server.....	467
Installing the Nginx Server.....	469
Installing from the Ubuntu Repositories.....	469
Building the Source Yourself.....	469
Configuring the Nginx Server.....	470
Virtual Hosting.....	473
Setting Up PHP.....	474
Adding and Configuring Modules.....	475
HTTPS.....	476
Reference.....	477
27 Other HTTP Servers.....	479
lighttpd.....	479
Yaws.....	480
Cherokee.....	480
Jetty.....	481
thttpd.....	481
Apache Tomcat.....	482

WildFly	482
Caddy	482
References	482
28 Administering Relational Database Services	483
A Brief Review of Database Basics	484
How Relational Databases Work	486
Understanding SQL Basics	487
Creating Tables	488
Inserting Data into Tables	489
Retrieving Data from a Database	490
Choosing a Database: MySQL Versus PostgreSQL	492
Speed	492
Data Locking	492
ACID Compliance in Transaction Processing to Protect Data Integrity	493
SQL Subqueries	494
Procedural Languages and Triggers	494
Configuring MySQL	494
Setting a Password for the MySQL Root User	495
Creating a Database in MySQL	496
Configuring PostgreSQL	498
Initializing the Data Directory in PostgreSQL	498
Creating a Database in PostgreSQL	499
Creating Database Users in PostgreSQL	499
Deleting Database Users in PostgreSQL	500
Granting and Revoking Privileges in PostgreSQL	500
Database Clients	501
SSH Access to a Database	501
Local GUI Client Access to a Database	503
Web Access to a Database	503
The MySQL Command-Line Client	504
The PostgreSQL Command-Line Client	505
Graphical Clients	506
References	507
29 NoSQL Databases	509
Key/Value Stores	512
Berkeley DB	512
Cassandra	513
etcd	513
Memcached and MemcacheDB	513

Redis	514
Riak	514
Scylla	514
Document Stores	514
CouchDB	515
MongoDB	516
BaseX	517
Wide Column Stores	517
BigTable	517
HBase	518
Graph Stores	518
Neo4j	518
OrientDB	519
HyperGraphDB	519
FlockDB	519
References	519
30 Virtualization on Ubuntu	521
KVM	523
VirtualBox	527
VMware	528
Xen	528
References	529
31 Containers and Ubuntu	531
LXC and LXD	532
Docker	533
Kubernetes	534
References	534
32 Ubuntu and Cloud Computing	535
Why a Cloud?	536
Software as a Service (SaaS)	537
Platform as a Service (PaaS)	537
Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)	537
Metal as a Service (MaaS)	537
Things to Consider Before You Make Any Decisions	538
Ubuntu on the Public Cloud	538
OpenStack	538
Amazon Web Services	539
Google Cloud	539

Microsoft Azure	539
Hybrid Clouds	539
Canonical-Specific Cloud Offerings	540
Juju	540
Mojo: Continuous Delivery for Juju	541
Landscape	541
References	541
33 Managing Sets of Servers	543
Puppet	543
Chef	544
Ansible	544
SaltStack	544
CFEngine	545
Juju	545
Landscape	545
References	545
34 Handling Email	547
How Email Is Sent and Received	547
The Mail Transport Agent	548
Choosing an MTA	550
The Mail Delivery Agent	550
The Mail User Agent	551
Basic Postfix Configuration and Operation	552
Configuring Masquerading	554
Using Smart Hosts	554
Setting Message Delivery Intervals	555
Mail Relaying	555
Forwarding Email with Aliases	556
Using Fetchmail to Retrieve Mail	557
Installing Fetchmail	557
Configuring Fetchmail	557
Choosing a Mail Delivery Agent	560
Procmail	561
Spamassassin	561
Squirrelmail	561
Virus Scanners	562
Autoresponders	562
References	562

35	Proxying, Reverse Proxying, and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)	563
	What Is a Proxy Server?	563
	Installing Squid	564
	Configuring Clients	564
	Access Control Lists	565
	Specifying Client IP Addresses	569
	Sample Configurations	570
	Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)	572
	Setting Up a VPN Client	573
	Setting Up a VPN Server	575
	References	577
36	Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP)	579
	Configuring the Server	580
	Creating Your Schema	580
	Populating Your Directory	582
	Configuring Clients	584
	LDAP Administration	584
	References	585
37	Name Serving with the Domain Name System (DNS)	587
	Understanding Domain Names	588
	DNS Servers	589
	DNS Records	590
	Setting Up a DNS Server with BIND	593
	References	595
Part V	Programming Linux	
38	Using Programming Tools	597
	Programming in C with Linux	598
	Using the C Programming Project Management Tools Provided with Ubuntu	599
	Building Programs with <code>make</code>	599
	Using the <code>autoconf</code> Utility to Configure Code	601
	Debugging Tools	602
	Using the GNU C Compiler	603
	Programming in Java with Linux	604
	Graphical Development Tools	605

IDEs and SDKs	605
Using the KDevelop Client	606
The Glade Client for Developing in GNOME	607
Beginning Mobile Development for Android	607
Hardware	608
Linux Kernel	608
Libraries	608
Android Runtime	608
Application Framework	608
Applications	609
Installing Android Studio	609
Creating Your First Android Application	609
Version Control Systems	609
Managing Software Projects with Git	610
Managing Software Projects with Bazaar	611
Managing Software Projects with Subversion	612
Continuous Integration and Continuous Delivery and DevOps Tools ...	613
CI/CD Tools	614
Chaos Engineering	614
Canonical-created Tools	614
Launchpad	614
Ubuntu Make	615
Creating Snap Packages	615
Bikeshed and Other Tools	616
References	618
39 Using Popular Programming Languages	621
Ada	622
Clojure	622
COBOL	623
D	624
Dart	624
Elixir	625
Elm	625
Erlang	625
Forth	626
Fortran	626
Go	626
Groovy	627
Haskell	627

Java	627
JavaScript	628
Kotlin	628
Lisp	629
Lua	629
Mono	629
OCaml	630
Perl	630
PHP	631
Python	631
Raku	631
Ruby	631
Rust	632
Scala	632
Scratch	632
Vala	633
References	633
40 Helping with Ubuntu Development	635
Introduction to Ubuntu Development	636
Setting Up Your Development System	637
Install Basic Packages and Configure	637
Creating a Launchpad Account	638
Setting Up Your Environment to Work with Launchpad	638
Fixing Bugs and Packaging	640
References	643
41 Helping with Ubuntu Testing and QA	645
Community Teams	645
Ubuntu Testing Team	646
Ubuntu QA Team	646
Bug Squad	647
References	647
Index	649

NOTE

Bonus Chapters 42–44 can be accessed online at [informit.com/title/9780136778851](https://www.informit.com/title/9780136778851).

Part VI Bonus Online Chapters

42 Using Perl	Web:1
Using Perl with Linux	Web:1
Perl Versions	Web:2
A Simple Perl Program	Web:2
Perl Variables and Data Structures	Web:4
Perl Variable Types	Web:4
Special Variables	Web:5
Perl Operators	Web:6
Comparison Operators	Web:6
Compound Operators	Web:7
Arithmetic Operators	Web:7
Other Operators	Web:8
Special String Constants	Web:8
Conditional Statements: <code>if/else</code> and <code>unless</code>	Web:9
<code>if</code>	Web:9
<code>unless</code>	Web:9
Looping	Web:10
<code>for</code>	Web:10
<code>foreach</code>	Web:10
<code>while</code>	Web:11
<code>until</code>	Web:11
<code>last</code> and <code>next</code>	Web:12
<code>do ... while</code> and <code>do ... until</code>	Web:12
Regular Expressions	Web:12
Access to the Shell	Web:13
Modules and CPAN	Web:14
Code Examples	Web:15
Sending Mail	Web:15
Purging Logs	Web:17
Posting to Usenet	Web:18
One-Liners	Web:19
Command-Line Processing	Web:19
References	Web:20
43 Using Python	Web:21
Python on Linux	Web:22
The Basics of Python	Web:23
Numbers	Web:23
More on Strings	Web:24
Lists	Web:27

Dictionaries	Web:30
Conditionals and Looping	Web:30
Functions	Web:33
Object Orientation	Web:34
Class and Object Variables	Web:34
Constructors and Destructors	Web:35
Class Inheritance	Web:36
The Standard Library and the Python Package Index	Web:38
References	Web:38
44 Using PHP	Web:39
Introduction to PHP	Web:39
Entering and Exiting PHP Mode	Web:40
Variables	Web:40
Arrays	Web:42
Constants	Web:43
References	Web:44
Comments	Web:44
Escape Sequences	Web:45
Variable Substitution	Web:46
Operators	Web:46
Conditional Statements	Web:48
Special Operators	Web:50
Switching	Web:51
Loops	Web:52
Including Other Files	Web:54
Basic Functions	Web:55
Strings	Web:55
Arrays	Web:58
Files	Web:60
Miscellaneous	Web:63
Handling HTML Forms	Web:66
Databases	Web:67
References	Web:69

About the Author

Matthew Helmke has used Ubuntu since 2005. He has written about Linux for several magazines and websites, is a lead author of *The Official Ubuntu Book*, and has coauthored both *A Practical Guide to Linux: Commands, Editors, and Shell Programming* and *The VMware Cookbook*. In his day job, Matthew works for Gremlin (<https://www.gremlin.com/>) making the Internet more reliable. Matthew first used UNIX in 1987, while studying Lisp on a Vax at the university. He has run a business using only free and open source software, has consulted, and teaches as an adjunct professor for the University of Arizona. You can find out more about Matthew at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/matthewhelmke/> or drop him a line with errata or suggestions at matthew@matthewhelmke.com.

Dedication

To Sage, Sedona, and Philip—the most amazing kids a guy could hope for; to Sandra and Evan, who are wonderful and welcome additions to our lives; to my grandfather for always believing in me and teaching me to believe in myself; and to my friends in the Linux, developer, sysadmin, cloud computing, DevOps, Site Reliability Engineering, and Chaos Engineering communities.

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Figure Credits

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Introduction

We are pleased to present the 2021 edition of *Ubuntu Unleashed*. Ubuntu is a Linux-based computer operating system that has taken the world by storm. From its humble beginning in 2004, Ubuntu has risen to become a perennial favorite for desktop Linux, as well as a popular choice for servers.

Ubuntu descends from one of the oldest and most revered Linux distributions, Debian. Debian is assembled by a team of talented volunteers, is one of the most stable and customizable distributions of Linux, and is well respected for its quality and technological prowess. It is, however, an operating system for geeks; the bar for entry into the Debian realm is set high, and its user base tends to be highly proficient and expects new users to learn the ropes before joining in. That is both appropriate and okay.

Ubuntu has leveraged the quality of Debian to create an operating system that ordinary people can use. This doesn't mean that Ubuntu users are not technologically proficient, just that they do not have to be. In fact, many talented and respected software developers love Ubuntu because it enables them to concentrate on their specific interests instead of the details of the operating system. This book is for these people and for those who aspire to join their ranks.

If you are new to Linux, you have made a great decision by choosing this book. *Unleashed* books offer an in-depth look at their subjects, helping both beginner and advanced users move to a new level of knowledge and expertise. Ubuntu is a fast-changing distribution that has an updated release twice a year. We have tracked the development of Ubuntu from early on to make sure the information in this book mirrors closely the development of the distribution.

IN THIS INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Licensing
- ▶ Who This Book Is For
- ▶ What This Book Contains
- ▶ Conventions Used in This Book

A QUICK WORD ABOUT MARKETING

Almost all of the content in this book applies regardless of what Ubuntu release version you are using, as long as it is reasonably current. The book has been written to try to focus on information that is useful for the longest amount of time possible. Some chapters, like those covering installation or the basics of the default Ubuntu graphical user interface, will have their information change frequently. These chapters are the exception. The blurb on the cover of the book about which editions this book covers was added to account for these chapters and to denote clearly when the book was most recently revised.

Do not let the highly technical reputation of Linux discourage you, however. Many people who have heard of Linux think that it is found only on servers, used to look after websites and email. But that is far from the truth. Distributions like Ubuntu are making huge inroads into the desktop market. Corporations are realizing the benefits of running a stable and powerful operating system that is easy to maintain and easy to secure. The best part is that as Linux distributions are improved, the majority of those improvements are shared freely, allowing you to benefit from the additions and refinements made by one distribution, such as Red Hat, while continuing to use a different distribution, such as Ubuntu, which in turn shares its improvements. You can put Ubuntu to work today and be assured of a great user experience. Feel free to make as many copies of the software as you want; Ubuntu is freely and legally distributable all over the world, so no copyright lawyers are going to pound on your door.

Licensing

Software licensing is an important issue for all computer users and can entail moral, legal, and financial considerations. Many consumers think that purchasing a copy of a commercial or proprietary operating system, productivity application, utility, or game conveys ownership, but that is not true. In the majority of cases, the *end user license agreement (EULA)* included with a commercial software package states that you have paid only for the right to use the software according to specific terms. This generally means you may not examine, make copies, share, resell, or transfer ownership of the software package. More onerous software licenses enforce terms that preclude you from distributing or publishing comparative performance reviews of the software. Even more insidious licensing schemes (and supporting legislation, especially in the United States) contain provisions allowing onsite auditing of the software's use!

This is not the case with the open source software covered in this book. You are entirely free to make copies, share copies, and install the software on as many computers as you want. (We encourage you to purchase additional copies of this book to give as gifts, however.)

You can put your copy of Ubuntu to work right away in your home or at your place of business without worrying about software licensing, per-seat workstation or client licenses, software auditing, royalty payments, or any other type of payments to third parties. However, be aware that although much of the software included with Ubuntu is licensed

under the GPL, some packages are licensed under other terms. Those packages are subject to a variety of software licenses, and many of them fall under a broad definition known as *open source*. Some of these licenses include the Artistic License, the BSD License, the Mozilla Public License, and the Q Public License.

For additional information about the various GNU software licenses, browse to www.gnu.org. For a definition of open source and licensing guidelines, along with links to the terms of nearly three dozen open source licenses, browse to www.opensource.org.

Who This Book Is For

This book varies in coverage from deep to shallow over a wide range of topics. This is intentional. Some topics are Ubuntu specific and are not covered by any other book, and they deserve deep coverage here. There are some topics that every power user really must master. Other topics are things power users should know about so that they understand some history, know some other options, or simply have what they need to be able to listen and participate in further discussions with other technical people without being completely confused.

Some topics, like using the Linux command line, receive deep and extensive coverage because we believe that information to be vital to anyone who wants to be a power user or become a skilled DevOps guru. That topic gets three full chapters.

Other topics get only brief coverage so that people who are interested get a few guideposts to help them continue if they are interested. For example, Chapter 39, “Using Popular Programming Languages,” describes languages such as Ada and Fortran, along with more than 20 other programming languages. In that chapter, dozens of programming languages are covered in just a few pages. These are useful topics to some but not topics we would consider vital.

In addition, some topics are just too broad to be covered in great depth in this book, but they deserve mention because, again, an intermediate to advanced user should have at least a foundational knowledge of them. These are covered briefly and then information is provided to help you find more resources and expand your understanding, as needed.

Those Wanting to Become Intermediate or Advanced Users

Ubuntu Unleashed is intended for intermediate and advanced users or those who want to become intermediate and advanced users. Our goal is to give you a nudge in the right direction, to help you enter the higher stages by exposing you to as many different tools and ideas as possible; we give you some thoughts and methods to consider and spur you on to seek out more. Although the contents are aimed at intermediate to advanced users, new users who pay attention will benefit from the advice, tips, tricks, traps, and techniques presented in each chapter. Pointers to more detailed or related information are also provided at the end of each chapter.

If you are new to Linux, you might need to learn some new computer skills, such as how to research your computer’s hardware, how to partition a hard drive, and (occasionally) how to use a command line. This book helps you learn these skills and shows you how

to learn more about your computer, Linux, and the software included with Ubuntu. Most importantly, it helps you overcome your fear of the system by telling you more about what it is and how it works.

We would like to take a moment to introduce a concept called “The Three Levels of Listening” from Alistair Cockburn’s *Agile Software Development*. This concept describes how a person learns and masters a technique, passing through three levels:

- ▶ **Following**—The level where the learner looks for one very detailed process that works and sticks to it to accomplish a task.
- ▶ **Detaching**—The level where the learner feels comfortable with one method and begins to learn other ways to accomplish the same task.
- ▶ **Fluent**—The level where the learner has experience with or understanding of many methods and doesn’t think of any of them in particular while doing a task.

We all start at the first level and progress from there. Few reach the last level, but those who do are incredibly effective and efficient. People aiming for this level are the very ones for whom we intend this book.

Myriad books focus on the first set of users. This is not one of them. It is our goal in *Ubuntu Unleashed* to write just enough to get you from where you are to where you want or need to be. This is not a book for newcomers who want or need every step outlined in detail, although we do that occasionally. This is a book for people who want help learning about what can be done and a way to get started doing it. The Internet is an amazing reference tool, so this is not a comprehensive reference book. This book is a tool to help you see the landscape, to learn enough about what you seek to get you started in the right direction with a quality foundational understanding.

Sysadmins, Programmers, DevOps, and Site Reliability Engineering

System administrators, or sysadmins, are people who keep servers and networks up and running. Their role is sometimes called *operations*. They deal with software installation and configuration and security, and they do all the amazing things behind the scenes that let others use these systems for their work. They are often given less respect than they deserve, but the pay is good, and it is a ton of fun to wield the ultimate power over a computer system. It is also a great responsibility, and these amazing guys and gals work hard to make sure they do their jobs well, striving for incredible system uptime and availability. Ubuntu is an excellent operating system for servers and networks, and in this book you can find much of the knowledge needed to get started in this role.

Programmers are people who write software. They are sometimes called *developers*. Programmers work with others to create the applications that run on top of those systems. Ubuntu is a great platform for writing and testing software. This is true whether you are doing web application development or writing software for desktop or server systems. It also makes a great platform for learning new programming languages and trying out new ideas. This book can help you get started.

DevOps is a portmanteau of *developer* and *operations*. It signifies a blending of the two roles already described. The information technology (IT) world is changing, and roles are becoming less clear-cut and isolated from one another. In the past, it was common to witness battles between programmers excited about new technology and sysadmins in love with stability. DevOps realizes that neither goal is healthy in isolation but that seeking a balance between the two can yield great results by removing the barriers to communication and understanding that sometimes cause conflict within a team. Because of the rise of cloud computing and virtualization, which are also covered in this book, and more agile forms of development, DevOps is a useful perspective that enables people working in IT to do an even better job of serving their ultimate clients: end users. Site Reliability Engineering (SRE) began at a similar time as DevOps and from a distance looks almost the same. The major difference is that the SRE focus is solely on keeping sites and systems up and running, whereas DevOps has evolved a wider philosophy that may touch on people processes outside of the typical scope of SRE. This book is a great foundation for those who want to learn knowledge that will help with both roles and implementations, hopefully presented in a way that balances them nicely.

What This Book Contains

Ubuntu Unleashed is organized into six parts, described here:

- ▶ Part I, “Getting Started,” takes you through installing Ubuntu on your computer in the place of any other operating system you might be running, such as Windows.
- ▶ Part II, “Desktop Ubuntu,” is aimed at users who want to use Ubuntu on desktop systems.
- ▶ Part III, “System Administration,” covers both elementary and sophisticated details of setting up a system for specific tasks and maintaining that system.
- ▶ Part IV, “Ubuntu as a Server,” gives you the information you need to start building your own file, web, and other servers for use in your home or office.
- ▶ Part V, “Programming Linux,” provides a great introduction to how you can extend Ubuntu capabilities even further by using the development tools available.
- ▶ Part VI, “Bonus Chapters,” consists of three online chapters on using the Perl, Python, and PHP languages on Ubuntu. See informit.com/title/9780136778851.

Conventions Used in This Book

It is impossible to cover every option of every command included in Ubuntu. Besides, with the rise of the Internet and high-speed connections, reference materials are far less valuable today than they used to be because most of these details are only a quick Google search away. Instead, we focus on teaching you how to find information you need while giving a quality overview worthy of intermediate and advanced users. Sometimes this book offers tables of various options, commands, and keystrokes to help condense, organize, and present information about a variety of subjects.

To help you better understand code listing examples and sample command lines, several formatting techniques are used to show input and ownership. For example, if a command or code listing example shows input that you as the user would type, the input is formatted in boldface after the sample command prompt, as follows:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls
```

If typed input is required, as in response to a prompt, the sample typed input also is in boldface, like so:

```
Delete files? [Y/n] y
```

All statements, variables, and text that should appear on your display use the same boldface formatting. In addition, command lines that require root or super-user access are prefaced with the `sudo` command, as follows:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo printtool &
```

Other formatting techniques include the use of italic for placeholders in computer command syntax, as shown here:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls directoryname
```

Computer terms or concepts are also italicized upon first introduction in text.

The following elements provide you with useful tidbits of information that relate to the discussion of the text:

NOTE

A note provides additional information you might find useful as you are working. A note augments a discussion with ancillary details or may point you to an article, a white paper, or another online reference for more information about a specific topic.

TIP

Tips contain special insights or time-saving techniques, as well as information about items of particular interest to you that you might not find elsewhere.

CAUTION

A caution warns you about pitfalls or problems before you run a command, edit a configuration file, or choose a setting when administering your system.

SIDEBARS CAN BE GOLDMINES

Just because something is in a sidebar does not mean that you will not find something new here. Be sure to watch for these elements, which bring in outside content that is an aside to the discussion in the text. In sidebars, you will read about other technologies, Linux-based hardware, and special procedures to make your system more robust and efficient.

Finally, you should know that all text, sample code, and screenshots in *Ubuntu Unleashed* were developed using Ubuntu and open source tools.

Read on to start learning about and using the latest version of Ubuntu.

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CHAPTER 10

Command-Line Beginner's Class

The Linux command line is one of the most powerful tools available for computer system administration and maintenance. The command line is also known as the terminal, shell, console, command prompt, and *command-line interface (CLI)*. For the purposes of this chapter and the next, these terms are interchangeable, although fine-grained differences do exist between them.

Using the command line is an efficient way to perform complex tasks accurately and much more easily than it would seem at a first glance. Knowledge of the commands available to you and also how to string them together makes using Ubuntu easier for many tasks. Many of the commands were created by the GNU Project as free software analogs to previously existing proprietary UNIX commands. You can learn more about the GNU Project at www.gnu.org/gnu/thegnuproject.html.

This chapter covers some of the basic commands that you need to know to be productive at the command line. You find out how to get to the command line and discover some of the commands used to navigate the file system and perform basic operations with files, directories, and users. This chapter does not give comprehensive coverage of all the commands discussed, but it does give you enough to get started. Chapter 11, “Command-Line Master Class, Part 1,” advances the subject further and expands on some of the commands from this chapter. The skills you discover in this chapter help you get started using the command line with confidence.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- ▶ What Is the Command Line?
- ▶ Accessing the Command Line
- ▶ User Accounts
- ▶ Reading Documentation
- ▶ Understanding the Linux File System Hierarchy
- ▶ Navigating the Linux File System
- ▶ Working with Permissions
- ▶ Working with Files
- ▶ Working as Root
- ▶ Commonly Used Commands and Programs
- ▶ References

What Is the Command Line?

If you have spent any amount of time with experienced Linux users, you have heard them mention the command line. Some, especially those who began their journey in the Linux world using distributions that make it easy to complete many tasks using a *graphical user interface (GUI)*, such as Ubuntu, might speak with trepidation about the mysteries of the text interface. Others either praise its power or comment about doing something via the command line as if it were the most natural and obvious way to complete a task.

Embracing either extreme is not necessary. You might develop an affinity for the command line when performing some tasks and might prefer using the GUI for others. This is where most users end up today. Some might say that you will never need to access the command line because Ubuntu offers a slew of graphical tools that enable you to configure most things on your system. Although the premise might be true most of the time, some good reasons exist to acquire a fundamental level of comfort with the command line that you should consider before embracing that view.

Sometimes things go wrong, and you might not have the luxury of a graphical interface to work with. In such situations, a fundamental understanding of the command line and its uses can be a real lifesaver. Also, some tasks end up being far easier and faster to accomplish from the command line. More importantly, though, you will be able to make your way around a command-line-based system, which you will encounter if you ever work with a Linux server because most Linux servers have no GUI, and all administration is done using a command-line interface.

NOTE

Don't be tempted to skip over this chapter as irrelevant. You should take the time to work through the chapter and ensure that you are comfortable with the command line before moving on. Doing so will benefit you greatly for years to come.

Initially, you might be tempted to think of the command line as the product of some sort of black and arcane art; in some ways, it can appear to be extremely difficult and complicated to use. However, with a little perseverance, by the end of this chapter, you will start to feel comfortable using the command line, and you'll be ready to move on to Chapter 11, "Command-Line Master Class, Part 1," and Chapter 12, "Command-Line Master Class, Part 2."

This chapter introduces you to commands that enable you to perform the following:

- ▶ **Routine tasks**—Logging in and out, changing passwords, and listing and navigating file directories
- ▶ **Basic file management**—Creating files and folders, copying or moving them around the file system, and renaming and deleting them
- ▶ **Basic system management**—Shutting down or rebooting, changing file permissions, and reading man pages, which are entries for commands included as files already on your computer in a standardized manual format

The information in this chapter is valuable for individual users and system administrators who are new to Linux and are learning to use the command line for the first time.

TIP

If you have used a computer for many years, you have probably come into contact with MS-DOS, in which case being presented with a black screen will fill you with a sense of nostalgia. Don't get too comfy; the command line in Linux is different from (and actually more powerful than) its distant MS-DOS cousin. Even cooler is that whereas MS-DOS skills are transferable only to other MS-DOS environments, the skills you learn at the Linux command line can be transferred easily to other UNIX and UNIX-like operating systems, such as Solaris, OpenBSD, FreeBSD, and even macOS, which provides access to the terminal.

Accessing the Command Line

You can quickly access the terminal by using the desktop menu option Terminal. This opens `gnome-terminal`, from which you can access the terminal while remaining in a GUI environment. This time, the terminal appears as white text on an aubergine (dark purple) background. This is the most common method for accessing the terminal for most desktop users.

NOTE

Finding and running programs, such as Terminal, from a GUI is covered in Chapter 4, "Ubuntu Desktop Options," as is logging in to a Linux system using a graphical interface. This chapter focuses on text-based logins and the use of Linux.

Text-Based Console Login

If you access the terminal as described previously, by opening the Terminal app, you will not need to log in because you are already logged in to your account.

If you are accessing the terminal remotely, such as from another computer using SSH (see Chapter 19, "Remote Access with SSH and VNC") you will start with a prompt similar to this one:

```
login:
```

Your prompt might vary, depending on the version of Ubuntu you are using and the method you are using to connect. In any event, at this prompt, type in your username and press Enter. When you are prompted for your password, type it in and press Enter.

NOTE

Your password is not echoed back to you, which is a good idea. Why is it a good idea? Security. This prevents any shoulder surfers from seeing what you've typed or the length of the password.

Pressing the Enter key drops you to a shell prompt, signified by the dollar sign:

```
matthew@seymour:~$
```

This particular prompt says that the user is logged in as the user `matthew` on the system `seymour` and is currently in the home directory; Linux uses the tilde (`~`) as shorthand for the home directory, which would usually be something like `/home/matthew`.

Note that throughout this book we use the default shell for the command line, but other shells exist. The default and other shells are discussed in more detail in Chapter 14, “Automating Tasks and Shell Scripting.”

TIP

Navigating through the system at the command line can get confusing at times, especially when a directory name occurs in several places. Fortunately, Linux includes a simple command that tells you exactly where you are in the file system. It's easy to remember that this command is `pwd` because it is an abbreviation of *print working directory*. You simply type `pwd` at any point to get the full path of your location. For example, typing `pwd` after following the preceding instructions shows `/home/yourusername`, meaning that you are currently in your home directory.

Using the `pwd` command can save you a lot of frustration when you have changed directory half a dozen times and have lost track of where you are.

Logging Out

Use the `exit` or `logout` command or press `Ctrl+D` to exit your session. You are then returned to the login prompt. If you use virtual consoles, remember to exit each console before leaving your PC. (Otherwise, someone could easily sit down and use your account.)

Logging In and Out from a Remote Computer

You can happily log in on your computer, an act known as a *local* login. In addition, you can log in to your computer via a network connection from a remote computer. Linux-based operating systems provide a number of remote access commands you can use to log in to other computers on your *local area network (LAN)*, *wide area network (WAN)*, or the Internet. Note that you must have an account on the remote computer, *and* the remote computer must be configured to support remote logins; otherwise, you won't be able to log in.

NOTE

See Chapter 18, “Networking,” to see how to set up network interfaces with Linux to support remote network logins and Chapter 19 to see how to start remote access services (such as `ssh`).

The best and most secure way to log in to a remote Linux computer is to use `ssh`, the Secure Shell client. Your login and session are then encrypted while you work on the

remote computer. The `ssh` client features many command-line options but can be simply used with the name or IP address of the remote computer, as follows:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ssh 192.168.0.41
The authenticity of host '192.168.0.41 (192.168.0.41)' can't be established.
RSA key fingerprint is e1:db:6c:da:3f:fc:56:1b:52:f9:94:e0:d1:1d:31:50.
Are you sure you want to continue connecting (yes/no)?
```

yes

The first time you connect with a remote computer using `ssh`, Linux displays the remote computer's encrypted identity key and asks you to verify the connection. After you type **yes** and press Enter, you are warned that the remote computer's identity (key) has been entered in a file named `known_hosts` under the `.ssh` directory in your home directory. You are also prompted to enter your password:

```
Warning: Permanently added '192.168.0.41' (RSA) \
to the list of known hosts.
matthew@192.168.0.41's password:
matthew@babbage~$
```

After entering your password, you can work on the remote computer, which you can confirm by noticing the changed prompt that now uses the name of the remote computer on which you are working. Again, because you are using `ssh`, everything you enter on the keyboard in communication with the remote computer is encrypted. When you log out, you return to the shell on your computer:

```
matthew@babbage~$ logout
matthew@seymour:~$
```

User Accounts

A good place to start this section is with the concept of user-based security. For the most part, only two types of people access the system as users. (Although there are other accounts that run programs and processes, here we are talking about accounts that represent human beings rather than something like an account created for a web server process.) Most people have a regular user account. These users can change anything that is specific to their accounts, such as the wallpaper on the desktop, their personal preferences, and the configuration for a program when it is run by them using their account. Note that the emphasis is on anything that is *specific to their accounts*. This type of user cannot make system-wide changes that could affect other users.

To make system-wide changes, you need to use super user privileges, such as can be done using the account you created when you started Ubuntu for the first time (see Chapter 1, “Installing Ubuntu and Post-Installation Configuration”). With super user privileges you have access to the entire system and can carry out any task—even destructive tasks. To help prevent this from happening, this user does not run with these powers enabled at all times but instead spends most of the time as a regular user.

To use super user privileges from the command line, you need to preface the command you want to execute with another command, `sudo`, followed by a space and the command you want to run. As a mnemonic device, some think of this as “super user do.” When you press Enter (after typing the remaining command), you are prompted for your password, which you should type, and then press the Enter key. As usual on any UNIX-based system, the password does not appear on the screen while you are typing it as a security measure, in case someone is watching over your shoulder. Ubuntu then carries out the command but with super user privileges.

An example of the destructive nature of working as the super user is the age-old example `sudo rm -rf /`, which would erase everything on your hard drive if it did not require appending `--no-preserve-root` to work—which was added specifically to prevent people from accidentally doing this. If you enter a command using `sudo` as a regular user who does not have an account with super user privileges, an error message appears, and nothing happens because the command will not run. We recommend that you don't try this particular command as a test, though. If you enter this command using an account with super user privileges, you will soon find yourself starting over with a fresh installation and hoping you have a current backup of all your data. You need to be especially careful when using your super user privileges; otherwise, you might do irreparable damage to your system.

However, the ability to work as the super user is fundamental to a healthy Linux system and should not be feared but rather respected, even while used only with focused attention. Without this ability, you could not install new software, edit system configuration files, or do a large number of important administration tasks. By the way, you have already been performing operations with super user privileges from the GUI if you have ever been asked to enter your password to complete a specific task, such as installing software updates. The difference is that most graphical interfaces limit the options that users have and make it a little more difficult to do some of the big, disruptive tasks, even the ones that are incredibly useful.

Ubuntu works slightly differently from many other Linux distributions. If you study some other Linux distros, especially older or more traditional ones, you will hear about a specific user account called `root`, which is a super user account. In those distros, instead of typing `sudo` before a command while using a regular user account with super user privileges, you log in to the `root` account and issue the command without entering a password (at least by default; in almost all cases, `sudo` can be installed and configured in these distros). In those cases, you can tell when you are using the `root` account at the command line because you see a pound sign (`#`) in the command-line prompt in place of the dollar sign (`$`). For example, you see `matthew@seymour:~#` instead of the usual `matthew@seymour:~$` prompt.

In Ubuntu, the `root` account is disabled by default because forcing regular users with super user privileges to type a specific command every time they want to execute a command as a super user should have the benefit of making them carefully consider what they are doing when they use that power. It is easy to forget to log out of a `root` account,

and entering a powerful command while logged in to root can be catastrophic. However, if you are more experienced and comfortable with the more traditional method of using super user privileges and want to enable the root account, you can use the command `sudo passwd`. When prompted, enter your user password to confirm that your user account has super user privileges. You are then asked for a new UNIX password, which will be the password for the root account, so make sure to remember it. You are also prompted to repeat the password, in case you've made any mistakes. After you've typed it in and pressed Enter, the root account is active. You find out how to switch to root later on.

An alternative way of getting a root prompt, without having to enable the root account, is to issue the command `sudo -i`. After entering your password, you find yourself at a root prompt (`#`). Do what you need to do, and when you are finished, type `exit` and press Enter to return to your usual prompt. You can learn more about `sudo` and root from an Ubuntu perspective at <https://help.ubuntu.com/community/RootSudo>.

Reading Documentation

Although you learn the basics of using Ubuntu in this book, you need time and practice to master and troubleshoot more complex aspects of the Linux operating system and your distribution. As with any other operating system, you can expect to encounter some problems or perplexing questions as you continue to work with Linux. The first place to turn for help with these issues is the documentation included with your system; if you cannot find the information you need there, check Ubuntu's website.

Using Man Pages

To learn more about a command or program, use the `man` command followed by the name of the command. Man pages are stored in places like `/usr/share/man` and `/usr/local/share/man`, but you don't need to know that. To read a man page, such as the one for the `rm` command, use the `man` command like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ man rm
```

After you press Enter, the `less` command (a Linux command known as a *pager*) displays the man page. The `less` command is a text browser you can use to scroll forward and backward (even sideways) through the document to learn more about the command. Type the letter `h` to get help, use the forward slash (`/`) to enter a search string, or press `q` to quit.

No one can remember everything. Even the best and most experienced systems administrators use man pages regularly. Looking up complicated information is easy because this frees you from having to recall it all, enabling you to focus on your task rather than punishing you for not remembering syntax.

NOTE

Nearly every one of the hundreds of commands included with Linux has a man page; however, some do not have man pages or have only simple ones. You can use the `info` command to read more detailed information about some commands or as a replacement for

others. For example, to learn even more about `info` (which has a rather extensive manual page), use the `info` command like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ info info
```

Use the arrow keys to navigate through the document and press `q` to quit reading.

Using apropos

Linux, like UNIX, is a self-documenting system, with `man` pages accessible through the `man` command. Linux offers many other helpful commands for accessing its documentation. You can use the `apropos` command (for example, with a keyword such as `partition`) to find commands related to partitioning, like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ apropos partition
addpart      (8)   - Simple wrapper around the "add partition" ioctl
all-swaps    (7)   - Event signaling that all swap partitions have been ac...
cfdisk       (8)   - Curses/slang based disk partition table manipulator fo...
delpart      (8)   - Simple wrapper around the "del partition" ioctl
fdisk        (8)   - Partition table manipulator for Linux
gparted      (8)   - Gnome partition editor for manipulating disk partitions.
Mpartition   (1)   - Partition an MSDOS hard disk
Partprobe    (8)   - Inform the OS of partition table changes
Partx        (8)   - Telling the kernel about presence and numbering of on-...
Pvcreate     (8)   - Initialize a disk or partition for use by LVM
Pvresize     (8)   - Resize a disk or partition in use by LVM2
Sfdisk       (8)   - Partition table manipulator for Linux
```

For the record, `apropos` is the equivalent of using `man -k`.

Using whereis

To find a command and its documentation, you can use the `whereis` command. For example, if you are looking for the `fdisk` command, you can use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ whereis fdisk
fdisk: /sbin/fdisk /usr/share/man/man8/fdisk.8.gz
```

Understanding the Linux File System Hierarchy

Linux has inherited from UNIX a well-planned hierarchy for organizing things. It isn't perfect, but it is generally logical and mostly consistent, although distributions do tend to make some modifications that force some thinking and adaptation when moving between, say, Fedora, Slackware, and Ubuntu. Table 10.1 shows some of the top-level directories that are part of a standard Linux distro.

Table 10.1 Basic Linux Directories

Directory	Description
/	The root directory
/bin	Essential commands
/boot	Boot loader files, Linux kernel
/dev	Device files
/etc	System configuration files
/home	User home directories
/lib	Shared libraries, kernel modules
/lost+found	Recovered files (if found after a file system check)
/media	Mount point for removable media, such as DVDs and floppy disks
/mnt	Usual mount point for local, remote file systems, file systems that are additional to the standard, such as a DVD-ROM or another HDD
/opt	Add-on software packages
/proc	Kernel information, process control
/root	Super user (root) home
/sbin	System commands (mostly root only)
/sys	Real-time information on devices used by the kernel
/tmp	Temporary files
/usr	Software not essential for system operation, such as applications
/var	Variable files relating to services that run on the system, but whose contents are expected to change regularly during normal operation

Knowing these directories can help you find files when you need them. This knowledge can even help you partition hard drives when you install new systems; you can choose to put certain directories on their own distinct partition, which can be useful for things like isolating directories from one another (for example, for server security you might put a directory like `/boot` that doesn't change often on its own partition and make it read-only and unchangeable without specific operations being done by a super user during a maintenance cycle). Desktop users probably don't need to think about such operations, but knowing the directory tree is still quite useful when you want to find the configuration file for a specific program and set some program options system-wide to affect all users.

NOTE

This is a lot to remember, especially at first. For reference, there is a man page for the Linux file system hierarchy:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ man hiercssn
```

This returns a detailed listing, with a description of each part.

More information about file systems is available in Chapter 21, "Performance Tuning."

Some of the important directories in Table 10.1, such as those containing user and root commands or system configuration files, are discussed in the following sections. You may use and edit files under these directories when you use Ubuntu.

Essential Commands in `/bin` and `/sbin`

The `/bin` directory contains essential commands used by the system for running and booting the system. In general, only the root operator uses the commands in the `/sbin` directory. The software in both locations is essential to the system; it makes the system what it is, and changing or removing this software could cause instability or a complete system failure. Often, the commands in these two directories are *statically* linked, which means the commands do not depend on software libraries residing under the `/lib` or `/usr/lib` directories. Nearly all the other applications on your system are *dynamically* linked, meaning that they require the use of external software libraries (also known as *shared* libraries) to run. This is a feature for both sets of software.

The commands in `/bin` and `/sbin` are kept stable to maintain foundational system integrity and do not need to be updated often, if at all. For the security of the system, these commands are kept in a separate location and isolated so that changes are more difficult and so it will be more obvious to the system administrator if unauthorized changes are attempted or made.

Application software changes more frequently, and applications often use the same functions that other pieces of application software use. This was the genesis of shared libraries. When a security update is needed for something that is used by more than one program, it has to be updated in only one location, a specific software library. This enables easy and quick security updates that will affect several pieces of non-system-essential software at the same time by updating one shared library, contained in one file on the computer.

Configuration Files in `/etc`

System configuration files and directories reside under the `/etc` directory. Some major software packages, such as Apache, OpenSSH, and `xinetd`, have their own subdirectories in `/etc`, filled with configuration files. Others, like `crontab` or `fstab`, use one file. Examples of system-related configuration files in `/etc` include the following:

- ▶ **fstab**—The file system table is a text file that lists each hard drive, CD-ROM, or other storage device attached to your PC. The table indexes each device's partition information with a place in your Linux file system (directory layout) and lists other options for each device when used with Linux (see Chapter 22, "Kernel and Module Management"). Nearly all entries in `fstab` can be manipulated by root using the `mount` command.
- ▶ **modprobe.d/**—This folder holds all the instructions to load kernel modules that are required as part of system startup.
- ▶ **passwd**—This file holds the list of users for the system, including special-purpose nonhuman users like `syslog` and `CouchDB`, along with user account information.
- ▶ **sudoers**—This file holds a list of users or user groups with super user access.

User Directories: /home

The most important data on a non-server Linux system often resides in the user's directories, found under the `/home` directory. User directories are named by default according to account usernames, so on a computer where you have an account named `matthew`, your home directory would generally be found in `/home/matthew`. This can be changed, as described in Chapter 11.

Segregating the system and user data can be helpful in preventing data loss and making the process of backing up easier. For example, having user data reside on a separate file system or mounted from a remote computer on the network might help shield users from data loss in the event of a system hardware failure. For a laptop or desktop computer at home, you might place `/home` on a separate partition from the rest of the file system so that if the operating system is upgraded, damaged, or reinstalled, `/home` would be more likely to survive the event intact.

Using the Contents of the /proc Directory to Interact with or Obtain Information from the Kernel

The contents of the `/proc` directory are created from memory and exist only while Linux is running. This directory contains special files that either extract information from or send information to the kernel. Many Linux utilities extract information from dynamically created directories and files under this directory, also known as a *virtual file system*. For example, the `free` command obtains its information from a file named `meminfo`:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ free
```

	total	used	free	shared	buffers	cached
Mem:	4055680	2725684	1329996	0	188996	1551464
-/+ buffers/cache:		985224	3070456			
Swap:	8787512	0	8787512			

This information constantly changes as the system is used. You can get the same information by using the `cat` command to see the contents of the `meminfo` file:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cat /proc/meminfo
```

```
MemTotal:          4055680 KB
MemFree:           1329692 KB
Buffers:           189208 KB
Cached:            1551488 KB
SwapCached:        0 KB
Active:            1222172 KB
Inactive:          1192244 KB
Active(anon):      684092 KB
Inactive(anon):    16 KB
Active(file):      538080 KB
Inactive(file):    1192228 KB
Unevictable:       48 KB
```

```

Mlocked:                48 KB
SwapTotal:              8787512 KB
SwapFree:               8787512 KB
Dirty:                  136 KB
Writeback:              0 KB
AnonPages:              673760 KB
Mapped:                 202308 KB
Shmem:                  10396 KB
Slab:                   129248 KB
SReclaimable:          107356 KB
SUnreclaim:             21892 KB
KernelStack:            2592 KB
PageTables:             30108 KB
NFS_Unstable:           0 KB
Bounce:                 0 KB
WritebackTmp:           0 KB
CommitLimit:           10815352 KB
Committed_AS:           1553172 KB
VmallocTotal:           34359738367 KB
VmallocUsed:             342300 KB
VmallocChunk:           34359387644 KB
HardwareCorrupted:      0 KB
HugePages_Total:        0
HugePages_Free:         0
HugePages_Rsvd:         0
HugePages_Surp:         0
Hugepagesize:           2048 KB
DirectMap4k:            38912 KB
DirectMap2M:            4153344 KB

```

The `/proc` directory can also be used to dynamically alter the behavior of a running Linux kernel by “echoing” numerical values to specific files under the `/proc/sys` directory. For example, to “turn on” kernel protection against one type of denial-of-service (DoS) attack known as *SYN flooding*, use the `echo` command to send the number 1 to the following `/proc` path:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo echo 1 >/proc/sys/net/ipv4/tcp_syncookies
```

Other ways to use the `/proc` directory include the following:

- ▶ Getting CPU information, such as the family, type, and speed from `/proc/cpuinfo`.
- ▶ Viewing important networking information under `/proc/net`, such as active interfaces information in `/proc/net/dev`, routing information in `/proc/net/route`, and network statistics in `/proc/net/netstat`.

- ▶ Retrieving file system information.
- ▶ Reporting media mount point information via USB; for example, the Linux kernel reports what device to use to access files (such as `/dev/sda`) if a USB camera or hard drive is detected on the system. You can use the `dmesg` command to see this information.
- ▶ Getting the kernel version in `/proc/version`, performance information such as uptime in `/proc/uptime`, or other statistics such as CPU load, swap file usage, and processes in `/proc/stat`.

Working with Shared Data in the `/usr` Directory

The `/usr` directory contains software applications, libraries, and other types of shared data for use by anyone on the system. Many Linux system administrators give `/usr` its own partition. A number of subdirectories under `/usr` contain manual pages (`/usr/share/man`), software package shared files (`/usr/share/name_of_package`, such as `/usr/share/emacs`), additional application or software package documentation (`/usr/share/doc`), and an entire subdirectory tree of locally built and installed software, `/usr/local`.

Temporary File Storage in the `/tmp` Directory

As its name implies, the `/tmp` directory is used for temporary file storage. As you use Linux, various programs create files in this directory. Files in this directory are cleared daily by a `cron` job and every time the system is booted.

Accessing Variable Data Files in the `/var` Directory

The `/var` directory contains subdirectories used by various system services for spooling and logging. Many of these variable data files, such as print spooler queues, are temporary, whereas others, such as system and kernel logs, are renamed and rotated in use. Incoming email is usually directed to files under `/var/spool/mail`.

NOTE

Linux also uses `/var` for other important system services, such as the Apache web server's initial home page directory for the system, `/var/www/html`. (See Chapter 25, "Apache Web Server Management," for more information about using Apache.)

Navigating the Linux File System

In the Linux file system, as with its predecessor UNIX, everything is a file: data files, binary files, executable programs, and even input and output devices. These files are placed in a series of directories that act like file folders. A directory is nothing more than a special type of file that contains a list of other files/directories. These files and directories

are used to create a hierarchical structure that enables logical placement of specific types of files. Later this chapter discusses the standard hierarchy of the Linux file system. First, you learn how to navigate and interact with the file system.

NOTE

A directory with contents is called a *parent*, and its contents are called *children*, as in “/home/matthew/Documents is a child directory of /home/matthew, its parent.”

Listing the Contents of a Directory with `ls`

The `ls` command lists the contents of the current directory. It is commonly used by itself, but a number of options (also known as switches) are available for `ls` and give you more information. If you have just logged in as described earlier, the `ls` command lists the files and directories in your home directory:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls
Documents  Music      file.txt  Pictures  Music
```

NOTE

All directory listings in this chapter are abbreviated to save space.

By itself, the `ls` command shows just a list of names. Some are files, some are directories. This is useful if you know what you are looking for but cannot remember the exact name. However, using `ls` in this manner has some limitations. First, it does not show hidden files. Hidden files use filenames that start with a period (.) as the first character. They are often used for configuration of specific programs and are not accessed frequently. For this reason, they are not included in a basic directory listing. You can see all the hidden files by adding a switch to the command, like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -a
.          .bash_logout  Documents     Music
..         .bashrc      file.txt      Pictures
.bash_history .config      .local       .profile
```

There is still more information available about each item in a directory. To include details such as the file/directory permissions, owner and group (discussed later in this chapter), size, and the date and time it was last modified, enter the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -al
total 608
drwxr-xr-x 38 matthew matthew 4096 2015-06-04 08:20 .
drwxr-xr-x  3 root    root   4096 2015-05-16 16:48 ..
-rw-----  1 matthew matthew  421 2015-06-04 10:27 .bash_history
```

```

-rw-r--r-- 1 matthew matthew 220 2015-05-16 16:48 .bash_logout
-rw-r--r-- 1 matthew matthew 3353 2015-05-16 16:48 .bashrc
drwxr-xr-x 13 matthew matthew 4096 2015-05-21 10:42 .config
drwxr-xr-x 2 matthew matthew 4096 2015-05-16 17:07 Documents
-rw-r--r-- 1 matthew matthew 335 2015-05-16 16:48 file.txt
drwxr-xr-x 3 matthew matthew 4096 2015-05-16 17:07 .local
drwxr-xr-x 2 matthew matthew 4096 2015-05-16 17:07 Music
drwxr-xr-x 3 matthew matthew 4096 2015-05-16 18:07 Pictures
-rw-r--r-- 1 matthew matthew 675 2015-05-16 16:48 .profile
    
```

The listing (abbreviated here) is now given with one item per line but with multiple columns. The listing starts with the number of items in the directory. (Both files and subdirectories are included; remember that the listing here is abbreviated.) Then, the details are as shown in Figure 10.1.

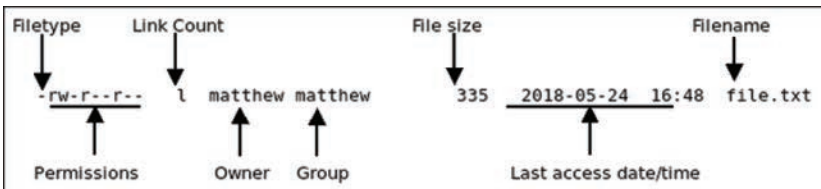


FIGURE 10.1 Decoding the output of a detailed directory listing.

These details are discussed more completely later in the chapter, in the “Working with Permissions” section.

Another useful switch is this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -R
```

This command scans and lists all the contents of the subdirectories of the current directory. This is likely to be a lot of information, so you might want to redirect the output to a text file so that you can browse through it at your leisure by using the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -laR > listing.txt
```

TIP

The previous command sends the output of `ls -laR` to a file called `listing.txt` and demonstrates part of the power of the Linux command line. At the command line, you can use files as inputs to commands, or you can generate files as outputs, as shown. For more information about redirects and combining commands, see Chapter 14. In the meantime, note that you can read the contents of the text file by using the command `less listing.txt`, which lets you read the file bit by bit, using the arrow keys to navigate in the file (or Enter to move to the next line), the spacebar to move to the next page, and q to exit when done.

Changing Directories with `cd`

Use the `cd` command to move within the file system from one directory to another. It might help you remember this command to think of it meaning *change directory*. The most basic usage of `cd` is as follows:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cd somedir
```

This command looks in the current directory for the `somedir` subdirectory and then moves you into it. You can also specify an exact location for a directory, like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cd /home/matthew/stuff/somedir
```

You can also use the `cd` command with several shortcuts. For example, to quickly move up to the *parent* directory, the one above the one you are currently in, use the `cd` command like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cd ..
```

To return to your home directory from anywhere in the Linux file system, use the `cd` command like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cd
```

You can also use the `$HOME` shell environment variable to accomplish the same thing. Environment variables are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 12. To return to your home directory, type this command and press Enter:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cd $HOME
```

You can accomplish the same thing by using the tilde (`~`), like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cd ~
```

Finding Your Current Directory with `pwd`

Use `pwd` to determine where you are within the file system:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ pwd
```

Working with Permissions

Under Linux (and UNIX), everything in the file system, including directories and devices, is a file. And every file on your system has an accompanying set of permissions based on ownership. These permissions provide data security by giving specific permission settings to every single item denoting who may read, write, or execute the file. These permissions are set individually for the file's owner, for members of the group the file belongs to, and for all others on the system.

You can examine the default permissions for a file you create by using the `umask` command, which lists default permissions using the number system explained next, or by using the `touch` command and then the `ls` command's long-format listing, like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ touch file
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -l file
-rw-r--r-- 1 matthew matthew 0 2015-06-30 13:06 file
```

In this example, the `touch` command quickly creates a file. The `ls` command then reports on the file, displaying the following (from left to right):

- ▶ **The type of file created**—Common indicators of the type of file are in the leading letter in the output. A blank (which is represented by a dash, as in the preceding example) designates a plain file, `d` designates a directory, `c` designates a character device (such as `/dev/ttyS0`), `l` indicates a symbolic link, and `b` is used for a block device (such as `/dev/sda`).
- ▶ **Permissions**—Read, write, and execute permissions may be assigned for the owner, group, and all others on the system. (You learn more about these permissions later in this section.) Permissions are traditionally called the *mode*, which is where the `chmod` command we will discuss later comes from.
- ▶ **Number of hard links to the file**—The number `1` designates that there is only one file, and any other number indicates that there might be one or more hard-linked files. Links are created with the `ln` command. A hard-linked file is a pointer to the original file, which might be located elsewhere on the system. Only the root operator can create a hard link of a directory.
- ▶ **The owner**—This is the account that owns the file; it is originally the file creator, but you can change this designation by using the `chown` command.
- ▶ **The group**—This is the group of users allowed to access the file; it is originally the file creator's main group, but you can change this designation by using the `chgrp` command.
- ▶ **File size and creation/modification date**—The last two elements indicate the size of the file in bytes and the date the file was created or last modified.

Assigning Permissions

Under Linux, permissions are grouped by owner, group, and others, with read, write, and execute permission assigned to each, as follows:

Owner	Group	Others
<code>rwX</code>	<code>rwX</code>	<code>rxw</code>

Permissions can be indicated by mnemonic or octal characters. Mnemonic characters are listed here:

- ▶ `r` indicates permission for an owner, a member of the owner's group, or others to open and read the file.

- ▶ `w` indicates permission for an owner, a member of the owner's group, or others to open and write to the file.
- ▶ `x` indicates permission for an owner, a member of the owner's group, or others to execute the file (or read a directory).

In the previous example for the file named `file`, the owner, `matthew`, has read and write permission. Any member of the group named `matthew` may only read the file. All other users may only read the file. Also note that default permissions for files created by the root operator (while using `sudo` or a root account) will differ because of `umask` settings assigned by the shell.

Many users prefer to use numeric codes, based on octal (base 8) values, to represent permissions. Here's what these values mean:

- ▶ 4 indicates read permission.
- ▶ 2 indicates write permission.
- ▶ 1 indicates execute permission.

In octal notation, the previous example file has a permission setting of `644` (read + write or `4 + 2`, read-only or `4`, read-only or `4`). Although you can use either form of permissions notation, octal is easy to use quickly when you visualize and understand how permissions are numbered.

NOTE

In Linux, you can create groups to assign a number of users access to common directories and files, based on permissions. You might assign everyone in accounting to a group named `accounting` and allow that group access to accounts payable files while disallowing access by other departments. Defined groups are maintained by the root operator, but you can use the `newgrp` command to temporarily join other groups to access files (as long as the root operator has added you to the other groups). You can also allow or deny other groups' access to your files by modifying the group permissions of your files.

Directory Permissions

Directories are also files under Linux. For example, again use the `ls` command to show permissions, like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mkdir directory
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -ld directory
drwxr-xr-x 2 matthew matthew 4096 2015-06-30 13:23 directory
```

In this example, the `mkdir` command is used to create a directory. The `ls` command, with its `-ld` option, is used to show the permissions and other information about the directory (not its contents). Here you can see that the directory has permission values of `755` (read + write + execute or `4 + 2 + 1`, read + execute or `4 + 1`, and read + execute or `4 + 1`).

This shows that the owner can read and write to the directory and, because of execute permission, also list the directory's contents. Group members and all other users can list only the directory contents. Note that directories require execute permission for anyone to be able to view their contents.

You should also notice that the `ls` command's output shows a leading `d` in the permissions field. This letter specifies that this file is a directory; normal files have a blank field in its place. Other files, such as those specifying a block or character device, have a different letter.

For example, if you examine the device file for a Linux serial port, you see the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -l /dev/ttyS0
crw-rw---- 1 root dialout 4, 64 2015-06-30 08:13 /dev/ttyS0
```

Here, `/dev/ttyS0` is a character device (such as a serial communications port and designated by a `c`) owned by root and available to anyone in the `dialout` group. The device has permissions of `660` (read + write, read + write, no permission).

On the other hand, if you examine the device file for an IDE hard drive, you see this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -l /dev/sda
brw-rw-- -- 1 root disk 8, 0 2015-06-30 08:13 /dev/sda
```

In this example, `b` designates a block device (a device that transfers and caches data in blocks) with similar permissions. Other device entries you will run across on your Linux system include symbolic links, designated by `s`.

Altering File Permissions with `chmod`

You can use the `chmod` command to alter a file's permissions. This command uses various forms of command syntax, including octal or a mnemonic form (such as `u`, `g`, `o`, or `a` and `rx`, and so on) to specify a desired change. You can use the `chmod` command to add, remove, or modify file or directory permissions to protect, hide, or open up access to a file by other users (except for the root account or a user with super user permission and using `sudo`, either of which can access any file or directory on a Linux system).

The mnemonic forms of `chmod`'s options are (when used with a plus character, `+`, to add, or a minus sign, `-`, to remove):

- ▶ `u`—Adds or removes user (owner) read, write, or execute permission
- ▶ `g`—Adds or removes group read, write, or execute permission
- ▶ `o`—Adds or removes read, write, or execute permission for others not in a file's group
- ▶ `a`—Adds or removes read, write, or execute permission for all users
- ▶ `r`—Adds or removes read permission
- ▶ `w`—Adds or removes write permission
- ▶ `x`—Adds or removes execution permission

For example, if you create a file, such as a `readme.txt`, the file has the following default permissions (set by the `umask` setting in `/etc/bashrc`, covered in the next section):

```
-rw-r--r-- 1 matthew matthew 0 2015-06-30 13:33 readme.txt
```

As you can see, you can read and write the file. Anyone else can only read the file (and only if it is outside your home directory, which will have read, write, and execute permission set only for you, the owner). You can remove all write permission for anyone by using `chmod`, the minus sign (`-`), and `aw`, as follows:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ chmod a-w readme.txt
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -l readme.txt
-r--r--r-- 1 matthew matthew 0 2015-06-30 13:33 readme.txt
```

Now, no one can write to the file (except you, if the file is in your `/home` or `/tmp` directory because of directory permissions). To restore read and write permission for only you as the owner, use the plus sign (`+`) and the `u` and `rw` options, like so:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ chmod u+rw readme.txt
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -l readme.txt
-rw-r--r-- 1 matthew matthew 0 2015-06-30 13:33 readme.txt
```

You can also use the octal form of the `chmod` command (for example, to modify a file's permissions so that only you, the owner, can read and write a file). Use the `chmod` command and a file permission of `600`, like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ chmod 600 readme.txt
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -l readme.txt
-rw----- 1 matthew matthew 0 2015-06-30 13:33 readme.txt
```

If you take away execution permission for a directory, files will be hidden inside and may not be listed or accessed by anyone else (except the root operator, of course, who has access to any file on your system). By using various combinations of permission settings, you can quickly and easily set up a more secure environment, even as a normal user in your `/home` directory.

File Permissions with `umask`

When you create a file, it is created with a default set of permissions, `666`. Directories have a default set of permissions, `777`. You can view and modify the default permissions for either with `umask`, which works like a filter. When a file is created by a user account, whether that account is owned by a human like `matthew` or a process like `init`, the file will be created using specific permissions.

The numbers we used earlier when discussing file permissions are also used with `umask`, but with an interesting change. Now, the numbers defined in `umask` are subtracted from the ultimate file permissions. So, if you wanted all new directories to be created with a default permission of `777`, you would type this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ umask 000
```

Of course, you would never want to have all your directories or files accessible by default because that would be incredibly insecure and unsafe. The default `umask` is `022`, which means that files are created by default with `644` permissions, except in the `/home` directory (for all user directories under it) where the `umask` is `002` and files are created with `775`. Note: The `umask` is a file system-wide variable for each user session, so you cannot have a different setting for specific directories, such as one for `/home` and another for `/home/seymour`.

To find the current `umask` setting, use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ umask
```

This may list four digits instead of three. If so, don't be confused. The additional digit is the first one; it is explained later in this chapter, in the section "Understanding Set User ID, Set Group ID, and Sticky Bit Permissions."

To change the `umask` setting—for example, if you wanted the default for files to be `640`—use the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ umask 037
```

File Permissions with `chgrp`

You can use the `chgrp` command to change the group to which a file belongs:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ chgrp sudo filename
```

Changing File Permissions with `chown`

You can use the `chown` command to change the owner of a file:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ chown matthew filename
```

You can also use the `chown` command to change the group of a file at the same time:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ chown matthew:sudo filename
```

Understanding Set User ID, Set Group ID, and Sticky Bit Permissions

The first two of the three listed types of permission are "set user ID," known as *suid*, and "set group ID," or *sgid*. These settings, when used in a program, enable any user running that program to have program owner or group owner permissions for that program. These settings enable the program to be run effectively by anyone, without requiring that each user's permissions be altered to include specific permissions for that program.

One commonly used program with *suid* permissions is the `passwd` command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ ls -l /usr/bin/passwd
-rwsr-xr-x 1 root root 42856 2015-01-26 10:09 /usr/bin/passwd
```

This setting allows normal users to execute the command (as root) to make changes to a root-only-accessible file `/etc/passwd`.

By default, `suid` and `sgid` are turned off on files. To set them, add an extra digit to the beginning of a number in a `chmod` command. `Suid` uses 4. `Sgid` uses 2. You can set both at the same time by using 6 (4 + 2). For example, for a file owned by root with current 711 permissions allowing anyone to run it, you can make it run as root with the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ chmod 4711 filename
```

NOTE

Other files that might have `suid` or `guid` permissions include `at`, `rcp`, `rlogin`, `rsh`, `chage`, `chsh`, `ssh`, `crontab`, `sudo`, `sendmail`, `ping`, `mount`, and several UNIX-to-UNIX Copy (UUCP) utilities. Many programs (such as games) might also have this type of permission to access a sound device.

`Sgid` has an additional function when set on directories; in this case, new directory contents are automatically assigned the group owner on the directory.

Files or programs that have `suid` or `guid` permissions can sometimes present security holes because they bypass normal permissions. This problem is compounded if the permission extends to an executable binary (a command) with an inherent security flaw because it could lead to any system user or intruder gaining root access. In past exploits, this typically happened when a user fed a vulnerable command with unexpected input (such as a long pathname or option); the command would fail, and the user would be presented with a root prompt. Although Linux developers are constantly on the lookout for poor programming practices, new exploits are found all the time and can crop up unexpectedly, especially in newer software packages that haven't had the benefit of peer developer review.

Savvy Linux system administrators keep the number of `suid` or `guid` files present on a system to a minimum. The `find` command can be used to display all such files on a system:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo find / -type f -perm /6000 -exec ls -l {} \;
```

NOTE

The `find` command is quite helpful and can be used for many purposes, such as before or during backup operations.

Note that the programs do not necessarily have to be removed from your system. If your users really do not need to use the program, you can remove a program's execute permission for anyone. As the root operator, you have to decide whether your users are allowed, for example, to mount and unmount CD-ROMs or other media on your system. Although Linux-based operating systems can be set up to accommodate ease of use and convenience, allowing programs such as `mount` to be `suid` might not be the best security

policy. Other candidates for `suid` permission change could include the `chsh`, `at`, or `chage` commands.

An additional setting called the *sticky bit* is available using this same additional first digit. A sticky bit limits who may rename or delete files within a directory. When it is set, files in that directory may be unlinked or renamed only by a super user, the directory owner, or the file owner. Set the sticky bit to on by using a `1`, like this for a directory with `755` permissions:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ chmod 1755 directoryname
```

You can set the sticky bit concurrently with `suid` and `sgid`, like this (`4 + 2 + 1`):

```
matthew@seymour:~$ chmod 7755 directoryname
```

Setting Permissions with Access Control Lists

POSIX is a family of standards created to maintain stability and consistency across operating systems for UNIX and UNIX-like systems, such as Linux. One important feature of POSIX is the access control list (ACL; often pronounced “AK-el”). ACLs permit even more fine-grained control over access permissions.

By default, all files have an ACL. To view the ACL for a file, use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ getfacl filename
```

Typical `getfacl` output includes multiple lines, like this for `filename.txt`:

```
# file: filename.txt
# owner: matthew
# group: matthew
user::rw-
group::rw-
other::r--
```

The information listed here is standard and clear, based on what you already know. The real power of ACLs is that you can add to them. You are not restricted to the standard set of `user`, `group`, `other`. You can add multiple users and groups with permissions specific to each.

To add the user `sandra` with read, write, and execute permissions to the ACL for a file named `secrets.txt`, use the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ setfacl -m u:sandra:rxw secrets.txt
```

To remove and reset `sandra`'s permissions on the file to the file's defaults, use the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ setfacl -x u:sandra: secrets.txt
```

From these two examples, you can see that `-m` is for modify and `-r` is for remove.

ACLs permit similar actions with groups and others as with a user. Instead of the `u:` before the name, use a `g:` for groups and an `o:` for others, like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ setfacl -m g:groupname:rxw secrets.txt
matthew@seymour:~$ setfacl -m o:r secrets.txt
```

Notice that with others, there is no username or group name to include in the commands.

A useful feature is masking, which allows you to list only the permissions that are available, as in this example:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ setfacl -m m:rx secrets.txt
```

This limits everyone, regardless of any other settings. So, in this case, a group may have `rxw` settings on the file, but the mask here says to permit only `rx`, so `rx` will be the only settings that are available.

As an exercise, see if you can figure out the meaning of this output from `getfacl` for a file named `coffeecup.conf`:

```
# file: coffeecup.conf
# owner: matthew
# group: yirgacheffe
user::rw-
group::rw-
other::r--
group:qa:rxw
group:uat:rxw
mask::rxw
```

Working with Files

Managing files in your home directory involves using one or more easily remembered commands.

Creating a File with `touch`

If you are the user `matthew`, to create an empty file called `myfile` within your current directory, use the following command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ touch myfile
```

To edit this file, you must use a text editor. (Several text editors are discussed in Chapter 14. However, it is sometimes useful to create an empty file as doing so also creates an access record because of the time and date information that is connected to the file. You can also use `touch` to update this information, called a timestamp, without otherwise accessing or modifying a file.

You can create a file in a different location by changing what is after `touch`. To create a new file in `/home/matthew/randomdirectory`, if you are already in your home directory, you can use the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ touch randomdirectory/newfile
```

Or from anywhere using an absolute path, you can use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ touch /home/matthew/randomdirectory/newfile
```

Or from anywhere using a path shortcut, you can use the following command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ touch ~/randomdirectory/newfile
```

Creating a Directory with `mkdir`

To create an empty directory called `newdirectory` within your current directory, use this command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mkdir newdirectory
```

If you are the user `matthew`, you can create a directory in a different location by changing what is after `mkdir`. To create a new directory in `/home/matthew/music`, if you are already in your `/home` directory, you can use the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mkdir music/newdirectory
```

Or from anywhere using an absolute path, you can use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mkdir /home/matthew/music/newdirectory
```

Or from anywhere using a path shortcut, you can use the following command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mkdir ~/music/newdirectory
```

The `-p` option is valuable. It enables you to create a directory and its parent directories at the same time, if they do not already exist. This can be a real time saver. If the parent directories exist, the command works normally. For example, suppose you want to make a new directory with two layers of subdirectories. In this example, `music` and `newdirectory` already exist, but `subdir1` and `subdir2` are to be created:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mkdir -p ~/music/newdirectory/subdir1/subdir2
```

Deleting a Directory with `rmdir`

If you are the user `matthew`, to delete an empty directory named `directoryname`, use the following command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rmdir directoryname
```


You can remove a directory in a different location by changing what is after `rmdir`. To remove a directory in `/home/matthew/music`, if you are already in your `/home` directory, you can use the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rmdir music/directoryname
```

Or from anywhere using an absolute path, you can use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rmdir /home/matthew/music/directoryname
```

Or from anywhere using a path shortcut, you can use the following command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rmdir ~/music/directoryname
```

The directory must be empty to be removed using `rmdir`. However, you can remove a directory with its contents by using `rm`.

CAUTION

You cannot easily recover anything that has been deleted using `rmdir` or `rm`, so proceed carefully. Be absolutely certain you will never need what you are about to delete before you do so. Only a professional data recovery service is likely to be able to recover the files, and even then at great expense.

Deleting a File or Directory with `rm`

If you are the user `matthew`, to delete a file named `filename`, use this command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rm filename
```

You can remove a file in a different location by changing what is after `rm`. To remove a directory in `/home/matthew/randomdirectory`, if you are already in your `/home` directory, you can use the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rm randomdirectory/filename
```

Or from anywhere using an absolute path, you can use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rm /home/matthew/randomdirectory/filename
```

Or from anywhere using a path shortcut, you can use the following command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rm ~/randomdirectory/filename
```

If you try to use `rm` to remove an empty directory, you receive an error message:

```
rm: cannot remove `random/': Is a directory. In this case, you must use rmdir.
However, you can remove a directory and its contents by using rm.
```

CAUTION

Be sure that all the contents of a directory are known and unwanted if you choose to delete them. There is no way to recover them later. Also, be careful to ensure that you

don't have extra spaces, mistype the name of the directory, or use `sudo` to delete something that you shouldn't be deleting. Linux gives you great power, and it lets you use that power without questioning you about it; that's the human's job.

To delete a directory and all its contents, use the `-r` recursive switch (which works with many commands, not only `rm`):

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rm -r /home/matthew/randomdirectory/
```

Everything in `randomdirectory` as well as the directory itself will be deleted, including other subdirectories, without considering whether they are empty or have contents.

Moving or Renaming a File with `mv`

In Linux land, moving and renaming a file are the same thing. It doesn't matter whether you are moving the directory to another or from one filename to another filename in the same directory; there is only one command to remember. To move a file named `filename` from `~/documents` to `~/archive`, use this command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mv documents/filename archive
```

Notice that the filename is not included in the destination. The destination here must be an existing directory. If it is not, the file is renamed to the term used. Some examples will make this clear.

Assuming that you are the user `matthew`, to rename a file that is in your current directory, you could use the following:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mv oldfilename newfilename
```

To rename a file as you move it from `~/documents` to `~/archive`, you could use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mv documents/oldfilename archive/newfilename
```

Or from anywhere using an absolute path, you could use the following command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mv /home/matthew/documents/oldfilename
[ccc]/home/matthew/archive/newfilename
```

Or from anywhere using a path shortcut, you could use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ mv ~/documents/oldfilename ~/archive/newfilename
```

Copying a File with `cp`

Copying works similarly to moving, but it retains the original in the original location. Assuming that you are the user `matthew`, to copy a file named `filename` from `~/documents` to `~/archive`, use this command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cp documents/filename archive
```

Notice that the filename is not included in the destination. The destination here must be an existing directory. If it is not, the file is renamed to the term used. Some examples will make this clear.

To copy a file that is in your current directory, you could use the following, and it will work exactly the same as `mv`, except that both files will exist afterward:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cp oldfilename newfilename
```

To rename a file as you copy it from `~/documents` to `~/archive`, you could use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cp documents/oldfilename archive/newfilename
```

Or from anywhere using an absolute path, you could use the following command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cp /home/matthew/documents/oldfilename
[ccc]/home/matthew/archive/newfilename
```

Or from anywhere using a path shortcut, you could use this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cp ~/documents/oldfilename ~/archive/newfilename
```

Displaying the Contents of a File with `cat`

To view the contents of a text file named `filename` on your screen, assuming that you are the user `matthew`, use this command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ cat filename
```

Notice that the text is displayed on your screen but that you cannot edit or work with the text in any way. This command is convenient when you want to know the contents of a file but don't need to make any changes. Text editors for the terminal are covered in Chapter 12. This command works best with short files because the contents of longer files scroll off the screen too quickly to be read.

Displaying the Contents of a File with `less`

When you need to view the contents of a longer text file from the command line, you can use `less`. This produces a paged output, meaning that output stops each time your screen is full. You can then use your up- and down-arrow keys and page-up and page-down keys to scroll through the contents of the file. Then, use `q` to quit and return to the command line:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ less filename
```

In the early days of UNIX, a program called `more` gave paged output. It was the first paged output program but did not include the ability to scroll up and down. `less` was written to add that capability and was named as a bit of hacker humor because “less is more.”

Using Wildcards and Regular Expressions

Each of the commands in the previous sections can be used with pattern-matching strings known as *wildcards* or *regular expressions*. For example, to delete all files in the current directory beginning with the letters `abc`, you can use an expression beginning with the first three letters of the desired filenames. An asterisk (*) is then appended to match all these files. Use a command line with the `rm` command like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ rm abc*
```

Linux shells recognize many types of file-naming wildcards, but this is different from the capabilities of Linux commands supporting the use of more complex expressions. You learn more about using wildcards in Chapter 11 and in Chapter 14.

NOTE

You can also learn more about using expressions by reading the `grep` manual pages (`man grep`), but because both `man` and `grep` are covered in Chapter 11, this mention is included only to whet your appetite.

Working as Root

The root, or super user, account is a special account and user on UNIX and Linux systems. Super user permissions are required in part because of the restrictive file permissions assigned to important system configuration files. You must have root permission to edit these files or to access or modify certain devices (such as hard drives). When logged in as root, you have total control over your system, which can be dangerous.

When you work in root, you can destroy a running system with a simple invocation of the `rm` command like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo rm -rf / --no-preserve-root
```

This command line not only deletes files and directories but also could wipe out file systems on other partitions and even remote computers. This alone is reason enough to take precautions when using root access.

The only time you should run Linux as the super user is when you are configuring the file system, for example, or to repair or maintain the system. Logging in and using Linux as the root operator isn't a good idea because it defeats the entire concept of file permissions.

Knowing how to run commands as the super user (root) without logging in as root can help avoid serious missteps when configuring your system. In Ubuntu, you can use `sudo` to execute single commands as root and then immediately return to normal user status. For example, if you would like to edit your system's file system table (a text file that describes local or remote storage devices, their type, and location), you can use `sudo` like this:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo nano -w /etc/fstab
[sudo] password for matthew:
```

After you press Enter, you are prompted for a password that gives you access to root. This extra step can also help you think before you leap into the command. Enter the root password, and you are then editing `/etc/fstab`, using the `nano` editor with line wrapping disabled (thanks to the `-w`).

CAUTION

Before editing any important system or software service configuration file, make a backup copy. Then make sure to launch your text editor with line wrapping disabled. If you edit a configuration file without disabling line wrapping, you could insert spurious carriage returns and line feeds into its contents, causing the configured service to fail when restarting. By convention, nearly all configuration files are formatted for 80-character text width, but this is not always the case. By default, the `vi` and `emacs` editors don't use line wrapping.

Understanding and Fixing `sudo`

Most Ubuntu users never have problems with `sudo`, but sometimes, people who like to experiment break things, especially while learning. This section helps you understand more completely how `sudo` works and also how to restore `sudo` access to a specific user when, for some reason, it has ceased to function for that user.

NOTE

You usually can tell that a problem has occurred because an error message like this appears when a user tries to issue a command using `sudo`:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo shutdown -h now
[sudo] password for matthew:
matthew is not in the sudoers file. This incident will be reported.
```

Sometimes, you might not even receive an error message, but the command issued simply does nothing. Either way, you can fix the problem by using the following knowledge and procedure.

In order for a user to use `sudo`, the user account must belong to the `sudo` group and must also be listed in the `/etc/sudoers` file. If both conditions are met, the user will be permitted to temporarily use root powers for specific commands that are issued at the command line by that user account by prefacing the command with the word `sudo`.

A problem can occur for a specific user with `sudo` in several situations:

- ▶ When the user is taken out of the `sudo` group but should not have been
- ▶ When the permissions for the `/etc/sudoers` file have been changed to anything other than `440`
- ▶ When the `/etc/sudoers` file has been changed in a way that does not allow members of the `sudo` group to use root powers

These problems generally result from users doing something they should not have done, such as changing the permissions on all files rather than taking the time to figure out a specific file that is causing problems due to permissions issues. Take heed: It is better to spend a bit more time learning than it is to take a shortcut that causes bigger problems.

Fixing any of these problems requires the use of root powers. This is an obvious problem because if `sudo` is not working, the account does not have access to root. To fix it, you must gain root access. You can do this by booting into *recovery mode*, using the following steps:

1. Hold down the Shift key while the computer is booting.
2. When the GRUB menu page appears, use the arrow keys on your keyboard to scroll to the entry that ends with *(recovery mode)* and press Enter to select it.
3. When the boot process finishes, and have several options, select the menu entry for root: Drop to Root Shell Prompt. You are now at the command line, with full root access to the computer.
4. Because Ubuntu mounts file systems as read-only by default in recovery mode, you need to remount the root file system, `/`, as read/write so that you can fix the problem. Enter the following:

```
root@seymour:~# mount -o rw,remount /
```

NOTE

You now have complete root access and read/write privileges on the machine. This is an example of why security of a physical machine is important. If someone has physical access to your computer and knows what he or she is doing, that person can easily and quickly gain full control over the machine and all it contains.

If the problem exists because the user account was removed from the admin group, enter the following:

```
root@seymour:~# adduser username admin
```

If the problem exists because the permissions for `/etc/sudoers` are wrong, enter this:

```
root@seymour:~# chmod 440 /etc/sudoers
```

If the problem exists because of an internal problem in `/etc/sudoers`, make a backup of the existing file and use `visudo` to edit it. (This is a special use of the `vi` editor, covered in Chapter 12, that runs a check on the file after editing to be certain it is correct; this particular problem usually occurs when someone edits the file using another editor that does not make this check.) The contents of the file should be as follows:

```
#
# This file MUST be edited with the 'visudo' command as root.
#
# Please consider adding local content in /etc/sudoers.d/ instead of
# directly modifying this file.
```

```

#
# See the man page for details on how to write a sudoers file.
#
Defaults env_reset
Defaults secure_path="/usr/local/sbin:/usr/local/bin:/usr/sbin:/usr/bin:/sbin:/bin"

# Host alias specification

# User alias specification

# Cmnd alias specification

# User privilege specification
root ALL=(ALL:ALL) ALL

# Members of the admin group may gain root privileges
%admin ALL=(ALL) ALL

# Allow members of group sudo to execute any command
%sudo ALL=(ALL:ALL) ALL

# See sudoers(5) for more information on "#include" directives:

#include_dir /etc/sudoers.d

```

After your fix is complete, exit the root command line:

```
root@seymour:~# exit
```

You return to the recovery mode menu. Select Resume Normal Boot to finish and return to a normal boot. When the boot completes, you should be able to use `sudo` correctly again.

Creating Users

When a Linux system administrator creates a user, an entry is created in `/etc/passwd` for the user. The system also creates a directory, labeled with the user's username, in the `/home` directory. For example, if you create a user named `sandra`, the user's home directory is `/home/sandra`.

NOTE

In this chapter, you learn how to manage users from the command line. See Chapter 13, "Managing Users," for more information on user administration, including administration using graphical administration utilities.

Use the `adduser` command, along with a user's name, to quickly create a user:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo adduser sandra
```

After creating a user, you must also create the user's initial password with the `passwd` command:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo passwd sandra
```

```
Changing password for user sandra.
```

```
New password:
```

```
Retype new password:
```

```
passwd: all authentication tokens updated successfully.
```

Enter the new password twice. If you do not create an initial password for a new user, the user cannot log in.

The `adduser` command has many command-line options. The command can be used to set policies and dates for the new user's password, assign a login shell, assign group membership, and other aspects of a user's account. See `man adduser` as well as Chapter 13 for more info.

Deleting Users

Use the `deluser` command to delete users from your system. This command removes a user's entry in the system's `/etc/passwd` file. You should also use the command's `--remove-all-files` and `--remove-home` options to remove all the user's files and directories (such as the user's mail spool file under `/var/spool/mail`):

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo deluser --remove-all-files --remove-home andrew
```

If you do not use the `--remove-home` option, you have to manually delete the user's directory under `/home`, along with the user's `/var/spool/mail` queue.

Shutting Down the System

Use the `shutdown` command to shut down your system. The `shutdown` command has a number of different command-line options (such as shutting down at a predetermined time), but the fastest way to cleanly shut down Linux is to use the `-h` (or `halt`) option, followed by the word `now`:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo shutdown -h now
```

You can also follow `-h` with the numeral zero (0), like this, to get the same effect:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo shutdown -h 0
```

To incorporate a timed shutdown and a pertinent message to all active users, use `shutdown`'s time and message options, as follows:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo shutdown -h 18:30 "System is going down for maintenance
this evening at 6:30 p.m. Please make sure you have saved your work and logged
out by then or you may lose data."
```


This example shuts down your system and provides a warning to all active users 15 minutes before the shutdown (or reboot). Shutting down a running server can be considered drastic, especially if there are active users or exchanges of important data occurring (such as a backup in progress). One good approach is to warn users ahead of time. This can be done by editing the system *Message of the Day (MOTD)* `motd` file, which displays a message to users when they log in using the command-line interface, as is common on multiuser systems.

It used to be that to create a custom MOTD file, you only had to use a text editor and change the contents of `/etc/motd`. However, this has changed in Ubuntu, as the developers have added a way to automatically and regularly update some useful information contained in the MOTD file by using `cron`. To modify how the MOTD file is updated, you should install `update-motd` and read the man page.

You can also make downtimes part of a regular schedule, perhaps to coincide with security audits, software updates, or hardware maintenance.

You should shut down Ubuntu for only a few very specific reasons:

- ▶ You are not using the computer, no other users are logged in or expected to need or use the system (as with your personal desktop or laptop computer), and you want to conserve electrical power.
- ▶ You need to perform system maintenance that requires any or all system services to be stopped.
- ▶ You want to replace integral hardware.

TIP

Do not shut down your computer if you suspect that intruders have infiltrated your system; instead, disconnect the machine from any or all networks and make a backup copy of your hard drives. You might want to also keep the machine running to examine the contents of memory and to examine system logs. Exceptions to this are when the system contains only trivial data files and nonessential services, such as a personal computer that is only used to run a web browser, and when you have no intention of trying to track down what an intruder might have changed, either to repair the damage or to try to catch the intruder by using computer forensics, but rather plan to merely wipe everything clean and rebuild or reinstall the system from scratch.

Rebooting the System

You should use the `shutdown` command to reboot your system. The fastest way to cleanly reboot Linux is to use the `-r` option and the word `now`:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo shutdown -r now
```

You can also follow `-r` with the numeral zero (0), like this, to get the same effect:

```
matthew@seymour:~$ sudo shutdown -r 0
```

Both rebooting and shutting down can have dire consequences if performed at the wrong time (such as during backups or critical file transfers, which arouses the ire of your system's users). However, Linux-based operating systems are designed to properly stop active system services in an orderly fashion. Other commands you can use to shut down and reboot Linux are the `halt`, `poweroff`, and `reboot` commands, but the `shutdown` command is more flexible.

Commonly Used Commands and Programs

A number of programs and built-in shell commands are commonly used when working at the command line. These commands are organized here by category to help you understand the purpose of each category:

- ▶ **Managing users and groups**—`chage`, `chfn`, `chsh`, `edquota`, `gpasswd`, `groupadd`, `groupdel`, `groupmod`, `groups`, `mkpasswd`, `newgrp`, `newusers`, `passwd`, `umask`, `useradd`, `userdel`, `usermod`
- ▶ **Managing files and file systems**—`cat`, `cd`, `chattr`, `chmod`, `chown`, `compress`, `cp`, `dd`, `fdisk`, `find`, `gzip`, `ln`, `mkdir`, `mksfs`, `mount`, `mv`, `rm`, `rmdir`, `rpm`, `sort`, `swapon`, `swapoff`, `tar`, `touch`, `umount`, `uncompress`, `uniq`, `unzip`, `zip`
- ▶ **Managing running programs**—`bg`, `fg`, `kill`, `killall`, `nice`, `ps`, `pstree`, `renice`, `top`, `watch`
- ▶ **Getting information**—`apropos`, `cal`, `cat`, `cmp`, `date`, `diff`, `df`, `dir`, `dmesg`, `du`, `env`, `file`, `free`, `grep`, `head`, `info`, `last`, `less`, `locate`, `ls`, `lsattr`, `man`, `more`, `pinfo`, `ps`, `pwd`, `stat`, `strings`, `tac`, `tail`, `top`, `uname`, `uptime`, `vdir`, `vmstat`, `w`, `wc`, `whatis`, `whereis`, `which`, `who`, `whoami`
- ▶ **Console text editors**—`ed`, `jed`, `joe`, `mcedit`, `nano`, `red`, `sed`, `vim`
- ▶ **Console Internet and network commands**—`bing`, `elm`, `ftp`, `host`, `hostname`, `ifconfig`, `links`, `lynx`, `mail`, `mutt`, `ncftp`, `netconfig`, `netstat`, `pine`, `ping`, `pump`, `rdate`, `route`, `scp`, `sftp`, `ssh`, `tcpdump`, `traceroute`, `whois`, `wire-test`

If you need to find full information for using the command, you can find that information under the command's man page.

References

- ▶ <https://help.ubuntu.com/community/UsingTheTerminal>—The Ubuntu community help page for using the terminal
- ▶ <https://help.ubuntu.com/community/LinuxFilesystemTreeOverview>—The Ubuntu community help page for and overview of the Linux file system tree
- ▶ <https://help.ubuntu.com/community/RootSudo>—An Ubuntu community page explaining `sudo`, the philosophy behind using it by default, and how to use it

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Index

Symbols

- & operator, 237
 - background processes, running, 173–174
 - special shell character, 247
 - VirtualBox commands, 527
- && operators, combining commands, 180, 198
- * special shell character, 247
- \ special shell character, 249–250
- ^ special shell character, 247, 250
- [] special shell character, 248
- [a, z] special shell character, 248
- [a-z] special shell character, 248
- [az] special shell character, 248
- \$, 235
 - \$? built-in variable, 247
 - \$ special shell character, 247
 - \$# built-in variable, 246
 - \$* built-in variable, 247
 - \$0 built-in variable, 247
- !! operator, 196–197
- != operator, 491
- < special shell character, 247
- << operator, 236
 - << special shell character, 248
- > special shell character, 247
- >> special shell character, 247
- | (pipe) special shell character, 247
- || operator, 198, 491
- # special shell character, 247
- ? special shell character, 247

650 " special shell character

" special shell character, 248–249

' special shell character, 249

Numbers

10BASE-T networking, 339

10G Ethernet networking, 340

32-bit Ubuntu, 64-bit Ubuntu versus, 4–5

50G Ethernet networking, 340

64-bit Ubuntu, 32-bit Ubuntu versus, 4–5

100BASE-T networking, 339

1000BASE-T networking, 339

A

A records, 590

AAAA records, 590

ac command, 211, 223

accessing

ACL

setting permissions, 127–128

Squid, 565–569

Apache web server, 452, 455

command line, 107

databases

local GUI clients, 503

PostgreSQL, 501–503

SSH, 501–502

web browsers, 503

file access time, disabling, 397

networks, chains, 387

remote access

copying files between machines,
372–373

Guacamole, 377

key-based logins, 373–375

online references, 377–378

SSH server, 371–375

VNC, 375–377

shell scripts, storing for system-wide access,
240

variable values, 243

accounting, user usage statistics, 212

ACID compliance, relational databases,
493–494

ACL

permissions, setting, 127–128

Squid, 565–569

activity (user), monitoring, 211–212

Ada, 622

addressing

broadcasting, 338

IPv4 addressing, 331–332

IPv6 addressing, 332, 334–336

multicasting, 338

NAT, 332

TCP/IP, 331–332

unicast addressing, 338

adduser command, 136–137, 209

administration

LDAP, 584–585

privileges, 217

Adobe Photoshop, 67

afio, 316

all-in-one (Print/Fax/Scan) devices, 435

AllowOverrides directives (Apache web server),
451–452

ALSA, 64

Amanda, 315–316

AND, 299

AND operators, 491–492

Android mobile development, 607

Android Runtime, 608

Android Studio, 609

- Application Framework, 608–609
- applications, 609
- ARM processors, 608
- Google Play, 607
- Linux kernels, 608
- RISC processors, 608
- Ansible, 544
- Apache Tomcat, 482
- Apache web server
 - access control, 452, 455
 - configuring
 - .htaccess configuration files, 450–452, 469
 - runtime servers, 446–449
 - threads, 468
 - development of, 443–444
 - file system authentication, 452–455
 - .htaccess configuration files, 450, 469
 - AllowOverrides directives, 451–452
 - Options directives, 451
 - HTTPS, 464–466
 - installing, 444
 - logging, 463–464
 - modules, 455–461
 - MPM, 449–450
 - online references, 466
 - overview of, 444
 - Require directive, 452
 - runtime servers
 - apache2.conf files, 447–449
 - configuring, 446–449
 - DirectoryIndex directive, 449
 - DocumentRoot directive, 449
 - GID, 448
 - Group directive, 448
 - Listen directive, 447
 - ServerAdmin directive, 448
 - ServerName directive, 448–449
 - ServerRoot directive, 447
 - UID, 448
 - User directive, 448
 - UserDir directive, 449
 - security, 444, 452–455
 - starting/stopping, 444–446
 - threads, 468
 - virtual hosting, 461–462
- apache2.conf files, 447–449
- API, 512
- AppArmor, 388–390
- Application Framework, 608–609
- applications
 - Android applications, 609
 - AppArmor, 388–390
 - CD/DVD burning applications
 - Brasero, 71
 - Linux command line, CD creation, 72–73
 - Linux command line, DVD creation, 73–75
 - Ubuntu support, 71
 - DVD/CD burning applications
 - Brasero, 71
 - Linux command line, CD creation, 72–73
 - Linux command line, DVD creation, 73–75
 - Ubuntu support, 71
 - games, 79–81
 - Battle for Wesnoth, 85–86
 - commercial games, 88
 - documentation, 89
 - emulators, 79
 - FlightGear, 87
 - Frets on Fire, 86
 - Frozen Bubble, 84
 - Game Jolt, 82
 - GOG.com, 82
 - Humble, 82

- installing from Ubuntu repositories, 82–87
- installing video drivers (proprietary), 80
- itch.io, 82
- kid-friendly games, 88
- LGDB, 82
- online game sources, 81–82
- Scorched 3D, 83–84
- Speed Dreams, 87
- SuperTux, 84–85
- Warsow, 82
- Windows games, 88–89
- graphics manipulation applications, 66, 70
 - Blender, 70, 77
 - CinePaint, 70
 - darktable, 70
 - digikam, 70
 - GIMP, 66–67
 - Hugin, 70
 - Inkscape, 70
 - Krita, 70
 - nautilus-image converter, 69
 - netpbm tools, 69
 - Photoshop, 67
 - POV-Ray, 70
 - Radiance, 70
 - Shotwell Photo Manager, 66, 71
 - Simple Scan, 67
 - Xara Xtreme, 70
- microservice architectures, 531
- multimedia applications
 - ALSA, 64
 - CD/DVD burning applications, 71–75
 - graphics manipulation applications, 66–71
 - music applications, 65–66
 - online references, 77
 - OSS, 64
 - PulseAudio, 64
 - sound cards, 63–64
- music applications, 65
 - Banshee, 66
 - Rhythmbox, 66
 - Sound Juicer, 66
- productivity applications
 - Celtx, 59
 - CrossOver Office, 61
 - defined, 56
 - gedit, 59
 - Heimer, 61
 - Kile, 61
 - LaTeX, 60
 - LibreOffice, 55, 56–58
 - LyX, 60
 - online references, 61
 - pdfedit, 58
 - Publican, 59–60
 - Texmaker, 60
 - users (typical), 56
 - Windows, 61
 - Wine, 61
 - XML Copy Editor, 60
- recording/editing sound, 76
- security, 388–390
- Startup Applications Preferences, 278
- VBA, LibreOffice and Office compatibility, 55
- video editing applications, 77
 - Avidemux, 77
 - Blender, 77
 - Cinelerra, 77
 - DaVinci Resolve, 77
 - Kdenlive, 77
 - Lightworks, 77
 - OpenShot Video Editor, 77
 - PiTiVi, 77
 - Shotcut, 77

apropos command, 112
 APT, 95

- apt-get versus, 99–100
- day-to-day usage, 95–98
- finding software, 98–99
- VirtualBox, 527

 apt-get, APT versus, 99–100
 archives, restoring files from, 311–312
 Ardour, 76
 arguments (positional), 242
 ARM processors, 608
 arrays (RAID), 307
Art of Unix Programming, The, 141–142
 ash, 226
 Aslett, Matt, 511
 assessing

- needs/resources, backup strategies, 303–304
- vulnerabilities, 381–382

 assigning

- permissions, file systems, 121–122
- values to variables, 242

 at command, 227–228, 229
 atomic changes, 613
 attacks, 380–381

- autocracking scripts, 380
- crackers, 380
- external attacks, 379–380
- hackers, 380
- internal attacks, 379–380
- script kiddies, 380
- spoofing attacks, 593
- viruses, 385
- war driving, 383
- worms, 380

 Audacity, 76

Audio CD Extractor. See Sound Juicer
 authentication

- file systems, Apache web server, 452–455
- PAM, 215–216

 autoconf command, 601–602
 autocracking scripts, 380
 automatically waking computers from sleep, 231–233
 automating tasks with scripts, 244–246
 availability

- localhost interfaces, checking availability of, 326
- memory space, displaying, 286

 .avi files, 75
 Avidemux, 77
 awk text editor, 189–191
 AWS, 539
 Azure, 539

B

Back In Time, 314
 background jobs, moving jobs to, 174–175
 background processes, 173–174 237

- running,

 backups

- afio, 316
- Amanda, 315–316
- Back In Time, 314
- cloud computing, 305–306, 309
- configuration files, version control, 320–322
- copying files, 316–317
 - cp command, 318
 - rsync command, 319–320
 - tar command, 317–318
- data loss, 302
- Déjà Dup, 313–314
- external hard drives, 308

- File Roller, 312
- flexbackup, 316
- full backups
 - with incremental backups, 307
 - on a periodic basis, 306–307
 - tar command, 310–311
- incremental backups, 310–311
- kdat, 312–313
- KDE ark archiving tool, 312–313
- levels of, 306
- mirroring data, 307
- NAS, 308
- network storage, 308
- online references, 324
- restoring files from archives, 311–312
- scheduling tasks, full backups on a periodic basis, 306–307
- software, 309–316
- strategies, 301
 - assessing needs/resources, 303–304
 - choosing a strategy, 308
 - choosing hardware/media, 308–309
 - evaluating, 304–306
 - full backups on a periodic basis, 306–307
 - full backups with incremental backups, 307
 - home users, 304–305
 - incremental backups, 307
 - inheriting, 306
 - large enterprises, 305
 - RAID arrays, 307
 - simple backup strategies, 306
 - small enterprises, 305
 - small offices, 305
- system rescue, 323
 - restoring GRUB2 boot loaders, 323–324
 - saving files from nonbooting hard disks, 324
 - Ubuntu Rescue disc, 323
 - tape drive backups, 309
 - tar command, 310
 - copying files, 317–318
 - incremental backups, 310–311
 - restoring files from archives, 311–312
 - Ubuntu installations, 7
 - Unison, 315
 - version control, configuration files, 320–322
- badblocks command, 397
- Banshee music application, 66
- BaseX, 517
- bash, 226
 - comparisons of expressions, 250–251
 - file operators, 253–254
 - logical operators, 255
 - numeric comparisons, 252–253
 - strings, 251–252
 - local bash shells, configuring, 640
- batch command, 228–229
- batches, changing passwords in, 216–217
- Battle for Wesnoth, 85–86
- Bazaar
 - configuring, 639
 - software project management, 611–612
- Berkeley DB, 512, 579
- bg command, 174–175
- BigTable, 517
- Bikeshed, 616–618
- /bin directory, 114
- BIND
 - configuring DNS servers, 593–595
 - online references, 595
- BIOS, 271
 - boot process, 272–274
 - Ubuntu bootups, troubleshooting, 195
- Blender
 - graphics manipulation, 70
 - video editing, 77

- .bmp files, 68
 - BOFH, 205
 - boolean operators, combining commands, 180
 - boot loaders, 271
 - boot process, 272–274
 - GRUB2, installing, 5
 - GRUB2 boot loaders, restoring, 323–324
 - Ubuntu installations, 2–3, 5–6
 - boot process
 - BIOS, 271, 272–274
 - boot loaders, 271, 272–274
 - Boot-Repair, 278–279
 - DHCP activation, 357
 - GPT, 274
 - init systems, 272
 - loading process, 272–274
 - MBR, 274
 - NetBoot, 274
 - nonbooting hard disks, saving files from, 324
 - PXE, 274
 - runlevels, 271–272, 275, 278
 - services
 - controlling, 278
 - running, 271–272
 - starting/stopping, 275–278
 - Startup Applications Preferences, 278
 - troubleshooting, 278–279
 - Ubuntu, troubleshooting, 195–196
 - UEFI, 273–274
 - Brasero, 71
 - break statements, 269
 - bridges, 343, 524–525
 - broadcasting, 338
 - browsers (web)
 - Chrome, 53–54
 - Chromium, 53–54
 - database access, 503
 - Firefox, 52–53
 - online references, 54
 - brute-forcing, 373–374
 - Budgie, 49
 - bugs, fixing
 - Bug Squad, 647
 - Ubuntu development, 640–643
 - built-in variables, 242, 246–247
 - bundles (software), Snappy package manager, 103–104
 - bunzip2 command, 191
 - burning CD/DVD
 - Brasero, 71
 - Linux command line
 - CD creation, 72–73
 - DVD creation, 73–75
 - Ubuntu support, 71
 - business applications, Ubuntu for, 27–28
 - byobu, multiple terminal operation, 192–193
 - bzip2 command, 191
- ## C
- C programming, 597–599
 - autoconf command, 601–602
 - building programs, 599–601
 - configuring code, 601–602
 - debugging, 602
 - checking source code, 602–603
 - gdb command, 603
 - gprof command, 603
 - splint command, 602–603
 - symbolic debugging, 603
 - tracking function time, 603
 - dependency checking, 599–600
 - GCC, 603–604
 - macros, 600–601

- makefile targets, 600–601
- makefiles, 599–600
- C++ programming, 597–598, 599
 - autoconf command, 601–602
 - building programs, 599–601
 - configuring code, 601–602
 - debugging, 602
 - checking source code, 602–603
 - gdb command, 603
 - gprof command, 603
 - splint command, 602–603
 - symbolic debugging, 603
 - tracking function time, 603
 - dependency checking, 599–600
 - GCC, 603–604
 - macros, 600–601
 - makefile targets, 600–601
 - makefiles, 599–600
- C10K problem, 467–468
- cabling, 340
 - fiber-optic cabling, 342
 - UTP cabling, 341
- Caddy, 482
- cameras (digital)
 - Ubuntu support, 70
 - USB connections, 70
- capturing screen images, 69
- case statements, 267–268
- Cassandra, 513
- cat command, 132, 144–145
- /cd command, 120
- cd command, 145–147
- CD tools, 613–614
- CD/DVD burning applications
 - Brasero, 71
 - Linux command line
 - CD creation, 72–73
 - DVD creation, 73–75
 - Ubuntu support, 71
- cdrecord command, 72–73
- Cecilia, 76
- Celtx, 59
- CFEngine, 545
- cgroups, 532
- chains, 387
- change command, 223
- changing
 - desktop environments, 39
 - directories, 120, 145–147
 - passwords in batches, 216–217
 - permissions, files/folders, 125, 147
 - shells, 226
 - user identities, 217–219
 - window managers, 39
- Chaos Engineering, 614
- Chef, 544
- Cherokee, 480–481
- chfn command, 224
- chgrp command, 125, 204, 224
- children directories, 118
- children, games for, 88
- chmod command, 123–124, 147, 204, 224
- chown command, 125, 204, 224
- chpasswd command, 224
- Chrome, 53–54
- Chromium, 53–54
- chroot jail, 531–532
- chsh command, 209, 224
- Cl/CD tools, 613–614
- Cinelerra, 77
- CinePaint, 70
- CLI. See command line
- client/server database model, 484
- Clojure, 622–623
- cloud computing
 - AWS, 539
 - Azure, 539
 - backups, 305–306, 309

- containers, 531
- DevOps, 535–536
- Google Cloud, 539
- hybrid clouds, 539–540
- laaS, 537
- Juju, 540–541, 545
- Landscape, 541, 545
- MaaS, 537
- Mojo, 541
- online references, 541
- OpenStack, 538–539
- PaaS, 537
- private clouds, 540
- public clouds, 538, 539
- reasons for using, 536–537
- SaaS, 537
- Sysadmin, 535–536
- Ubuntu, 535
 - AWS, 539
 - Azure, 539
 - considerations for using, 538
 - Google Cloud, 539
 - hybrid clouds, 539–540
 - laaS, 537
 - install instructions, 536
 - Juju, 540–541, 545
 - Landscape, 541
 - MaaS, 537
 - Mojo, 541
 - OpenStack, 538–539
 - PaaS, 537
 - private clouds, 540
 - public clouds, 538, 539
 - reasons for using, 536–537
 - SaaS, 537
 - Ubuntu Cloud, 536
 - VM, 536
- VM, 536
- CNAME records, 590–591
- COBOL, 623–624
- code packaging, Ubuntu development, 640–643
- combining commands
 - && operators, 180, 198
 - !! operator, 196–197
 - || operator, 198
 - boolean operators, 142–143
 - pipng, 142–143, 178–180
- comm command, 170–171
- command line (Linux)
 - !! operator, 196–197
 - || operator, 198
 - accessing, 107
 - apropos command, 112
 - APT, 95
 - apt-get versus, 99–100
 - day-to-day usage, 95–98
 - finding software, 98–99
 - background jobs, 174–175
 - background processes, running, 173–174
 - basic commands, 143–144
 - BIOS, troubleshooting Ubuntu bootups, 195
 - byobu, multiple terminal operation, 192–193
 - CD creation, 72–73
 - combining commands
 - && operators, 180, 198
 - !! operator, 196–197
 - || operator, 198
 - boolean operators, 180
 - pipng, 178–180
 - command history, viewing, 197
 - commands
 - combining, 178–180, 196–197, 198
 - list of, 143–144
 - redirecting input/output of, 167–170
 - shortcuts, 198
 - standard input/output, 169

- commonly used commands/programs, 139
- Coreutils, 199
- defined, 106–107
- directories, 112–114
 - /bin directory, 114
 - changing, 120, 145–147
 - children directories, 118
 - confining scripts to directories, 198–199
 - copying files, 131, 147
 - creating, 129, 160
 - creating files, 128–129
 - deleting, 129–131, 161–162
 - displaying contents of files, 132
 - /etc directory, 114
 - finding current directory, 120
 - finding files, 147
 - /home directory, 115
 - listing contents of, 118–119
 - listing files in directories, 156–158
 - moving files, 131, 161
 - parent directories, 118
 - permissions, 122–127
 - printing directory sizes, 148
 - printing last lines of files, 163–164
 - /proc directory, 115–117
 - regular expressions, 133
 - renaming files, 131, 161
 - /sbin directory, 114
 - sorting file contents, 162–163
 - /tmp directories, 117
 - /usr directory, 117
 - /var directory, 117
 - wildcard characters, 133
- documentation
 - manual pages, 111–112
 - reading, 111–112
- DVD creation, 73–74
 - packet writing, 74–75
 - session writing, 74
- environment variables, 182–185
- file systems
 - directories, 112–117
 - hierarchy of, 112–114
- files/folders
 - comparisons, 170
 - compressed files, 191–192
 - creating links, 154–156
 - downloading, 164
 - finding differences in files, 170
 - finding files, 149–151
 - finding from indexes, 156
 - finding similarities in files, 170–171
 - listing in directories, 156–158
 - listing system information, 158–159
 - printing contents of, 144–145
- foreground jobs, 174–175
- GRUB, troubleshooting Ubuntu bootups, 195–196
- input string searches, 151–152
- jobs
 - executing in parallel, 181–182
 - listing, 173
- kernel ring buffers, reading contents of, 200
- location of commands, printing, 164
- logging out of, 108
- logins
 - from remote computers, 108–109
 - text-based logins, 107–108
- manual pages, 159–160
- multiple terminal operation, 192–193
- MySQL command line client, 504–505
- network interface configuration
 - ifconfig command, 346–348
 - ip command, 348–349

- ip route command, 346, 349
 - netstat command, 346, 350
 - online references, 139, 165, 200
 - paging through output, 152–154
 - pipng commands, 178–180
 - polite system resets, 194–195
 - PostgreSQL command line client, 505–506
 - printing, resource usage, 175–177
 - processes
 - listing, 171–173
 - prioritizing, 177–178
 - substituting, 181
 - reasons for using, 142–143
 - REISUB, 194–195
 - repeating text, 148–149
 - rerunning previous commands, 196–197
 - resource usage, printing, 175–177
 - root accounts, 110–111, 133–134
 - sequence, running commands in, 180–181
 - sudo command, troubleshooting, 134–136
 - systems
 - rebooting, 138–139
 - shutting down, 137–138
 - text editors, 185–191
 - Ubuntu bootups, troubleshooting, 195
 - user accounts
 - creating, 136–137
 - deleting, 137
 - super user accounts, 109–111
 - whereis command, 112
- command line (shells), 233–234
- background processes, 237
 - pattern-matching, 235
 - pipng commands, 237
- commands
- & operator, running background processes, 173–174
 - && operators, 180, 198
 - ! ! operator, 196–197
 - || operator, 198
 - database commands, 506
 - history of commands, viewing, 197
 - pipng, 142–143, 178–180, 237
 - printing location of, 164
 - redirecting input/output, 167–169
 - redirecting input/output with shell command line, 236
 - rerunning previous commands, 196–197
 - running, in sequence, 180–181
 - shortcuts, 198
 - substituting, 250
 - wildcard characters, 235
- commercial games, 88
- community teams, testing Ubuntu, 645–646
- comparing files/folders, 170
- comparisons of expressions, 250–251
- file operators, 253–254, 257–258
 - logical operators, 255, 259
 - numeric comparisons, 252–253, 256–257
 - strings, 251–252, 255–256
- compatibility
- free/open-source software, MS Office compatibility, 55
 - LibreOffice, Office compatibility, 55
 - Office, free/open-source software compatibility, 55
 - open-source/free software, MS Office compatibility, 55
 - Ubuntu installations, Mac hardware compatibility, 3
- compiling
- kernels, 412–414, 418–419
 - software
 - from source, 100, 101–102
 - from tarballs, 100–101
 - from Ubuntu repositories, 101–102
- compressed files, 191–192, 318

- computers (remote), command line logins, 108–109
- configuration files
 - Dotfiles, 322
 - version control, 320–322
- configuring
 - Apache web server
 - .htaccess configuration files, 450–452, 469
 - runtime servers, 446–449
 - threads, 468
 - bash shells, 640
 - Bazaar, 639
 - C/C++ code, 601–602
 - configuration management, 102
 - dotdee, 102–103
 - Snappy package manager, 103–104
 - Ubuntu Core, 103
 - DHCP software, 358–359
 - dial-up Internet access, 367–368
 - disk quotas, 223
 - DNS servers with BIND, 593–595
 - DSL Internet access, 365
 - /etc directory configuration files, 114
 - firewalls, 386–388
 - GPG keys, 637–639
 - hosts (networks) with DHCP, 359–361
 - Internet connections, common configuration information, 364–365
 - kernels, 403, 414–417
 - Launchpad, work environments, 638–640
 - LDAP servers, 580
 - local bash shells, 640
 - localhost interfaces, 327
 - MySQL, 494–495
 - networks
 - command line network interfaces, 345–350
 - configuration files, 350–355
 - DHCP, 355–361
 - /etc/host.conf files, 355
 - /etc/hosts files, 350–351
 - /etc/netplan/*.yaml files, 353–355
 - /etc/nsswitch.conf files, 351–352, 355
 - /etc/resolv.conf files, 352–353
 - graphical configuration tools, 355
 - nm-connection-editor, 345–346
 - NFS
 - clients, 423–424
 - servers, 422–423
 - pbuilder, 638
 - PostgreSQL, 498
 - power management, in Ubuntu, 18–19
 - PPP Internet access, 364
 - PPPoE, 364
 - printers, in Ubuntu, 18
 - runtime servers, Apache web server, 446–449
 - Samba, 425
 - /etc/samba/smb.conf files, 426–429
 - global behaviors, 427
 - security, 384–385
 - software repositories, 15–17
 - Squid, 570–572
 - Squid clients, 564–565
 - SSH server, 371–372
 - system settings, in Ubuntu, 17–18
 - Ubuntu
 - date/time settings, 19–20
 - development packages, 637–638, 640–643
 - power management, 18–19
 - printer configurations, 18
 - software repositories, 15–17
 - system settings, 17–18
 - troubleshooting post-configuration problems, 21–22
 - wireless networks, 20

- VPN
 - clients, 573–575
 - servers, 575–577
 - wireless networks, 20
- confining scripts to directories, 198–199
- Conky, 292–297
- connectivity
 - Internet, 363–364
 - checking, 328–330
 - common configuration information, 364–365
 - dial-up access, 367–368
 - DSL access, 365
 - ISP, 364–365
 - Linux commands, 369
 - online references, 369–370
 - PPP access, 364
 - PPPoE, 364
 - troubleshooting, 368–369
 - Ubuntu commands, 369
 - VM, 526
- console-based monitoring, 281–283
- containers, 531
 - Docker, 533
 - Kubernetes, 534
 - LXC, 532
 - LXD, 533
 - online references, 534
- contents of directories, listing, 118–119
- contents of files
 - displaying, 132
 - sorting, 162–163
- converting
 - graphics, 68–69
 - sound files, 65
- copying
 - files between machines (remote access), 372–373

- files/folders, 131, 147, 316–317. *See also* mirroring
 - cp command, 318
 - rsync command, 319–320
 - tar command, 317–318
- VM, 526
- Coreutils, 199
- CouchDB, 515–516
- cp command, 131, 147, 318
- crackers, 380
- createdb command, 506
- createuser command, 506
- cron command, 229–231
- CrossOver Office, 61
- cups cancel command, 435
- cups command, 435
- cups disable command, 435
- cups enable command, 435
- CUPS GUI, network printers, 431–434
- cuspreject command, 435
- custom kernels, 402

D

- D programming language, 624
- daemons
 - AND, 299
 - Linux, 25
 - smbd, starting/stopping, 429
- darktable, 70
- Dart, 624
- dash, 226
- Dash (GNOME), 43–44
- data, SQL tables
 - inserting data, 489–490
 - retrieving data, 490–492

- data directory initialization, PostgreSQL, 498
- data integrity, relational databases, 493–494
- data locking, relational databases, 492
- data loss, 302
- data mirroring, 307
- data recovery, 323
 - GRUB2 boot loaders, restoring, 323–324
 - saving files from nonbooting hard disks, 324
 - Ubuntu Rescue disc, 323
- databases
 - accessing
 - local GUI clients, 503
 - MySQL, 501–503
 - SSH, 501–502
 - web browsers, 503
 - AND operators, 491–492
 - client/server model, 484
 - commands, 506
 - flat file databases, 484–485
 - graphical database clients, 506
 - MySQL, 483
 - ACID compliance, 493–494
 - command line client, 504–505
 - configuring, 494–495
 - creating databases, 496–497
 - data integrity, 493–494
 - data locking, 492
 - database access, 501–503
 - inserting data into tables, 490
 - mysql command, 506
 - mysqladmin command, 506
 - mysqldump command, 506
 - MySQLGUI, 506
 - online references, 493, 507
 - PostgreSQL versus, 492–494
 - procedural languages, 494
 - retrieving data from tables, 490–492
 - root user passwords, 495
 - speed, 492
 - SQL subqueries, 494
 - stored procedures, 494
 - triggers, 494
- NoSQL, 485, 509–510
 - advantages of, 510, 511
 - BaseX, 517
 - Berkeley DB, 512, 579
 - BigTable, 517
 - Cassandra, 513
 - CouchDB, 515–516
 - disadvantages of, 510–511
 - document stores, 514–515
 - etcd, 513
 - FlockDB, 519
 - graph stores, 518
 - HBase, 518
 - HyperGraphDB, 519
 - key/value stores, 512
 - Memcached, 513–514
 - MemcacheDB, 514
 - MongoDB, 516
 - Neo4j, 518
 - NewSQL and, 511
 - online references, 519–520
 - OrientDB, 519
 - Redis, 514
 - Riak, 514
 - Scylla, 514
 - UnQL, 511
 - wide column stores, 517
- OR operators, 491–492
- PostgreSQL
 - ACID compliance, 493–494
 - command line client, 505–506
 - configuring, 498
 - creating database users, 499–500
 - creating databases, 499

- data integrity, 493–494
- data locking, 492
- database access, 501–503
- deleting database users, 500
- granting/revoking privileges, 500–501
- initializing data directories, 498
- MySQL versus, 492–494
- online references, 493, 507
- pgAdmin, 506
- procedural languages, 494
- retrieving data from tables, 491
- speed, 492
- SQL subqueries, 494
- stored procedures, 494
- triggers, 494
- relational databases, 485. *See also* MySQL; PostgreSQL
 - creating tables, 488–489
 - DBA, 483–484
 - inserting data into tables, 489–490
 - operation of, 486–487
 - SQL basics, 487–492
- Datadog, 298
- date/time settings
 - date command, 19
 - Ubuntu, 19–20
- DaVinci Resolve, 77
- DBA, 483–484, 511
- Debian Linux, 24
- debugging C/C++ programming, 602
 - checking source code, 602–603
 - gdb command, 603
 - gprof command, 603
 - splint command, 602–603
 - symbolic debugging, 603
 - tracking function time, 603
- Déjà Dup, 313–314
- deleting
 - directories, 129–131, 161–162
 - PostgreSQL database users, 500
 - user accounts, 137
- deluser command, 137, 209
- dependency checking, 599–600
- depmod command, 407
- desktop environments, 41–42
 - Budgie, 49
 - changing, 39
 - GNOME, 41
 - Dash, 43, 44
 - Mutter, 42
 - Power icon, 43, 45
 - Shell, 43–45
 - Show Applications icon, 43, 44
 - GNOME 2, 48
 - KDE, 45
 - Kubuntu, 45–46
 - Kylin, 50
 - Lubuntu, 47–48
 - LXDE, 47–48
 - MATE, 48–49
 - online references, 50
 - Ubuntu desktops, sharing, 424
 - Ubuntu MATE, 48–49
 - widgets, 42
- X server
 - benefits of, 34
 - components of, 33–34
 - display manager, 39
 - display managers, 33
 - online references, 40
 - starting, 39
 - terminal clients, 33–34
 - window manager, 33–34
 - xorg.conf files, 33–39

- Xfce, 46
- Xubuntu, 46–47
- development (Ubuntu)
 - Bazaar, 639
 - fixing bugs, 640–643
 - GPG keys, 637–639
 - introduction to, 636–637
 - Launchpad, 614–615
 - creating accounts, 638
 - work environments, 638–640
 - local bash shells, configuring, 640
 - online references, 643
 - package installation
 - code packaging, 640–643
 - packages, 637–638, 640–643
 - pbuilder, 638
 - SSH keys, 638, 639
- Device section (xorg.conf files), 37–38
- devices
 - all-in-one (Print/Fax/Scan) devices, 435
 - devices.txt files, 403
 - i2c-dev devices, 407
 - security, 385
- DevOps
 - Chaos Engineering, 614
 - CI/CD tools, 614
 - Sysadmin versus, 535–536
- df command, 286–287
- dhclient command, 369
- DHCP, 338, 361
 - activating, 357
 - dhcpcd, 358
 - Dynamic DNS, 356–357
 - networks
 - configuring, 355–361
 - host configurations, 359–361
 - operation of, 356
 - servers, 358–359
 - software, installing/configuring, 358–359
- dial-up Internet access, configuring, 367–368
- diff command, 170
- differences in files, finding, 170
- digiKam, 70
- digital cameras
 - Ubuntu support, 70
 - USB connections, 70
- directories, 112–114
 - /bin directory, 114
 - changing, 120, 145–147
 - children directories, 118
 - creating, 129, 160
 - data directory initialization, PostgreSQL, 498
 - deleting, 129–131, 161–162
 - DIT, 580
 - /etc directory, 114
 - files
 - copying, 131, 147
 - creating, 128–129
 - displaying contents of, 132
 - finding, 147
 - listing in directories, 156–158
 - moving, 131, 161
 - printing last lines of files, 163–164
 - renaming, 131, 161
 - sorting file contents, 162–163
 - finding current directory, 120
 - home directories, 208, 427–428
 - /home directory, 115
 - kernel directories, 403–405
 - LDAP directories, populating, 582–583
 - listing contents of, 118–119
 - parent directories, 118
 - permissions, 122–127
 - printing directory sizes, 148

- /proc directory, 115–117
- regular expressions, 133
- /sbin directory, 114
- scripts, confining to directories, 198–199
- /tmp directories, 117
- user directories, 115
- /usr directory, 117
 - shared data, 117
 - X server, 33
- /var directory, 117
- wildcard characters, 133
- DirectoryIndex directive (Apache web server), 449
- disaster recovery, planning, 390–391
- disk quotas, 287
 - configuring, 223
 - implementing, 222–223
 - managing, 222
- display managers, X server, 33, 39
- displaying
 - available memory space, 286
 - contents of files, 132
 - free space (hard disks), 286–287
- distributed processing, X server, 32–33
- distributions
 - Linux distributions
 - included software, 24–25
 - versions of, 24
 - Ubuntu distributions, versions of, 27
- DIT, 580
- dmesg command, 21, 200
- DNS, 448–449
 - Dynamic DNS, 356–357
 - online references, 595
 - records, 589–590
 - A records, 590
 - AAAA records, 590
 - CNAME records, 590–591
 - MX records, 591
 - NS records, 591
 - SOA records, 592–593
 - TXT records, 593
 - requests, 589–590
 - search orders, 355
 - servers, 588, 589–590, 593–595
- DocBook, Publican, 59–60
- Docker, 533
- document stores, 514–515
- documentation
 - apropos command, 112
 - games, 89
 - Linux, 28–30
 - manual pages, 111–112
 - mind maps, 61
 - reading, 111–112
 - TeX documents
 - Kile, 61
 - LaTeX, 60
 - LyX, 60
 - Texmaker, 60
 - Ubuntu, 28, 30
 - Wayland, 32
 - whereis command, 112
 - WYGIWYW, 60
- DocumentRoot directive (Apache web server), 449
- domains
 - DNS
 - online references, 595
 - records, 590–593
 - requests, 589–590
 - servers, 588, 589–590, 593–595
 - hostnames, 589
 - names, 588–589
 - root zones, 589
 - TLD, 588–589

- dotdee, 102–103, 322
- Dotfiles, 322
- downloading
 - files/folders, 164
 - Ubuntu updates during installation, 8
- drivers, video drivers (proprietary), installing, 80
- dropdb command, 506
- dropuser command, 506
- DSL Internet access, configuring, 365
- du command, 148
- dual-boot systems, Ubuntu installations, 6
- dumb gateways, 343
- dummy interfaces, 327
- DVD installations, Ubuntu, 2, 6–11
- dvd+rw-tools, 74
- DVD/CD burning applications
 - Brasero, 71
 - Linux command line
 - CD creation, 72–73
 - DVD creation, 73–75
 - preformatted DVD, 74
 - Ubuntu support, 71
- Dynamic DNS, 356–357
- Dynamo, 514

E

- e2fsck command, 397
- echo command, 148–149
- Eclipse, 606
- editing
 - /etc/modprobe.conf files, 344
 - sound, 76
 - Ardour, 76
 - Audacity, 76
 - Cecilia, 76
 - LMMS, 76
 - Mixxx, 76
 - Rosegarden, 76
- text, 185, 186
 - awk, 189–191
 - emacs, 185, 188–189
 - gedit, 186
 - kate, 186
 - kedit, 186
 - nano, 185, 186–187
 - sed, 189–191
 - vi, 185, 187–188
 - vim, 185
- video, 76, 77
 - Avidemux, 77
 - Blender, 77
 - Cinelerra, 77
 - DaVinci Resolve, 77
 - Kdenlive, 77
 - Lightworks, 77
 - OpenShot Video Editor, 77
 - PiTiVi, 77
 - Shotcut, 77
- Elixir, 625
- Elm, 625
- emacs text editor, 185, 188–189
- email, 547
 - Autoresponders, 562
 - virus scanners, 562
- embedded spaces, resolving strings with, 248–249
- emulators, 79
- encrypted files, 318
- endless loops, 261–262
- enterprise servers, monitoring, 298–299
- environment variables, 182–185, 242
- erasing, hard disks, Ubuntu installations, 9
- Erlang, 625

- error messages
 - redirecting input/output of commands, 169–170
 - sudo command, 134–136
- /etc directory, 114
- etcd, 513
- /etc/host.conf files, 355
- /etc/hosts files, 350–351
- /etc/modprobe.conf files, 344, 407
- /etc/modprobed files, 407
- /etc/netplan/*.yaml files, 353–355
- /etc/nsswitch.conf files, 351–352, 355
- /etc/resolv.conf files, 352–353
- /etc/samba/smb.conf files, 426–429
- etckeeper, 321–322
- ethereal command, 369
- Ethernet
 - 10G Ethernet networking, 340
 - 50G Ethernet networking, 340
 - Gigabit Ethernet. See 1000BASE-T networking
 - PPPoE, 364
- evaluating backup strategies, 304–306
- event handlers, 468–469
- executing
 - jobs in parallel, 181–182
 - shell scripts, 237–239
- exit statements, 269
- expr statements, 266
- expressions, 235
 - comparisons of expressions, 250–251
 - file operators, 253–254, 257–258
 - logical operators, 255, 259
 - numeric comparisons, 252–253, 256–257
 - strings, 251–252, 255–256
 - directories, 133
- external attacks, 379–380
- external hard drives, backups, 308

F

- faillog command, 289
- fax machines, all-in-one (Print/Fax/Scan) devices, 435
- FDDI networks, 340
- Fetchmail, 557–560
- fg command, 174–175
- fiber-optic networks, 340, 342
- File Roller, 312
- file systems
 - authentication, Apache web server, 452
 - directories, 112–114
 - /bin directory, 114
 - changing, 120, 145–147
 - children directories, 118
 - copying files, 131, 147
 - creating, 129, 160
 - creating files, 128–129
 - deleting, 129–131, 161–162
 - displaying contents of files, 132
 - /etc directory, 114
 - finding current directory, 120
 - finding files, 147
 - /home directory, 115
 - listing contents of, 118–119
 - listing files in directories, 156–158
 - moving files, 131, 161
 - parent directories, 118
 - printing directory sizes, 148
 - printing last lines of files, 163–164
 - /proc directory, 115–117
 - regular expressions, 133
 - renaming files, 131, 161
 - /sbin directory, 114
 - sorting file contents, 162–163
 - /tmp directories, 117
 - /usr directory, 117
 - /var directory, 117

- wildcard characters, 133
- hierarchy of, 112–114
- permissions, 120–121
 - altering, 123–124
 - assigning, 121–122
 - changing file groups, 125
 - changing file permissions, 125, 147
 - setting with ACL, 127–128
 - sgid permissions, 125–127
 - sticky bit permissions, 126–127
 - suid permissions, 125–127
 - viewing/modifying default permissions, 124–125
- Files section (xorg.conf files), 35–36
- files/folders
 - apache2.conf files, 447–449
 - comparisons, 170
 - compressed files, 191–192, 318
 - configuration files, version control, 320–322
 - copying. *See also* mirroring, 131–132, 147, 316–317
 - between machines (remote access), 372–373
 - cp command, 318
 - rsync command, 319–320
 - tar command, 317–318
- creating in directories, 128–129
- disabling access time, 397
- displaying contents of, 132
- Dotfiles, 322
- downloading, 164
- encrypted files, 318
- /etc/host.conf files, 355
- /etc/hosts files, 350–351
- /etc/modprobe.conf files, 407
- /etc/modprobed files, 407
- /etc/netplan/*.yaml files, 353–355
- /etc/nsswitch.conf files, 351–352, 355
- /etc/resolv.conf files, 352–353
- file operator comparisons, 253–254, 257–258
- File Roller, 312
- finding, 149–151
 - differences in files, 170
 - from indexes, 156
 - similarities in files, 170–171
 - in Ubuntu, 12
- inodes, 155
- LDIF files, 583
- links, creating, 154–156
- listing in directories, 156–158
- log files
 - checking, 287–289
 - rotating, 289–291
- makefiles, 599–600
- mirroring. *See also* copying, 164
- moving, 131, 161
- network configuration files, 350–355
- new user home directories, 208
- NFS, 422
 - clients, 423–424
 - installing, 422
 - servers, 422–423
 - starting/stopping, 422
- password files, 212–214
- permissions, 204
 - altering, 123–124
 - changing file groups, 125
 - changing permissions, 125, 147
 - viewing/modifying default permissions, 124–125
- printing
 - contents of, 144–145
 - file sizes, 148
 - last lines of files, 163–164
- renaming, 131, 161
- restoring files from archives, 311–312

- Samba, 424
 - configuring, 425, 427–429
 - /etc/samba/smb.conf files, 426–429
 - installing, 425–426
 - saving files from nonbooting hard disks, 324
 - sharing
 - NFS, 422–424
 - online references, 435
 - Samba, 424–431
 - sorting contents of, 162–163
 - temporary file storage, /tmp directories, 117
 - time warps, 212
 - variable data files, /var directory, 117
 - filesystems
 - performance tuning, 394–395
 - synchronizing, 396
 - find command, 126
 - finding
 - directories, 120
 - files/folders, 149–151
 - differences in files, 170
 - from indexes, 156
 - similarities in files, 170–171
 - in Ubuntu, 12
 - groups, 206
 - software, with APT, 98–99
 - finger information fields, 213
 - Firefox, 52–53
 - firewalls
 - configuring, 386–388
 - iptables, 388
 - nftables, 388
 - UFW, 386–387
 - .flac files, 65
 - flat file databases, 484–485
 - flexbackup, 316
 - FlightGear, 87
 - FlockDB, 519
 - .flv files, 75
 - folders. *See* files/folders
 - for statements, 259–261
 - foreground jobs, 174–175
 - formatting, DVD, 74
 - Forth, 626
 - Fortran, 626
 - FQDN, 448–449, 580
 - free command, 286
 - free/open-source software, Office compatibility, 55
 - free space, displaying, 286–287
 - hard disks, 286–287
 - memory space, 286
 - Frets on Fire, 86
 - Frozen Bubble, 84
 - fstab command, 114
 - ftp command, 372
 - full backups
 - with incremental backups, 307
 - on a periodic basis, 306–307
 - tar command, 310–311
 - functions, shell scripts, 269–270
- ## G
- Game Jolt, 82
 - games, 79, 80
 - Battle for Wesnoth, 85–86
 - commercial games, 88
 - documentation, 89
 - emulators, 79
 - FlightGear, 87
 - Frets on Fire, 86
 - Frozen Bubble, 84

- Game Jolt, 82
- GOG.com, 82
- Humble, 82
- installing
 - from Ubuntu repositories, 82–87
 - video drivers (proprietary), 80
- itch.io, 82
- kid-friendly games, 88
- LGDB, 82
- online game sources, 81–82
- online references, 89
- Scorched 3D, 83–84
- Speed Dreams, 87
- Steam, 81
- SuperTux, 84–85
- video drivers (proprietary), installing, 80
- Warsow, 82
- Windows games, 88–89
- gateways
 - dumb gateways, 343
 - smart gateways, 343
- GCC, 597, 603–604
- gdb command, 603
- gedit, 59
- gedit text editor, 186
- genprof, 389
- GHC, 627
- GID, 204, 448
- .gif files, 68
- Gigabit Ethernet. *See* 1000BASE-T networking
- GIMP, 66–67
- Git, software project management, 610–611
- Glade, 607
- GNOME, 41
 - Dash, 43, 44
 - File Roller, 312
 - Glade, 607
 - Mutter, 42
 - performance tuning, 3933
 - Power icon, 43, 45
 - Shell, 43–45
 - Show Applications icon, 43, 44
- GNOME 2, 48
- gnome-nettool, 297
- GNU
 - Coreutils, 199
 - GCC, 597, 603–604
 - GPL, development of, 23–24
- Go programming language, 626–627
- GOG.com, 82
- Google Chrome, 53–54
- Google Chromium, 53–54
- Google Cloud, 539
- Google Play, 607
- GParted, 9–10
- gpasswd command, 207
- GPG keys
 - configuring, 637–638
 - uploading, 638–639
- GPL, development of, 23–24
- gprof command, 603
- GPT, boot process, 274
- granting/revoking privileges, PostgreSQL, 500–501
- graph stores, 518
- graphical database clients, 506
- graphical development tools, 605
 - Eclipse, 606
 - Glade, 607
 - IDE, 605–606
 - KDevelop Client, 606–607
 - NetBeans, 606
 - Oracle JDeveloper, 606
 - SDK, 606
 - Visual Studio Code, 606

- graphical network configuration tools, 355
- graphical process tools, 292
 - Conky, 292–297
 - gnome-nettool, 297
 - vncviewer, 297
 - Wireshark, 298
- graphics, 67–68
 - .bmp files, 68
 - converting, 68–69
 - .gif files, 68
 - image captures, 69
 - .jpg files, 68
 - .pbm files, 69
 - .pcx files, 68
 - .pgm files, 69
 - .png files, 68
 - .pnm files, 69
 - .ppm files, 69
 - .svg files, 68
 - .tif files, 68
- graphics manipulation applications, 66, 70
 - Blender, 70, 77
 - CinePaint, 70
 - darktable, 70
 - digiKam, 70
 - GIMP, 66–67
 - Hugin, 70
 - Inkscape, 70
 - Krita, 70
 - nautilus-image converter, 69
 - netpbm tools, 69
 - Photoshop, 67
 - POV-Ray, 70
 - Radiance, 70
 - Shotwell Photo Manager, 66, 71
 - Simple Scan, 67
 - Xara Xtreme, 70
- grep command, 151–152, 234
- Groovy, 627
- Group directive (Apache web server), 448
- group management, 205
 - finding groups, 206
 - listing groups, 205–206
 - tools, 206–207
- groupadd command, 207
- groupdel command, 207
- groupmod command, 207
- groups command, 224
- grpck command, 207
- GRUB
 - recovery mode, 196
 - reinstalling, 195–196
 - Ubuntu bootups, troubleshooting, 195–196
- GRUB2
 - boot loaders, restoring, 323–324
 - installing, 5
- Guacamole, 377
- GUI, 31, 41–42
 - Budgie, 49
 - GNOME, 41
 - Dash, 43, 44
 - Mutter, 42
 - Power icon, 43, 45
 - Shell, 43–45
 - Show Applications icon, 43, 44
 - GNOME 2, 48
 - KDE, 45
 - Kubuntu, 45–46
 - Kylin, 50
 - local GUI clients, database access, 503
 - Lubuntu, 47–48
 - LXDE, 47–48
 - MATE, 48–49
 - MySQLGUI, 506

- pgAdmin, 506
 - Ubuntu MATE, 48–49
 - Wayland, 32
 - widgets, 42
 - X server, 32, 33
 - benefits of, 33–34
 - components of, 33–34
 - display manager, 39
 - display managers, 33
 - distributed processing, 32–33
 - online references, 40
 - starting, 39
 - terminal clients, 33–34
 - /usr directory, 33
 - window manager, 33–34
 - xorg.conf files, 33–39
 - Xfce, 46
 - Xubuntu, 46–47
 - gunzip command, 191
 - gzip command, 191
- ## H
- hackers, 380
 - hard disks
 - disk quotas, 287
 - erasing, Ubuntu installations, 9
 - free space, displaying, 286–287
 - nonbooting disks, saving files from, 324
 - printing, disk usage, 148
 - Ubuntu installations, erasing hard disks, 9
 - hard drives (external), backups, 308
 - hard links, 155–156
 - hardware
 - Mac hardware, Ubuntu compatibility, 3
 - network hardware, initializing, 343–344
 - /etc/modprobe.conf files, 343–344
 - kernel modules, 344–345
 - modprobe command, 344–345
 - Ubuntu specifications
 - Mac hardware, 3
 - researching, 2–16
 - Haskell, 627
 - HBase, 518
 - hdparm command, 395–396
 - Heimer, 61
 - help, Ubuntu online references, 22
 - history of commands, viewing, 197
 - hitsujiTMO, 272
 - home applications, Ubuntu for, 28
 - home directories, 208
 - /home directory, 115
 - home users, backup strategies, 304–305
 - Horowitz, Eliot, 516
 - hosting (virtual), Apache web server, 461–462
 - hostnames, 589
 - hosts (networks)
 - adding to /etc/hosts files, 350–351
 - configuring with DHCP, 359–361
 - Nginx web server, 473–474
 - HOWTO documents, Linux, 29
 - HPC, 598
 - .htaccess configuration files, Apache web server, 450, 469
 - AllowOverrides directives, 451–452
 - Options directives, 451
 - HTTP servers
 - Caddy, 482
 - Cherokee, 480–481
 - Jetty, 481
 - lighttpd, 479–480
 - online references, 482
 - thttpd, 481–482

- Tomcat, 482
 - Wildfly, 482
 - Yaws, 480
 - HTTPS
 - Apache web server, 464–466
 - Nginx web server, 476–477
 - hubs, 342
 - Hugin, 70
 - Humble, 82
 - hwclock command, 19–20
 - hybrid clouds, 539–540
 - HyperGraphDB, 519
- I
- i2c-dev devices, 407
 - laaS, 537
 - ID
 - GID, 204, 448
 - PID, 164, 175–176, 237, 274, 566
 - sgid permissions, 125–127
 - suid permissions, 125–127
 - UID, 204, 448
 - IDE, 605–606
 - ide.txt files, 404
 - if statements, 265–266
 - ifconfig command, 346–348, 369, 385
 - image captures, 69
 - image file formats, 67–68
 - .bmp files, 68
 - .gif files, 68
 - .jpg files, 68
 - .pbm files, 69
 - .pcx files, 68
 - .pgm files, 69
 - .png files, 68
 - .pnm files, 69
 - .ppm files, 69
 - .svg files, 68
 - .tif files, 68
 - image scanners, 67
 - incremental backups
 - full backups with incremental backups, 307
 - tar command, 310–311
 - indexes, finding files from, 156
 - init systems, 272
 - initializing
 - data directories, PostgreSQL, 498
 - network hardware, 343–344
 - /etc/modprobe.conf files, 344
 - kernel modules, 344–345
 - modprobe command, 344–345
 - initrd.txt files, 404
 - Inkscape, 70
 - inodes, 155
 - InputDevice section (xorg.conf files), 36–37
 - input/output of commands
 - redirecting, 167–170
 - redirecting with shell command line, 236
 - standard input/output, 167, 169
 - input strings, searches, 151–152
 - inserting data into SQL tables, 489–490
 - insmod command, 406
 - installing
 - Android Studio, 609
 - Apache web server, 444
 - DHCP activation at installation, 357
 - DHCP software, 358–359
 - games, from Ubuntu repositories, 82–87
 - GRUB, 195–196
 - GRUB2, 5
 - NFS, 422
 - Nginx web server, 469–470

- Samba, 425–426
 - Squid, 564
 - Ubuntu, 196
 - 32-bit Ubuntu, 4–5
 - 64-bit Ubuntu, 4–5
 - backups, 7
 - boot loaders, 5–6
 - cloud computing, 536
 - downloading updates during installation, 8
 - dual-boot systems, 6
 - DVD installations, 2, 6–11
 - erasing hard disks during installation, 9
 - flavors of Ubuntu, 2–3
 - language selection, 7–8
 - Mac hardware compatibility, 3
 - partition strategies, 5
 - partitions, 5, 9
 - password creation, 10
 - preinstallation process, 1–2
 - researching hardware specifications, 2–16
 - storage drives, 9
 - UEFI, 6
 - USB thumb drive installations, 3, 6–11
 - Ubuntu development packages
 - code packaging, 640–643
 - packages, 637–638, 640–643
 - video drivers (proprietary), 80
 - virt-install, 525–526
 - instances, 533
 - internal attacks, 379–380
 - Internet, 51–52
 - Chrome, 53–54
 - Chromium, 53–54
 - connections, 363–364
 - checking, 328–330
 - common configuration information, 364–365
 - dial-up access, 367–368
 - DSL access, 365
 - ISP, 364–365
 - Linux commands, 369
 - online references, 369–370
 - PPP access, 364
 - PPPoE, 364
 - troubleshooting, 368–369
 - Ubuntu commands, 369
 - dummy interfaces, 327
 - Firefox, 52–53
 - introduction to, 51
 - ISP, 364–365
 - localhost interfaces, 326
 - checking availability of, 326
 - configuring manually, 327
 - I/O transfer speeds, 396
 - IP addressing
 - IPv4 addressing, 331–332
 - IPv6 addressing, 332, 334–336
 - Squid, specifying client IP addresses, 569–570
 - ip command, 348–349
 - IP masquerading, 332–333
 - ip route command, 346, 349
 - iptables, 388
 - ISP, 364–365
 - itch.io, 82
 - iwconfig command, 369
- ## J
- Java programming, 604, 627–628
 - JVM, 604
 - OpenJDK, 604–605
 - JavaScript, 628
 - JDeveloper (Oracle), 606

Jetty, 481

jobs

- background jobs, 174–175
- foreground jobs, 174–175
- listing, 173
- moving, to background/foreground, 174–175
- parallel, executing in, 181–182
- running repeatedly, 229–231

jobs command, 173

.jpg files, 68

JSON, 628

Juju, 540–541, 545

JVM, 604

K

kate text editor, 186

kdat, 312–313

KDE, 45

- kdat, 312–313
- KDE ark archiving tool, 312–313
- monitoring tools, 298
- performance tuning, 3933

Kdenlive, 77

KDevelop Client, 606–607

kdf, 298

kedit text editor, 186

kernel ring buffers, reading contents of, 200

kernels, 401, 402

- Android mobile development, 608
- compiling, 418–419
- configuring, 403, 414–417
- custom kernels, 402
- devices.txt files, 403
- directories, 403–405
- first kernel, 402
- ide.txt files, 404
- initrd.txt files, 404
- kernel oops, 419
- kernel-parameters.txt files, 404
- KVM, 523–526
- loading, 274
- loading process, 344–345
- make utility, 404
- modules, 406–408
- numbering schema, 24
- obtaining sources, 409–410
- online references, 419–420
- patching, 410–411
- performance tuning, 398–399
- /proc directory, 115–117
- RAM disk images, creating, 418
- recompiling, 408–409
- security, 379
- source tree, 403–405
- sysrq.txt files, 404
- troubleshooting, 418–419
- types of, 405–406
- Ubuntu kernels, 401–402
- versions of, 409

key-based logins, 373–375

key/value stores, 512

kid-friendly games, 88

Kile, 61

kill command, 283–284

killall command, 284

Kotlin, 628–629

Krita, 70

ksh, 226

ksysguard, 298

Kubernetes, 534

Kubuntu, 45–46

KVM, 523–526

Kylin, 50

L

- LAMP, 437–439
- LAN, network printers, 431–432
- Landscape, 541, 545
- languages
 - procedural languages, relational databases, 494
 - programming languages, 621–622
 - Ada, 622
 - Clojure, 622–623
 - COBOL, 623–624
 - D, 624
 - Dart, 624
 - Elixir, 625
 - Elm, 625
 - Erlang, 625
 - Forth, 626
 - Fortran, 626
 - Go, 626–627
 - Groovy, 627
 - Haskell, 627
 - Java, 627–628
 - JavaScript, 628
 - Kotlin, 628–629
 - Lisp, 629
 - Lua, 629
 - Mono, 629–630
 - OCaml, 630
 - online references, 633–634
 - Perl, 630
 - PHP, 631
 - Python, 631
 - Raku, 631
 - Ruby, 631–632
 - Rust, 632
 - Scala, 632
 - Scratch, 632–633
 - Vala, 633
 - selecting, Ubuntu installations, 7–8
 - large enterprises, backup strategies, 305
 - last command, 212
 - last lines of files, printing, 163–164
 - lastlog command, 289
 - later, scheduling tasks for, 227–229
 - LaTeX, 60
 - Launchpad, 614–615
 - accounts, creating, 638
 - GPG keys, 638–639
 - SSH keys, 639
 - work environments, configuring, 638–640
 - LDAP, 579–580
 - administration, 584–585
 - configuring
 - clients, 584
 - servers, 580
 - directories, populating, 582–583
 - ldap-utils package, 584–585
 - LDIF files, 583
 - online references, 585
 - schemas, creating, 580–581
 - Thunderbird, LDAP client configuration, 584
 - LDIF files, 583
 - LEMP, 439
 - less command, 132, 152–154
 - LGDB, 82
 - libraries (software), Android mobile development, 608
 - LibreOffice
 - brief history of, 57–58
 - components of, 56–57
 - Office compatibility, 55
 - VBA, 55
 - lighttpd, 479–480

Lightworks, 77

links

files/folders, creating links, 154–156

hard links, 155–156

symlinks, 154–156

Linux

C programming, 598–599

command line

&& operators, 180, 198

!! operator, 196–197

|| operator, 198

accessing, 107

apropos command, 112

background jobs, 174–175

basic commands, 143–144

BIOS, 195

boolean operators, 180

byobu, 192–193

CD creation, 72–73

changing directories, 145–147

command shortcuts, 198

commands list, 143–144

commonly used commands/programs,
139

compressed files, 191–192

confining scripts to directories, 198–199

copying files, 147

Coreutils, 199

creating links, 154–156

defined, 106–107

directories, 112–117

downloading files/folders, 164

DVD creation, 73–75

environment variables, 182–185

executing jobs in parallel, 181–182

file comparisons, 170

file systems, 112–114

finding differences in files, 170

finding files, 149–151

finding files from indexes, 156

finding similarities in files, 170–171

foreground jobs, 174–175

GRUB, 195–196

input string searches, 151–152

kernel ring buffers, 200

listing files in directories, 156–158

listing jobs, 173

listing processes, 171–173

listing system information, 158–159

logging out of, 108

manual pages, 111–112, 159–160

multiple terminal operation, 192–193

online references, 139, 165, 200

pipng commands, 178–180

polite system resets, 194–195

printing directory sizes, 148

printing disk usage, 148

printing file contents, 144–145

printing resource usage, 175–177

prioritizing processes, 177–178

reading documentation, 111–112

reasons for using, 142–143

rebooting systems, 138–139

redirecting input/output of commands,
167–170

REISUB, 194–195

remote computer logins, 108–109

repeating text, 148–149

rerunning previous commands, 196–197

root accounts, 110–111, 133–134

running background processes, 173–174

running commands in sequence,
180–181

shutting down systems, 137–138

- standard input/output of commands, 169
 - substituting processes, 181
 - super user accounts, 109–111, 133–134
 - text editors, 185–191
 - text-based logins, 107–108
 - troubleshooting sudo command, 134–136
 - troubleshooting Ubuntu bootups, 195
 - user accounts, 109–111, 136–137
 - viewing command history, 197
 - whereis command, 112
- daemons, 25
- Debian Linux, 24
- development of, 23–25
- directories, 112–114
- /bin directory, 114
 - changing, 120, 145–147
 - children directories, 118
 - copying files, 131, 147
 - creating, 129, 160
 - creating files, 128–129
 - deleting, 129–131, 161–162
 - displaying contents of files, 132
 - /etc directory, 114
 - finding current directory, 120
 - finding files, 147
 - /home directory, 115
 - listing contents of, 118–119
 - listing files in directories, 156–158
 - moving files, 131, 161
 - parent directories, 118
 - permissions, 122–127
 - printing directory sizes, 148
 - printing last lines of files, 163–164
 - /proc directory, 115–117
 - regular expressions, 133
 - renaming files, 131, 161
 - /sbin directory, 114
 - sorting file contents, 162–163
 - /tmp directories, 117
 - /usr directory, 117
 - /var directory, 117
 - wildcard characters, 133
- distributions
- included software, 24–25
 - versions of, 24
- documentation, 28–30
- file systems
- directories, 112–120
 - hierarchy of, 112–114
 - permissions, 120–128
- filesystems
- performance tuning, 394–395
 - synchronizing, 396
- GNU GPL, development of, 23–24
- HOWTO documents, 29
- kernels, 401, 402
- Android mobile development, 608
 - compiling, 418–419
 - configuring, 403, 414–417
 - creating RAM disk images, 418
 - custom kernels, 402
 - devices.txt files, 403
 - directories, 403–405
 - first kernel, 402
 - ide.txt files, 404
 - initrd.txt files, 404
 - kernel oops, 419
 - kernel-parameters.txt files, 404
 - loading, 274
 - make utility, 404
 - modules, 406–408
 - obtaining sources, 409–410
 - online references, 419–420
 - patching, 410–411
 - performance tuning, 398–399

- recompiling, 408–409
- security, 379
- source tree, 403–405
- sysrq.txt files, 404
- troubleshooting, 418–419
- types of, 405–406
- versions of, 409
- location of commands, printing, 164
- manual pages, 29–30
- network connectivity commands, 369
- numbering schema, 24
- online references, 23
- paging through output, 152–154
- reasons for using, 25–26
- rebooting systems, 138–139
- security, 385
- SELinux, 388
- shells, 25
- shutting down systems, 137–138
- user accounts
 - creating, 136–137
 - deleting, 137
- video, viewing, 76
- viruses, 385
- web resources, 23
- X server, 32, 33
 - benefits of, 33–34
 - components of, 33–34
 - display manager, 39
 - display managers, 33
 - distributed processing, 32–33
 - online references, 40
 - starting, 39
 - terminal clients, 33–34
 - /usr directory, 33
 - window manager, 33–34
 - xorg.conf files, 33–39
- Lisp, 629
- Listen directive (Apache web server), 447
- listing
 - contents of directories, 118–119
 - files/folders in directories, 156–158
 - groups, 205–206
 - jobs, 173
 - processes, 171–173
 - system information, 158–159
 - units (services), 276
- LMMS, 76
- In command, 154–156
- loading process
 - kernels, 274, 344–345
 - modprobe command, 344–345
 - modules, 408
- local bash shells, configuring, 640
- local GUI clients, database access, 503
- localhost interfaces, 326
 - checking availability of, 326
 - configuring manually, 327
- locate command, 156
- location of commands, printing, 164
- locking
 - data, relational databases, 492
 - users out of accounts, 209
- log files
 - checking, 287–289
 - rotating, 289–291
- logging, Apache web server, 463–464
- logging out of command line, 108
- logical operators, comparisons, 255, 259
- logins
 - command line
 - from remote computers, 108–109
 - text-based logins, 107–108
 - key-based logins, 373–375
- logname command, 224

loopback interfaces. See localhost interfaces

loops (endless), 261–262

loss of data, 302

lp command, 435

lpc command, 435

lpq command, 435

lprm command, 435

lpstat command, 435

ls command, 118–119, 156–158

lsblk command, 158–159

lshw command, 158–159

lsmod command, 158–159, 406–408

lspci command, 158–159

Lua, 629

Lubuntu, 47–48

users, 205

LXC, 532

LXD, 533

LXDE, 47–48

LyX, 60

M

MaaS, 537

Mac hardware, Ubuntu installations, 3

MAC systems, 388

macros, 600–601

Mail Delivery Agent (MDA), 560–562

Mail Transport Agent (MTA), 548

Maildir Versus Mbox, 550

make utility, 404

makefiles, 599–600

managing

 Apache web server

 .htaccess configuration files, 450–452, 469

 access control, 452, 455

 configuring, 446–449, 450–452

 development of, 443–444

 file system authentication, 45–455

 HTTPS, 464–466

 installing, 444

 logging, 463–464

 modules, 455–461

 MPM, 449–450

 online references, 466

 overview of, 444

 runtime servers, 446–449

 security, 444, 452–455

 starting/stopping, 444–446

 threads, 468

 virtual hosting, 461–462

 configurations, 102

 dotdee, 102–103

 Snappy package manager, 103–104

 Ubuntu Core, 103

 disk quotas, 222

 groups, 205

 finding groups, 206

 listing groups, 205–206

 tools, 206–207

 modules, 406–408

 Nginx web server, 467–469

 building sources, 469–470

 configuring, 470–473

 HTTPS, 476–477

 installing, 469–470

 modules, 475

 online references, 477

 PHP, 474–475

 uninstalling, 470

 virtual hosting, 473–474

 passwords, 212, 216

 changing in batches, 216–217

 password files, 212–214

 shadow passwords, 214–215

 system password policies, 212

- sets of servers, 543
 - Ansible, 544
 - CFEngine, 545
 - Chef, 544
 - Juju, 545
 - Landscape, 545
 - online references, 545
 - Puppet, 543–544
 - SaltStack, 544–545
- software
 - APT, 95–100
 - apt-get, 99–100
 - compiling software, 100–102
 - configuration management, 102–104
 - online references, 104
 - Software Updater, 94–95
 - Synaptic, 92–94
 - Ubuntu Software, 91
- software project management
 - Bazaar, 611–612
 - Git, 610–611
 - Subversion, 612–613
- system management tools, 292
 - Conky, 292–297
 - gnome-nettool, 297
 - System Monitor, 292
 - vncviewer, 297
 - Wireshark, 298
- system resource management
 - APT, 95–100
 - apt-get, 99–100
 - compiling software, 100–102
 - configuration management, 102–104
 - online references, 104
 - Software Updater, 94–95
 - Synaptic, 92–94
 - Ubuntu Software, 91
- user accounts, 201–202, 204, 207
 - adding accounts, 209–211
 - administration privileges, 217
 - BOFH, 205
 - changing identities, 217–219
 - disk quotas, 222–223
 - file permissions, 204
 - GID, 204
 - group management, 205–207
 - locking users out of accounts, 209
 - lusers, 205
 - monitoring user activity, 211–212
 - online references, 224
 - passwords, 202, 212–217
 - root privileges, 219–222
 - root user accounts, 202–203
 - stereotypes, 205
 - super user accounts, 202, 203
 - system user accounts, 203–204
 - tools, 208–209
 - Ubuntu commands, 223–224
 - UID, 204
 - usernames, 211
- manual pages, 111–112
 - Linux, 29–30
 - reading, 159–160
- MATE, 48–49
- MBR, boot process, 274
- MEAN, 440–441
- Memcached, 513–514
- MemcacheDB, 514
- memory, displaying available space, 286
- Merriman, Dwight, 509
- message block printing, 432–433
- microservice architectures, 531
- Microsoft Azure, 539
- mind maps, 61

- mirroring data, 307
- mirroring. *See also* copying, 164
- Mixxx, 76
- mkdir command, 129, 160
- mkisofs command, 72
- "moat mentality", 333
- mobile development, Android, 607
 - Android Runtime, 608
 - Android Studio, 609
 - Application Framework, 608–609
 - applications, 609
 - ARM processors, 608
 - Google Play, 607
 - Linux kernels, 608
 - RISC processors, 608
- modifying default file permissions, 124–125
- modinfo command, 407
- modprobe command, 344–345, 406–407
- modprobe.d/ command, 114
- Module section (xorg.conf files), 36
- modules, 406–408
 - Apache web server, 455–461
 - MPM, Apache web server, 449–450
 - Nginx web server, 475
- Mojo, 541
- MongoDB, 516
- Monitor section (xorg.conf files), 37
- monitoring
 - console-based monitoring, 281–283
 - enterprise servers, 298–299
 - KDE monitoring tools, 298
 - systems
 - checking log files, 287–289
 - Conky, 292–297
 - console-based monitoring, 281–283
 - disk quotas, 287
 - displaying free hard disk space, 286
 - displaying used memory, 286
 - enterprise servers, 298–299
 - graphical process tools, 292–298
 - KDE monitoring tools, 298
 - killing processes, 283–284
 - online references, 299
 - priority scheduling, 285
 - rotating log files, 289–291
 - system management tools, 292–298
 - System Monitor, 292
 - user activity, 211–212
- Mono, 629–630
- motd files, 138
- mounting, Samba shares, 430–431
- .mov files, 75
- moving
 - files/folders, 131, 161
 - jobs
 - background jobs, 174–175
 - to background/foreground, 174–175
 - foreground jobs, 174–175
- .mp3 files, 65
- .mp4 files, 65
- .mpeg files, 75
- MPM, Apache web server, 449–450
- MS Office
 - CrossOver Office, 61
 - free/open-source software compatibility, 55
 - LibreOffice compatibility, 55
 - VBA, 55
- MS-DOS, 107
- mtr command, Internet connections, checking, 329–330
- multicasting, 338
- multimedia applications
 - ALSA, 64
 - CD/DVD burning applications

- Brasero, 71
- Linux command line, CD creation, 72–73
- Linux command line, DVD creation, 73–75
- Ubuntu support, 71
- graphics manipulation applications, 66, 70
 - Blender, 70, 77
 - CinePaint, 70
 - darktable, 70
 - digiKam, 70
 - GIMP 66–67
 - Hugin, 70
 - Inkscape, 70
 - Krita, 70
 - nautilus-image converter, 69
 - netpbm tools, 69
 - Photoshop, 67
 - POV-Ray, 70
 - Radiance, 70
 - Shotwell Photo Manager, 66, 71
 - Simple Scan, 67
 - Xara Xtreme, 70
- music applications, 65
 - Banshee, 66
 - Rhythmbox, 66
 - Sound Juicer, 66
- online references, 77
- OSS, 64
- PulseAudio, 64
- recording/editing sound, 76
- sound cards, 63–64
- video editing applications, 77
 - Avidemux, 77
 - Blender, 77
 - Cinelerra, 77
 - DaVinci Resolve, 77
 - Kdenlive, 77
 - Lightworks, 77
 - OpenShot Video Editor, 77
 - PiTiVi, 77
 - Shotcut, 77
- multiple jobs, executing in parallel, 181–182
- multiple terminal operation, byobu, 192–193
- music applications, 65
 - Banshee, 66
 - Rhythmbox, 66
 - Sound Juicer, 66
- Mutter, 42
- mv command, 131, 161
- MX records, 591
- MySQL, 483
 - ACID compliance, 493–494
 - command line client, 504–505
 - configuring, 494–495
 - creating databases, 496–497
 - data integrity, 493–494
 - data locking, 492–493
 - database access, 501
 - local GUI clients, 503
 - SSH, 501–502
 - web browsers, 503
 - inserting data into tables, 490
 - mysql command, 506
 - mysqladmin command, 506
 - mysqldump command, 506
 - MySQLGUI, 506
 - online references, 493, 507
 - PostgreSQL versus, 492–494
 - procedural languages, 494
 - retrieving data from tables, 490–492
 - root user passwords, 495
 - speed, 492
 - SQL subqueries, 494
 - stored procedures, 494
 - triggers, 494

mysql command, 506
 mysqladmin command, 506
 mysqldump command, 506
 MySQLGUI, 506

N

Nagios, 298

name servers

 DNS

 online references, 595

 records, 590–593

 requests, 589–590

 servers, 588, 589–590, 593–595

 setting, 352–355

naming services, 351–352

nano text editor, 185, 186–187

NAS, 308

NAT, 332

nautilus-image converter, 69

needs assessments, backup strategies,
 303–304

Neo4j, 518

neofetch command, 158–159

NetBeans, 606

NetBoot, boot process, 274

NetCat, 330

netmasks. *See* subnet masks

netpbm tools, 68–69

netstat command, 346, 350

networks, 337

 10BASE-T networking, 339

 10G Ethernet networking, 340

 50G Ethernet networking, 340

 100BASE-T networking, 339

 1000BASE-T networking, 339

 accessing, chains, 387

 bridges, 343, 524–525

 broadcasting, 338

 cabling, 340

 fiber-optic cabling, 342

 UTP cabling, 341

 chains, 387

 command line network interface configuration

 ifconfig command, 346–348

 ip command, 348–349

 ip route command, 346, 349

 netstat command, 346, 350

 configuring

 command line network interfaces,
 345–350

 configuration files, 350–355

 DHCP, 355–361

 /etc/host.conf files, 355

 /etc/hosts files, 350–351

 /etc/netplan/*.yaml files, 353–355

 /etc/nsswitch.conf files, 351–352, 355

 /etc/resolv.conf files, 352–353

 graphical configuration tools, 355

 nm-connection-editor, 345–346

 connections, troubleshooting, 342

 DHCP, 361

 activating, 357

 configuring hosts, 359–361

 installing/configuring software, 358–359

 DNS search orders, 355

 dummy interfaces, 327

 FDDI networks, 340

 fiber-optic networks, 340, 342

 gateways

 dumb gateways, 343

 smart gateways, 343

 hosts

 adding to /etc/hosts files, 350–351

 configuring with DHCP, 359–361

- hubs, 342
- initializing hardware, 343–344
 - /etc/modprobe.conf files, 344
 - kernel modules, 344–345
 - modprobe command, 344–345
- Internet connections, 363–364
 - checking, 328–330
 - common configuration information, 364–365
 - dial-up access, 367–368
 - DSL access, 365
 - ISP, 364–365
 - Linux commands, 369
 - PPP access, 364
 - PPPoE, 364
 - troubleshooting, 342
 - Ubuntu commands, 369
- IP masquerading, 332–333
- IPv4 addressing, 331–332
- IPv6 addressing, 332, 334–336
- LAN, network printers, 431–432
- localhost interfaces, 326
 - checking availability of, 326
 - configuring manually, 327
- "moat mentality", 333
- multicasting, 338
- name servers, 352–355
- naming services, 351–352
- NAT, 332
- NIC, 338–340
- online references, 369–370
- printers, 431
 - CUPS GUI, 431–434
 - LAN, 431–432
 - online references, 435
 - server message block printing, 432–433
 - troubleshooting, 434–435
- routers, 343
- storage, backups, 308
- subnet masks, 337–338
- subnetting, 337–338
- switches, 342
- TCP/IP, 330
 - addressing, 331–332
 - IP masquerading, 332–333
 - ports, 333–334
- Token Ring networking, 339
- troubleshooting, connections, 342
- Ubuntu, 330
- unicast addressing, 338
- VPN, 563, 572–573
 - configuring clients, 573–575
 - configuring servers, 575–577
 - online references, 577
- wireless networks, 361, 382–383
 - configuring, 20
 - interfaces, 340
 - selecting protocols, 363
 - Ubuntu support, 361–363
- New Relic, 299
- new shell programs, running, 239–240
- NewSQL, 511
- newusers command, 224
- NFS, 422
 - configuring
 - clients, 423–424
 - servers, 422–423
 - installing, 422
 - starting/stopping, 422
- nftables, 388
- Nginx web server, 467–469
 - building sources, 469–470
 - configuring, 470–473
 - HTTPS, 476–477

- installing, 469–470
 - modules, 475
 - online references, 477
 - PHP, 474–475
 - uninstalling, 470
 - virtual hosting, 473–474
 - NIC, 338–339
 - 10BASE-T networking, 339
 - 10G Ethernet networking, 340
 - 50G Ethernet networking, 340
 - 100BASE-T networking, 339
 - 1000BASE-T networking, 339
 - fiber-optic networks, 340
 - promiscuous mode, 385
 - security, 385
 - Token Ring networking, 339
 - wireless network interfaces, 340
 - nice command, 177–178
 - Nmap, 330, 382
 - nm-connection-editor, 345–346, 369
 - nonbooting hard disks, saving files from, 324
 - NoSQL databases, 485, 509–510
 - advantages of, 510, 511
 - BaseX, 517
 - Berkeley DB, 512, 579
 - BigTable, 517
 - Cassandra, 513
 - CouchDB, 515–516
 - disadvantages of, 510–511
 - document stores, 514–515
 - etcd, 513
 - FlockDB, 519
 - graph stores, 518
 - HBase, 518
 - HyperGraphDB, 519
 - key/value stores, 512
 - Memcached, 513–514
 - MemcacheDB, 514
 - MongoDB, 516
 - Neo4j, 518
 - NewSQL and, 511
 - online references, 519–520
 - OrientDB, 519
 - Redis, 514
 - Riak, 514
 - Scylla, 514
 - UnQL, 511
 - wide column stores, 517
 - NS records, 591
 - numbering schema, Linux kernels, 24
 - numeric comparisons, 252–253, 256–257
- ## O
- OCaml, 630
 - Office
 - CrossOver Office, 61
 - free/open-source software compatibility, 55
 - LibreOffice compatibility, 55
 - VBA, 55
 - .ogg files, 65, 66
 - .ogv/.ogg files, 75
 - online references
 - Apache web server, 466
 - backups, 324
 - BIND, 595
 - boot process, 278–279
 - cloud computing, 541
 - command line, 139, 165, 200
 - containers, 534
 - desktop environments, 50
 - DNS, 595
 - file sharing, 435
 - games, 89
 - HTTP servers, 482

- Internet connections, 369–370
- kernels, 419–420
- LDAP, 585
- Linux, 23, 28
- multimedia applications, 77
- MySQL, 493, 507
- network printers, 435
- networks, 369–370
- Nginx web server, 477
- NoSQL databases, 519–520
- performance tuning, 396–400
- PostgreSQL, 493, 507
- programming, 618–619
- programming languages, 633–634
- QA, 647
- remote access, 377–378
- security, 391–392
- sets of servers, 545
- shell scripts, 270
- software management, 104
- sound, 65
- Squid, 577
- system monitoring, 299
- system resource management, 104
- testing, 647
- Ubuntu, 22, 28, 30
- Ubuntu development, 643
- user accounts, 224
- virtualization, 529
- VPN, 577
- Wayland, 32
- web browsers, 54
- web server stacks, 441
- X server, 40
- OpenJDK, 604–605
- OpenLDAP. See LDAP
- OpenShot Video Editor, 77

- open-source/free software, Office compatibility, 55
- OpenSSH. See SSH
- OpenStack, 538–539
- OR operators, 491–492
- optimizing performance, 393–394
 - badblocks command, 397
 - e2fsck command, 397
 - file access time, disabling, 397
 - filesystems, 394–395
 - GNOME, 3933
 - hdparm command, 395–396
 - I/O transfer speeds, 396
 - KDE, 3933
 - kernels, 398–399
 - online references, 396–400
 - storage disks, 394
 - tune2fs command, 396–397
 - Tuned Project, 396–400
- Options directives (Apache web server), 451
- Oracle JDeveloper, 606
- OrientDB, 519
- OSS, 64
- output
 - commands
 - redirecting, 167–170
 - redirecting with shell command line, 236
 - standard input/output, 167, 169
 - paging through, 152–154

P

- PaaS, 537
- packages
 - PPA, 615
 - snap packages, 615–616

- Ubuntu development
 - code packaging, 640–643
 - configuring, 637–638
 - installing, 637–638
- packet writing, Linux command line, DVD creation, 74–75
- paging through output, 152–154
- PAM, 215–216
- parallel, executing jobs in, 181–182
- parameters (positional), 243
 - accessing/retrieving variables, 244
 - example of, 243–244
- parent directories, 118
- partitions
 - planning, Ubuntu installations, 5
 - Ubuntu installations, 5
- passwd command, 114, 209, 224
- passwords, 212, 216, 383–384
 - brute-forcing, 373–374
 - changing in batches, 216–217
 - MySQL root users, 495
 - password files, 212–214
 - shadow passwords, 214–215
 - system password policies, 212
 - Ubuntu, 10
 - user accounts, 202
- patching kernels, 410–411
- pattern-matching, 235
- .pbm files, 69
- pbuilder, 638
- .pcx files, 68
- pdcsch, 226
- PDF, 58
- pdfedit, 58
- pdksh, comparisons of expressions, 250–251
 - file operators, 253–254
 - logical operators, 255
 - numeric comparisons, 252–253
 - strings, 251–252
- performance tuning, 393–394
 - badblocks command, 397
 - e2fsck command, 397
 - file access time, disabling, 397
 - filesystems, 394–395
 - GNOME, 3933
 - hdparm command, 395–396
 - HPC, 598
 - I/O transfer speeds, 396
 - KDE, 3933
 - kernels, 398–399
 - online references, 396–400
 - storage disks, 394
 - tune2fs command, 396–397
 - Tuned Project, 396–400
- periodic basis, full backups on, 306–307
- peripherals
 - digital cameras, 70
 - scanners, 67
- Perl, 630
- permissions
 - directories, 122–127
 - file systems, 120–128
 - altering permissions, 123–124
 - assigning permissions, 121–122
 - changing file groups, 125
 - changing file permissions, 125, 147
 - viewing/modifying default permissions, 124–125
 - files/folders, 204
 - altering permissions, 123–124
 - changing file groups, 125
 - changing permissions, 125, 147
 - viewing/modifying default permissions, 124–125
 - setting with ACL, 127–128
 - sgid permissions, 125–127
 - sticky bit permissions, 126–127
 - suid permissions, 125–127

- pgAdmin, 506
- .pgm files, 69
- Photoshop, 67
- PHP, 474–475, 631
- physical security, 383–384
- PID, 164, 175–176, 237, 274, 566
- ping command, checking Internet connections, 328–329
- ping6 command, checking Internet connections, 328–329
- pipelines (CI/CD), 613
- piping commands, 142–143, 178–180, 237
- PiTiVi, 77
- planning
 - backup strategies
 - assessing needs/resources, 303–304
 - choosing a strategy, 308
 - choosing hardware/media, 308–309
 - evaluating, 304–306
 - full backups on a periodic basis, 306–307
 - full backups with incremental backups, 307
 - home users, 304–305
 - incremental backups, 307
 - inheriting, 306
 - large enterprises, 305
 - mirroring data, 307
 - RAID arrays, 307
 - simple backup strategies, 306
 - small enterprises, 305
 - small offices, 305
 - disaster recovery plans, 390–391
 - partition strategies, Ubuntu installations, 5
 - Ubuntu installations, 1–2
 - flavors of Ubuntu, 2–3
 - partition strategies, 5
 - researching hardware specifications, 2–16
- .png files, 68
- .pnm files, 69
- polite system resets, 194–195
- ports
 - TCP/IP networking, 333–334
 - Ubuntu network ports, 421
 - uplink ports, 342
- positional arguments, 242
- positional parameters, 243
 - accessing/retrieving variables, 244
 - example of, 243–244
- Postfix, 552–556
- PostgreSQL
 - ACID compliance, 493–494
 - command line client, 505–506
 - configuring, 498
 - creating
 - database users, 499–500
 - databases, 499
 - data integrity, 493–494
 - data locking, 492
 - database access, 501–503
 - local GUI clients, 503
 - SSH, 501–502
 - web browsers, 503
 - deleting database users, 500
 - granting/revoking privileges, 500–501
 - initializing data directories, 498
 - MySQL versus, 492–494
 - online references, 493, 507
 - pgAdmin, 506
 - procedural languages, 494
 - retrieving data from tables, 491
 - speed, 492
 - SQL subqueries, 494
 - stored procedures, 494
 - triggers, 494
- POV-Ray, 70

- Power icon (GNOME), 43, 45
- power management, configuring, in Ubuntu, 18–19
- PPA, 615
- .ppm files, 69
- PPP Internet access, configuring, 364
- PPPoE, 366–367
- preformatted DVD, 74
- preinstallation processes, Ubuntu, 1–2
 - flavors of Ubuntu, 2–3
 - hardware specifications, 2–16
- previous commands, rerunning, 196–197
- printing
 - all-in-one (Print/Fax/Scan) devices, 435
 - commands, location of, 164
 - directory sizes, 148
 - disk usage, 148
 - file contents, 144–145
 - file sizes, 148
 - last lines of files, 163–164
 - network printers, 431
 - CUPS GUI, 431–434
 - LAN, 431–432
 - online references, 435
 - server message block printing, 432–433
 - troubleshooting, 434–435
 - resource usage, 175–177
 - server message block printing, 432–433
 - sharing printers, Samba, 428–429
 - Ubuntu printer configurations, 18
- prioritizing
 - processes, 177–178
 - scheduling priorities, 285
- private clouds, 540
- privileges
 - administration privileges, 217
 - granting/revoking with PostgreSQL, 500–501
 - root privileges, 219–222
 - user accounts, 109–111
- /proc directory, 115–117
- procedural languages, relational databases, 494
- processes
 - killing, 283–284
 - listing, 171–173
 - prioritizing, 177–178
 - substituting, 181
- processors, Android mobile development, 608
- productivity applications
 - Celtx, 59
 - CrossOver Office, 61
 - defined, 56
 - gedit, 59
 - Heimer, 61
 - Kile, 61
 - LaTeX, 60
 - LibreOffice
 - brief history of, 57–58
 - components of, 56–57
 - Office compatibility, 55
 - VBA, 55
 - LyX, 60
 - online references, 61
 - pdfedit, 58
 - Publican, 59–60
 - Texmaker, 60
 - users (typical), 56
 - Windows, 61
 - Wine, 61
 - XML Copy Editor, 60
- productivity suites, LibreOffice, Office compatibility, 55
- programming
 - Android mobile development, 607
 - Android Runtime, 608
 - Android Studio, 609

- Application Framework, 608–609
- applications, 609
- ARM processors, 608
- Google Play, 607
- Linux kernels, 608
- RISC processors, 608
- Bikeshed, 616–618
- C, 597–599
 - autoconf command, 601–602
 - building programs, 599–601
 - checking source code, 602–603
 - configuring code, 601–602
 - debugging tools, 602–603
 - dependency checking, 599–600
 - GCC, 603–604
 - gdb command, 603
 - gprof command, 603
 - macros, 600–601
 - makefile targets, 600–601
 - makefiles, 599–600
 - splint command, 602–603
 - symbolic debugging, 603
 - tracking function time, 603
- C++597–598, 599
 - autoconf command, 601–602
 - building programs, 599–601
 - checking source code, 602–603
 - configuring code, 601–602
 - debugging tools, 602–603
 - dependency checking, 599–600
 - GCC, 603–604
 - gdb command, 603
 - gprof command, 603
 - macros, 600–601
 - makefile targets, 600–601
 - makefiles, 599–600
 - splint command, 602–603
 - symbolic debugging, 603
 - tracking function time, 603
- Chaos Engineering, 614
- CI/CD tools, 613–614
- GCC, 597
- graphical development tools, 605
 - Eclipse, 606
 - Glade, 607
 - IDE, 605–606
 - KDevelop Client, 606–607
 - NetBeans, 606
 - Oracle JDeveloper, 606
 - SDK, 606
 - Visual Studio Code, 606
- Java programming, 604
 - JVM, 604
 - OpenJDK, 604–605
- languages, 621–622
 - Ada, 622
 - Clojure, 622–623
 - COBOL, 623–624
 - D, 624
 - Dart, 624
 - Elixir, 625
 - Elm, 625
 - Erlang, 625
 - Forth, 626
 - Fortran, 626
 - Go, 626–627
 - Groovy, 627
 - Haskell, 627
 - Java, 627–628
 - JavaScript, 628
 - Kotlin, 628–629
 - Lisp, 629
 - Lua, 629
 - Mono, 629–630

- OCaml, 630
- online references, 633–634
- Perl, 630
- PHP, 631
- Python, 631
- Raku, 631
- Ruby, 631–632
- Rust, 632
- Scala, 632
- Scratch, 632–633
- Vala, 633
- online references, 618–619
- snap packages, 615–616
- software project management
 - Bazaar, 611–612
 - Git, 610–611
 - Subversion, 612–613
- Ubuntu Make, 615
- version control systems, 609–610
- promiscuous mode (NIC), 385
- proxy servers
 - defined, 563–564
 - Squid, 563–564
 - ACL, 565–569
 - configuring, 570–572
 - configuring clients, 564–565
 - installing, 564
 - online references, 577
 - specifying client IP addresses, 569–570
- ps command, 171–173
- psql command, 506
- public clouds, 538, 539
- Publican, 59–60
- PulseAudio, 64
- Puppet, 543–544
- /pwd command, 120
- PXE, boot process, 274
- Python, 631

Q

- QA
 - Bug Squad, 647
 - online references, 647
 - Ubuntu QA Teams, 646–647
- Qmail, 549–550
- .qt files, 75
- quotas (disk), 287
 - configuring, 223
 - implementing, 222–223
 - managing, 222

R

- Radiance, 70
- RAID arrays, 307
- Raku, 631
- RAM disk images (kernels), creating, 418
- RARP, 338
- .raw files, 65
- Raymond, Eric, 141–142
- rcp command, 372
- RDP, VirtualBox, 528
- rebooting systems, 138–139
- recompiling kernels, 408–409
- recording/editing sound, 76
 - Ardour, 76
 - Audacity, 76
 - Cecilia, 76
 - LMMS, 76
 - Mixxx, 76
 - Rosegarden, 76
- recovery
 - data, 323
 - GRUB2 boot loaders, restoring, 323–324

- saving files from nonbooting hard disks, 324
 - Ubuntu Rescue disc, 323
 - disaster recovery plans, 390–391
- recovery mode (GRUB), 196
- reddit.com, 272
- redirecting input/output of commands, 167–170, 236
- Redis, 514
- references (online)
 - Apache web server, 466
 - BIND, 595
 - boot process, 278–279
 - cloud computing, 541
 - command line, 139, 165, 200
 - containers, 534
 - desktop environments, 50
 - DNS, 595
 - file sharing, 435
 - games, 89
 - HTTP servers, 482
 - Internet connections, 369–370
 - kernels, 419–420
 - LDAP, 585
 - Linux, 23, 28
 - multimedia applications, 77
 - MySQL, 493, 507
 - network printers, 435
 - networks, 369–370
 - Nginx web server, 477
 - NoSQL databases, 519–520
 - online references, 324
 - performance tuning, 396–400
 - PostgreSQL, 493, 507
 - programming, 618–619
 - programming languages, 633–634
 - QA, 647
 - remote access, 377–378
 - security, 391–392
 - sets of servers, 545
 - shell scripts, 270
 - software management, 104
 - sound, 65
 - Squid, 577
 - system monitoring, 299
 - system resource management, 104
 - testing, 647
 - Ubuntu, 22, 28, 30
 - Ubuntu development, 643
 - user accounts, 224
 - virtualization, 529
 - VPN, 577
 - Wayland, 32
 - web browsers, 54, 61
 - web server stacks, 441
 - X server, 40
- regular expressions, 235
 - comparisons of expressions, 250–251
 - file operators, 253–254, 257–258
 - logical operators, 255, 259
 - numeric comparisons, 252–253, 256–257
 - strings, 251–252, 255–256
 - directories, 133
- reinstalling
 - GRUB, 195–196
 - Ubuntu, 196
- REISUB, polite system resets, 194–195
- relational databases, 485
 - DBA, 483–484
 - graphical database clients, 506
 - MySQL, 483
 - ACID compliance, 493–494
 - command line client, 504–505
 - configuring, 494–495

- creating databases, 496–497
- data integrity, 493–494
- data locking, 492
- database access, 501–503
- inserting data into tables, 490
- mysql command, 506
- mysqladmin command, 506
- mysqldump command, 506
- MySQLGUI, 506
- online references, 493, 507
- PostgreSQL versus, 492–494
- procedural languages, 494
- retrieving data from tables, 490–492
- root user passwords, 495
- speed, 492
- SQL subqueries, 494
- stored procedures, 494
- triggers, 494
- operation of, 486–487
- PostgreSQL
 - ACID compliance, 493–494
 - command line client, 505–506
 - configuring, 498
 - creating database users, 499–500
 - creating databases, 499
 - data integrity, 493–494
 - data locking, 492
 - database access, 501–503
 - deleting database users, 500
 - granting/revoking privileges, 500–501
 - initializing data directories, 498
 - MySQL versus, 492–494
 - online references, 493, 507
 - pgAdmin, 506
 - procedural languages, 494
 - retrieving data from tables, 491
 - speed, 492
 - SQL subqueries, 494
 - stored procedures, 494
 - triggers, 494
- SQL, 487–492
 - creating tables, 488–489
 - inserting data into tables, 489–490
- remote access
 - copying files between machines, 372–373
 - Guacamole, 377
 - key-based logins, 373–375
 - online references, 377–378
 - SSH server, 371–375
 - VNC, 375–377
- remote computers, command line, logins, 108–109
- rename command, 161
- renaming files/folders, 161
- repeat statements, 263
- repeatedly running jobs, 229–231
- repeating text, 148–149
- repositories
 - software repositories, configuring, 15–17
 - Ubuntu repositories, compiling software, 101–102
- Require directive (Apache web server), 452
- rerunning previous commands, 196–197
- resetting systems, polite system resets, 194–195
- resources
 - assessing, backup strategies, 303–304
 - usage, printing, 175–177
- restoring
 - files from archives, 311–312
 - GRUB2 boot loaders, 323–324
- retrieving data from SQL tables, 490–492
- revoking/granting privileges, PostgreSQL, 500–501

- Rhythmbox music application, 66
- Riak, 514
- ripping audio, 71
- RISC processors, 608
- rm command, 130–131, 161–162
- rmdir command, 129–130
- rmmod command, 406
- root accounts, 110–111, 133–134
- root privileges, 219–222
- root prompt, dangers of working in, 15
- root user accounts, 202–203
- root zones, 589
- Rosegarden, 76
- rotating log files, 289–291
- route command, 369
- routers, 343
- rsync command, 319–320
- rtcwake command, 231–233
- Ruby, 631–632
- runlevels, 271–272, 275, 278
- Runtime (Android), 608
- runtime servers, Apache web server
 - apache2.conf files, 447–449
 - configuring, 446–449
 - DirectoryIndex directive, 449
 - DocumentRoot directive, 449
 - GID, 448
 - Group directive, 448
 - Listen directive, 447
 - ServerAdmin directive, 448
 - ServerName directive, 448–449
 - ServerRoot directive, 447
 - UID, 448
 - User directive, 448
 - UserDir directive, 449
- Rust, 632

S

- SaaS, 537
- SaltStack, 544–545
- Samba, 424
 - configuring, 425, 427
 - /etc/samba/smb.conf files, 426–429
 - installing, 425–426
 - mounting, 430–431
 - sharing
 - home directories, 427–428
 - printers, 428–429
 - smbclient command, 430
 - smbd daemon, starting/stopping, 429–430
 - smbstatus command, 430
 - testing, 429
- saving, files from nonbooting hard disks, 324
- /sbin directory, 114
- Scala, 632
- scanners, 67, 435
- scheduling
 - backups, full backups on a periodic basis, 306–307
 - priorities, 285
 - tasks, 226
 - automating tasks with scripts, 244–246
 - for later, 227–229
 - running jobs repeatedly, 229–231
 - waking computers from sleep, 231–233
- Scorched 3D, 83–84
- scp command, 372–373
- Scratch, 632–633
- screen images, capturing, 69
- Screen section (xorg.conf files), 38–39
- script kiddies, 380
- scripting
 - autocracking scripts, 380
 - automating tasks, 244–246

- break statements, 269
 - case statements, 267–268
 - Celx, 59
 - comparisons of expressions, 250–251
 - file operators, 253–254, 257–258
 - logical operators, 255, 259
 - numeric comparisons, 252–253, 256–257
 - strings, 251–252, 255–256
 - confining to directories, 198–199
 - endless loops, 261–262
 - executing scripts, 237–239
 - exit statements, 269
 - expr statements, 266
 - for statements, 259–261, 263
 - functions, 269–270
 - if statements, 265–266
 - interpreting scripts through specific shells, 240–241
 - new shell programs, 239–240
 - online references, 270
 - positional arguments, 242
 - positional parameters, 243
 - accessing/retrieving variables, 244
 - example of, 243–244
 - repeat statements, 263
 - select statements, 264
 - shift statements, 264
 - special shell characters
 - ^ special shell character, 250
 - ", 248–249
 - ' special shell character, 249
 - backslash, 249–250
 - list of, 247–248
 - storing scripts for system-wide access, 240
 - strings with embedded spaces, resolving, 248–249
 - variables, 242
 - accessing values, 243
 - accessing/retrieving with positional parameters, 244
 - assigning values, 242
 - built-in variables, 246–247
 - unexpanded variables, 249
 - while statements, 261, 262
 - writing scripts, 237–239
- Scylla, 514
- SDK, 606
- searches
 - DNS search orders, 355
 - input strings, 151–152
- security
 - access control, Apache web server, 452–455
 - Apache web server, 444, 452
 - AppArmor, 388–390
 - applications, 388–390
 - attacks, 380–381
 - autocracking scripts, 380
 - crackers, 380
 - external attacks, 379–380
 - hackers, 380
 - internal attacks, 379–380
 - script kiddies, 380
 - viruses, 385
 - war driving, 383
 - worms, 380
 - authentication
 - Apache web server, 452–455
 - PAM, 215–216
 - brute-forcing, 373–374
 - checklist, 381
 - configuring, 384–385
 - devices, 385
 - disaster recovery plans, 390–391
 - encrypted files, 318

- firewalls, 386–388
 - iptables, 388
 - nftables, 388
 - UFW, 386–387
- genprof, 389
- kernels, 379
- nftables, 388
- NIC, 385
- online references, 391–392
- passwords, 212, 216, 383–384
 - brute-forcing, 373–374
 - changing in batches, 216–217
 - MySQL root users, 495
 - password files, 212–214
 - shadow passwords, 214–215
 - system password policies, 212
 - Ubuntu installations, 10
 - user accounts, 202
- physical security, 383–384
- proxy servers. *See also* Squid, 563–564
- spoofing attacks, 593
- Tripwire, 384–385
- UFW, 386–387
- viruses, 385
- VPN, 563, 572–573
 - configuring clients, 573–575
 - configuring servers, 575–577
 - online references, 577
- vulnerability assessments, 381–382
- wireless networks, 382–383
- sed text editor, 189–191
- select statements, 264
- SELinux, 388
- semistructured data, 515
- sequence, running commands in, 180–181
- ServerAdmin directive (Apache web server), 448
- ServerLayout section (xorg.conf files), 35
- ServerName directive (Apache web server), 448–449
- ServerRoot directive (Apache web server), 447
- servers
 - Apache web server
 - access control, 452, 455
 - configuring, 446–449, 450–452
 - development of, 443–444
 - file system authentication, 452–455
 - .htaccess configuration files, 450–452, 469
 - HTTPS, 464–466
 - installing, 444
 - logging, 463–464
 - modules, 455–461
 - MPM, 449–450
 - online references, 466
 - overview of, 444
 - runtime servers, 446–449
 - security, 444, 452–455
 - starting/stopping, 444–446
 - threads, 468
 - virtual hosting, 461–462
 - DHCP servers, 358–359
 - DNS servers, 588, 589–590, 593–595
 - enterprise servers, monitoring, 298–299
 - FQDN, 580
 - HTTP servers
 - Caddy, 482
 - Cherokee, 480–481
 - Jetty, 481
 - lighttpd, 479–480
 - online references, 482
 - thttpd, 481–482
 - Tomcat, 482
 - Wildfly, 482
 - Yaws, 480

- LDAP servers, configuring, 580
- message block printing, 432–433
- name servers, 352–355
- NFS servers, 422–423
- Nginx web server, 467–469
 - building sources, 469–470
 - configuring, 470–473
 - HTTPS, 476–477
 - installing, 469–470
 - modules, 475
 - online references, 477
 - PHP, 474–475
 - uninstalling, 470
 - virtual hosting, 473–474
- proxy servers, defined. *See also* Squid, 563–564
- runtime servers, Apache web server, 446–449
- sets of servers, managing, 543
 - Ansible, 544
 - CFEngine, 545
 - Chef, 544
 - Juju, 545
 - Landscape, 545
 - online references, 545
 - Puppet, 543–544
 - SaltStack, 544–545
- Squid, 563–564
 - ACL, 565–569
 - configuring, 570–572
 - configuring clients, 564–565
 - installing, 564
 - online references, 577
 - specifying client IP addresses, 569–570
- SSH server
 - configuring, 371–372
 - copying files between machines, 372–373
 - ftp command, 372
 - key-based logins, 373–375
 - scp command, 372–373
 - sftp command, 373
 - ssh-keygen command, 373–375
- VPN servers, configuring, 575–577
- web servers
 - C10K problem, 467–468
 - event handlers, 468–469
 - threads, 468
- X server, 32, 33
 - /usr directory, 33
 - benefits of, 33–34
 - components of, 33–34
 - display manager, 39
 - display managers, 33
 - distributed processing, 32–33
 - online references, 40
 - starting, 39
 - terminal clients, 33–34
 - window manager, 33–34
 - xorg.conf files, 33–39
- server stacks, 437
 - LAMP, 437–439
 - LEMP, 439
 - MEAN, 437
 - online references, 441
- services
 - boot process
 - controlling, 278
 - running services, 271–272
 - starting/stopping services, 275–278
 - Startup Applications Preferences, 278
 - /etc/services files, 351
 - microservice architectures, 531
 - naming services, 351–352
 - units, listing, 276

- session writing, DVD creation, 74
- set group ID permissions (suid), 125–127
- set user ID permissions (suid), 125–127
- sets of servers, managing, 543
 - Ansible, 544
 - CFEngine, 545
 - Chef, 544
 - Juju, 545
 - Landscape, 545
 - online references, 545
 - Puppet, 543–544
 - SaltStack, 544–545
- sftp command, 373, 383
- sgid permissions, 125–127
- shadow passwords, 214–215
- shared data, /usr directory, 117
- sharing
 - files/folders
 - NFS, 422–424
 - online references, 435
 - Samba, 424–431
 - home directories with Samba, 427–428
 - printers, Samba, 428–429
 - Ubuntu desktops, 424
- shells. *See also* command line, 233
 - ash, 226
 - bash, 226, 250–255
 - changing, 226
 - command line, 233–234
 - background processes, 237
 - pattern-matching, 235
 - piping commands, 237
 - dash, 226
 - defined, 225–226
 - expressions, 235
 - GNOME Shell, 43–45
 - ksh, 226
 - Linux, 25
 - local bash shells, configuring, 640
 - new shell programs, 239–240
 - pdcksh, 226
 - pdcksh, comparisons of expressions, 250–255
 - scripting
 - ` special shell character, 250
 - ", 248–249
 - ' special shell character, 249
 - automating tasks, 244–246
 - backslash, 249–250
 - break statements, 269
 - case statements, 267–268
 - comparisons of expressions, 250–259
 - endless loops, 261–262
 - executing scripts, 237–239
 - exit statements, 269
 - expr statements, 266
 - functions, 269–270
 - if statements, 265–266
 - interpreting through specific shells, 240–241
 - new shell programs, 239–240
 - online references, 270
 - positional arguments, 242
 - positional parameters, 243–244
 - repeat statements, 263
 - resolving strings with embedded spaces, 248–249
 - select statements, 264
 - shift statements, 264
 - special shell characters, 247–248
 - for statements, 259–261
 - storing scripts for system-wide access, 240
 - until statements, 263
 - variables, 242–243, 244, 246–247, 249

- while statements, 261, 262
 - writing scripts, 237–239
- tcsh, 226, 255–259
- types of, 225–226
- zsh, 226
- shift statements, 264
- shortcuts, commands, 198
- Shotcut, 77
- Shotwell Photo Manager, 66, 71
- Show Applications icon (GNOME), 43, 44
- shred command, 155
- shutdown command, 137–139
- shutting down
 - systems, 137–138
 - Ubuntu, 11–12
- SignalFX, 299
- similarities in files, finding, 170–171
- simple backup strategies, 306
- Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP), 547
- Simple Scan, 67
- sleep, waking computers from, 231–233
- small enterprises, backup strategies, 305
- small offices, backup strategies, 305
- smart gateways, 343
- smbclient command, 430
- smbd daemon, starting/stopping, 429
- smbstatus command, 430
- snap packages, 615–616
- SnapCraft, 616
- Snappy package manager, 103–104
- Snappy Playpen, 616
- snaps, Snappy package manager, 103–104
- SOA records, 592–593
- soft links. *See* symlinks
- software
 - backup software, 309–316
 - bundles, Snappy package manager, 103–104
 - compiling
 - from source, 100, 101–102
 - from tarballs, 100–101
 - from Ubuntu repositories, 101–102
 - DHCP software, installing/configuring, 358–359
 - finding, with APT, 98–99
 - free/open-source software, MS Office compatibility, 55
 - libraries, Android mobile development, 608
 - Linux distributions, included software, 24–25
 - management tools
 - APT, 95–100
 - apt-get, 99–100
 - compiling software, 100–102
 - configuration management, 102–104
 - online references, 104
 - Software Updater, 94–95
 - Synaptic, 92–94
 - Ubuntu Software, 91
 - open-source/free software, MS Office compatibility, 55
 - project management
 - Bazaar, 611–612
 - Git, 610–611
 - Subversion, 612–613
 - repositories, configuring, 15–17
 - Snappy package manager, 103–104
 - updating, 12–14
- Software Updater, 12–14, 94–95
- sort command, 162–163
- sorting, file contents, 162–163
- sound, 65
 - ALSA, 64
 - CD/DVD burning applications
 - Brasero, 71
 - Linux command line, CD creation, 72–73

- Linux command line, DVD creation, 73–75
- Ubuntu support, 71
- converting files, 65
- .flac files, 65
- .mp3 files, 65
- .mp4 files, 65
- music applications, 65
 - Banshee, 66
 - Rhythmbox, 66
 - Sound Juicer, 66
- .ogg files, 65, 66
- online references, 65
- OSS, 64
- PulseAudio, 64
- recording/editing, 76
 - Ardour, 76
 - Audacity, 76
 - Cecilia, 76
 - LMMS, 76
 - Mixxx, 76
 - Rosegarden, 76
- recording/editing applications, sound, 76
- ripping audio, 71
- sound cards, 63–64
- sox command, 65
- UNIX and, 63–64
- .wav files, 65
- Sound Juicer, 66
- source, compiling software from, 100, 101–102
- source tree (kernels), 403–405
- sources (kernels), obtaining, 409–410
- sox command, 65
- spaces
 - embedded spaces, resolving strings with, 248–249
 - as special shell characters, 248
- Spamassassin, 561
- special characters
 - & operator, 173–174, 237, 247, 527
 - && operators, combining commands, 180, 198
 - * special shell character, 247
 - \ special shell character, 249–250
 - ` special shell character, 247, 250
 - [] special shell character, 248
 - [a, z] special shell character, 248
 - [a-z] special shell character, 248
 - [az] special shell character, 248
 - \$, 235
 - \$? built-in variable, 247
 - \$ special shell character, 247
 - \$# built-in variable, 246
 - \$* built-in variable, 247
 - \$0 built-in variable, 247
 - !! operator, 196–197
 - != operator, 491
 - < special shell character, 247
 - << operator, 236
 - << special shell character, 248
 - > special shell character, 247
 - >> special shell character, 247
 - | (pipe) special shell character, 247
 - || operator, 198, 491
 - # special shell character, 247
 - ? special shell character, 247
 - " special shell character, 248–249
 - ' special shell character, 249
- speed, relational databases, 492
- Speed Dreams, 87
- splint command, 602–603
- Splunk, 299
- spoofing attacks, 593
- SQL, 487–488
 - != operator, 491
 - MySQL, 483

- ACID compliance, 493–494
- command line client, 504–505
- configuring, 494–495
- creating databases, 496–497
- data integrity, 493–494
- data locking, 492
- database access, 501–503
- inserting data into tables, 490
- mysql command, 506
- mysqladmin command, 506
- mysqldump command, 506
- MySQLGUI, 506
- online references, 493, 507
- PostgreSQL versus, 492–494
- procedural languages, 494
- retrieving data from tables, 490–492
- root user passwords, 495
- speed, 492
- SQL subqueries, 494
- stored procedures, 494
- triggers, 494
- NoSQL databases, 485
- PostgreSQL
 - ACID compliance, 493–494
 - command line client, 505–506
 - configuring, 498
 - creating database users, 499–500
 - creating databases, 499
 - data integrity, 493–494
 - data locking, 492
 - database access, 501–503
 - deleting database users, 500
 - granting/revoking privileges, 500–501
 - initializing data directories, 498
 - MySQL versus, 492–494
 - online references, 493, 507
 - pgAdmin, 506
 - procedural languages, 494
 - retrieving data from tables, 491
 - speed, 492
 - SQL subqueries, 494
 - stored procedures, 494
 - triggers, 494
 - subqueries, 494
 - tables
 - creating, 488–489
 - inserting data, 489–490
- Squid, 563–564
 - ACL, 565–569
 - client IP addresses, 569–570
 - configuring, 564–565, 570–572
 - installing, 564
 - online references, 577
- Squirrelmail, 561
- SSH, database access, 501–502
- ssh command, 369, 383
- SSH keys, 638, 639
- SSH server
 - configuring, SSH server, 371–372
 - copying files between machines, 372–373
 - ftp command, 372
 - key-based logins, 373–375
 - scp command, 372–373
 - sftp command, 373
 - ssh-keygen command, 373–375
- ssh-keygen command, 373–375
- stacks, 437
 - LAMP, 437–439
 - LEMP, 439
 - MEAN, 437
 - online references, 441
- standard input/output of commands, 169
- starting/stopping
 - Apache web server, 444–446
 - NFS, 422

- services, 275–278
- smbd daemon, 429–430
- VM, 526
- Startup Applications Preferences, 278
- statements
 - break statements, 269
 - case statements, 267–268
 - exit statements, 269
 - expr statements, 266
 - for statements, 259–261
 - if statements, 265–266
 - repeat statements, 263
 - select statements, 264
 - shift statements, 264
 - for statements, 259–261
 - until statements, 263
 - while statements, 261, 262
- statistics, user usage, 212
- stderr command, 169–170
- stdin command, 169–170
- stdout command, 169–170
- Steam, 81
- stereotypes, users, 205
- sticky bit permissions, 126–127
- stopping/starting
 - Apache web server, 444–446
 - NFS, 422
 - services, 275–278
 - smbd daemon, 429–430
 - VM, 526
- storage
 - backups
 - cloud storage, 309
 - external hard drives, 308
 - NAS, 308
 - network storage, 308
 - tape drive backups, 309
 - disks, performance tuning, 394
 - drives, Ubuntu installations, 9
 - temporary file storage, /tmp directories, 117
- stored procedures
 - MySQL, 494
 - relational databases, 494
- strings
 - command substitution, 250
 - comparisons, 251–252, 255–256
 - with embedded spaces, resolving, 248–249
 - input strings, searches, 151–152
- su command, 217–219, 224
- subnet masks, 337–338
- subnetting, 337–338
- subqueries (SQL), relational databases, 494
- substitute user accounts, 217–218
- substituting
 - commands, 250
 - processes, 181
- Subversion, software project management, 612–613
- sudo command, 14–15, 110–111, 134–136, 219–222, 224
- sudoers command, 114
- suid permissions, 125–127
- super user accounts, 109–111, 133–134, 202–203, 217–218
- SuperTux, 84–85
- support, Ubuntu online references, 22
- .svg files, 68
- switches, 342
- symbolic debugging, 603
- symbols. *See also* wildcard characters
 - & operator, 237
 - background processes, running, 173–174
 - special shell character, 247
 - VirtualBox commands, 527

- && operators, combining commands, 180, 198
- * special shell character, 247
- \ special shell character, 249–250
- ` special shell character, 247, 250
- [] special shell character, 248
- [a, z] special shell character, 248
- [a-z] special shell character, 248
- [az] special shell character, 248
- \$, 235
- \$? built-in variable, 247
- \$ special shell character, 247
- \$# built-in variable, 246
- \$* built-in variable, 247
- \$0 built-in variable, 247
- !! operator, 196–197
- != operator, 491
- < special shell character, 247
- << operator, 236
- << special shell character, 248
- > special shell character, 247
- >> special shell character, 247
- | (pipe) special shell character, 247
- || operator, 198, 491
- # special shell character, 247
- ? special shell character, 247
- " special shell character, 248–249
- ' special shell character, 249
- symlinks, 154–156
- Synaptic, 92–94
- synchronizing, filesystems, 396
- Sysadmin, DevOps versus, 535–536
- sysctl command, 398–399
- sysrq.txt files, 404
- System Monitor, 292
- system resource management
 - APT, 95
 - apt-get versus, 99–100
 - day-to-day usage, 95–98
 - finding software, 98–99
 - apt-get, APT versus, 99–100
 - compiling software
 - from source, 100, 101–102
 - from tarballs, 100–101
 - from Ubuntu repositories, 101–102
 - configuration management, 102
 - dotdee, 102–103
 - Snappy package manager, 103–104
 - Ubuntu Core, 103
 - online references, 104
 - Software Updater, 94–95
 - Synaptic, 92–94
 - Ubuntu Software, 91
- system settings, Ubuntu settings, configuring, 17–18
- system user accounts, 203–204
- systemd command, 275, 277–278, 532
 - service-related commands, 276–277
 - state-related commands, 276
 - targets, 275–276
- systems
 - administration privileges, 217
 - listing information, 158–159
 - management tools, 292
 - Conky, 292–297
 - gnome-nettool, 297
 - System Monitor, 292
 - vncviewer, 297
 - Wireshark, 298
- monitoring
 - checking log files, 287–289
 - Conky, 292–297
 - console-based monitoring, 281–283
 - disk quotas, 287
 - displaying free hard disk space, 286–287
 - displaying used memory, 286

- enterprise servers, 298–299
- graphical process tools, 292–298
- KDE monitoring tools, 298
- killing processes, 283–284
- online references, 299
- priority scheduling, 285
- rotating log files, 289–291
- system management tools, 292–298
- System Monitor, 292
- user activity, 211–212
- password policies, 212
- polite resets, 194–195
- rebooting, 138–139
- rescue, 323
 - restoring GRUB2 boot loaders, 323–324
 - saving files from nonbooting hard disks, 324
 - Ubuntu Rescue disc, 323
- shutting down, 137–138
- storing shell scripts for system-wide access, 240
- SystemV runlevels, 275–276

T

- tables (SQL)
 - creating, 488–489
 - inserting data, 489–490
- tail command, 163–164
- tape drive backups, 309
- tar command, 192, 310
 - compressed files, 318
 - copying files, 317–318
 - encrypted files, 318
 - full backups, 310–311
 - incremental backups, 310–311
 - restoring files from archives, 311–312

- tarballs, compiling software from, 100–101
- tasks, scheduling, 226
 - automating tasks with scripts, 244–246
 - for later, 227–229
 - running jobs repeatedly, 229–231
 - waking computers from sleep, 231–233
- tcpdump command, 385
- TCP/IP networking, 330
 - addressing, 331–332
 - IP masquerading, 332–333
 - ports, 333–334
- tcsh, comparisons of expressions, 226, 255
 - file operators, 257–258
 - logical operators, 259
 - numeric comparisons, 256–257
 - strings, 255–256
- temporary file storage, /tmp directories, 117
- terminals. *See also* command line
 - clients, X server, 33–34
 - multiple terminal operation, byobu, 192–193
- testing
 - online references, 647
 - Samba, 429
 - Ubuntu
 - community teams, 645–646
 - Ubuntu Testing Teams, 646
- testparm command, 429
- TeX documents
 - Kile, 61
 - LaTeX, 60
 - LyX, 60
 - Texmaker, 60
- Texmaker, 60
- text
 - editors, 185, 186
 - awk, 189–191
 - emacs, 185, 188–189

- gedit, 186
- kate, 186
- kedit, 186
- nano, 185, 186–187
- sed, 189–191
- vi, 185, 187–188
- vim, 185
- repeating, 148–149
- text-based logins, command line, 107–108
- threads, 468
- thttpd, 481–482
- thumb drives, Ubuntu installations, 3, 6–11
- Thunderbird, LDAP client configuration, 584
- .tif files, 68
- time warps, 212
- time/date settings
 - date command, 19
 - hwclock command, 19–20
 - Ubuntu, 19–20
- TLD, 588–589
- /tmp directories, 117
- Token Ring networking, 339
- Tomcat, 482
- top command, 175–177
- Totem Movie Player, 76
- touch command, 128–129
- traceroute command, checking Internet connections, 329
- traceroute6 command, checking Internet connections, 329
- triggers, relational databases, 494
- Tripwire, 384–385
- troubleshooting
 - boot process, 278–279
 - bugs
 - Bug Squad, 647
 - Ubuntu development, 640–643
 - Internet connections, 368–369

- kernels, 418–419
- network printers, 434–435
- networks, connections, 342
- runlevels, 278
- sudo command, 134–136
- Ubuntu
 - bootups, 195–196
 - post-configuration problems, 21–22
- tune2fs command, 396–397
- Tuned Project, 396–400
- TXT records, 593
- type name command, 160

U

- Ubuntu, 27
 - 32-bit Ubuntu, 4–5
 - 64-bit Ubuntu, 4–5
 - Android mobile development, 607
 - Android Runtime, 608
 - Android Studio, 609
 - Application Framework, 608–609
 - applications, 609
 - ARM processors, 608
 - Google Play, 607
 - Linux kernels, 608
 - RISC processors, 608
- bash, 226
- Bikeshed, 616–618
- bootups, troubleshooting, 195–196
- Budgie, 49
- business applications, 27–28
- C programming
 - autoconf command, 601–602
 - building programs, 599–601
 - checking source code, 602–603

- configuring code, 601–602
- debugging tools, 602–603
- dependency checking, 599–600
- GCC, 603–604
- gdb command, 603
- gprof command, 603
- macros, 600–601
- makefile targets, 600–601
- makefiles, 599–600
- splint command, 602–603
- symbolic debugging, 603
- tracking function time, 603
- C++ programming
 - autoconf command, 601–602
 - building programs, 599–601
 - checking source code, 602–603
 - configuring code, 601–602
 - debugging tools, 602–603
 - dependency checking, 599–600
 - GCC, 603–604
 - gdb command, 603
 - gprof command, 603
 - macros, 600–601
 - makefile targets, 600–601
 - makefiles, 599–600
 - splint command, 602–603
 - symbolic debugging, 603
 - tracking function time, 603
- CD/DVD burning applications, 71
- Chaos Engineering, 614
- CI/CD tools, 613–614
- cloud computing, 535
 - AWS, 539
 - Azure, 539
 - considerations for using, 538
 - Google Cloud, 539
 - hybrid clouds, 539–540
 - laaS, 537
 - install instructions, 536
 - Juju, 540–541, 545
 - Landscape, 541
 - MaaS, 537
 - Mojo, 541
 - OpenStack, 538–539
 - PaaS, 537
 - private clouds, 540
 - public clouds, 538, 539
 - reasons for using, 536–537
 - SaaS, 537
 - Ubuntu Cloud, 536
 - VM, 536
- configuring
 - date/time settings, 19–20
 - power management, 18–19
 - system settings, 17–18
 - troubleshooting post-configuration problems, 21–22
 - wireless networks, 20
- database commands, 506
- date/time settings, 19–20
- desktop environments, changing, 39
- desktops, sharing, 424
- development
 - Bazaar, 639
 - code packaging, 640–643
 - fixing bugs, 640–643
 - GPG keys, 637–639
 - introduction to, 636–637
 - Launchpad, 614–615, 638–640
 - local bash shells, 640
 - online references, 643
 - packages, 637–638, 640–643
 - pbuilder, 638
 - SSH keys, 638, 639
- digital cameras, 70
- distributions, versions of, 27

- documentation, 28, 30
- dual-boot systems, 6
- DVD/CD burning applications, 71
- finding files/folders, 12
- graphical development tools, 605
 - Eclipse, 606
 - Glade, 607
 - IDE, 605–606
 - KDevelop Client, 606–607
 - NetBeans, 606
 - Oracle JDeveloper, 606
 - SDK, 606
 - Visual Studio Code, 606
- home applications, 28
- installing, 196
 - 32-bit Ubuntu, 4–5
 - 64-bit Ubuntu, 4–5
 - backups, 7
 - boot loaders, 5–6
 - downloading updates during installation, 8
 - dual-boot systems, 6
 - DVD installations, 2, 6–11
 - erasing hard disks during installation, 9
 - flavors of Ubuntu, 2–3
 - language selection, 7–8
 - Mac hardware compatibility, 3
 - partitions, 5, 9
 - password creation, 10
 - preinstallation process, 1–2
 - researching hardware specifications, 2–16
 - storage drives, 9
 - UEFI, 6
 - USB thumb drive installations, 3, 6–11
- Java programming, 604
 - JVM, 604
 - OpenJDK, 604–605
- kernels, 401–402
- Kylin, 50
- MATE, 48–49
- networks, 330
 - connectivity commands, 369
 - ports, 421
 - printers, 431–436
- Nginx web server installations, 469
- online references, 22
- partitions, installing, 5, 9
- passwords, 10
- power management, configuring, 18–19
- preinstallation process, 1–2
 - flavors of Ubuntu, 2–3
 - researching hardware specifications, 2–16
- printers, configuring, 18
- proxy servers. *See* Squid
- QA
 - Bug Squad, 647
 - Ubuntu QA Teams, 646–647
- reinstalling, 196
- repositories, compiling software, 101–102
- root prompt, dangers of working in, 15
- scanners, 67
- shutting down, 11–12
- snap packages, 615–616
- SnapCraft, 616
- Snappy Playpen, 616
- software project management
 - Bazaar, 611–612
 - Git, 610–611
 - Subversion, 612–613
- software repositories, configuring, 15–17
- Software Updater, 12–14
- storage drives, Ubuntu installations, 9
- sudo command, 14–15
- system settings, configuring, 17–18

- testing
 - community teams, 645–646
 - Ubuntu Testing Teams, 646
- troubleshooting, post-configuration problems, 21–22
- Ubuntu Make, 615
- Ubuntu Rescue disc, 323
- updating
 - first updates, 11
 - during installation, 8
 - software, 12–14
- user account management, 223–224
- version control systems, 609–610
- virtualization, 521–523
 - bridged networks, 524–525
 - KVM, 523–526
 - VirtualBox, 527–528
 - VM, 522, 525–526, 536
- web resources, 22
- window managers, changing, 39
- wireless networks, 20, 361–363
- X server, 32–33
 - benefits of, 33–34
 - components of, 33–34
 - display manager, 39
 - display managers, 33
 - distributed processing, 32–33
 - online references, 40
 - starting, 39
 - terminal clients, 33–34
 - /usr directory, 33
 - window manager, 33–34
 - xorg.conf files, 33–39
- Ubuntu Budgie, 49
- Ubuntu Core, 103
- Ubuntu Kylin, 50
- Ubuntu MATE, 48–49
- Ubuntu QA Teams, 646–647
- Ubuntu Software, 91
- Ubuntu Testing Teams, 646
- ubuntu-restricted-extras, 76
- UEFI
 - boot process, 273–274
 - Ubuntu installations, 6
- ufw command, 369
- UFW, configuring, 386–387
- UID, 204, 448
- unexpanded variables, maintaining, 249
- unicast addressing, 338
- uninstalling Nginx web server, 470
- Unison, 315
- units (services), listing, 276
- UNIX
 - backup levels, 306
 - CUPS GUI, network printers, 431–434
 - sound, 63–64
- UnQL, 511
- until statements, 263
- updating
 - software, 12–14
 - Software Updater, 94–95
 - Ubuntu
 - first updates, 11
 - installations, downloading updates during installation, 8
 - Software Updater, 12–14
- uplink ports, 342
- uptime command, 286
- usage statistics, user accounts, 212
- USB
 - digital cameras, 70
 - thumb drives, Ubuntu installations, 3, 6–11
- used memory, displaying, 286
- user accounts, 201–202, 204, 207
 - adding accounts, 209–211

- administration privileges, 217
- BOFH, 205
- changing identities, 217–219
- creating, 136–137
- deleting, 137
- disk quotas, managing, 222–223
- file permissions, 204
- GID, 204
- group management, 205
 - finding groups, 206
 - listing groups, 205–206
 - tools, 206–207
- locking users out of accounts, 209
- lusers, 205
- monitoring user activity, 211–212
- online references, 224
- passwords, 202, 212, 216
 - changing in batches, 216–217
 - password files, 212–214
 - shadow passwords, 214–215
 - system password policies, 212
- privileges, 109–111
- root privileges, 219–222
- root user accounts, 202–203
- stereotypes, 205
- substitute user accounts, 217–218
- super user accounts, 109–111, 133–134, 202–203, 217–218
- system user accounts, 203–204
- tools, 208–209
- Ubuntu commands, 223–224
- UID, 204
- usernames, 211
- User directive (Apache web server), 448
- user directories, 115
- user variables, 242
- useradd command, 208, 224

- useradd -D command, 208
- useradd -G command, 207
- UserDir directive (Apache web server), 449
- usermod command, 209, 224
- usermod -G command, 207
- users, productivity suites, 56
- /usr directory
 - shared data, 117
 - X server, 33
- UTP cabling, 341

V

- Vala, 633
- values, assigning to variables, 242
- /var directory, 117
- variable data files, /var directory, 117
- variables
 - built-in variables, 242, 246–247
 - environment variables, 182–185, 242
 - shell scripts, 242
 - accessing values, 243
 - accessing/retrieving variables, 244
 - assigning values, 242
 - resolving strings with embedded spaces, 248–249
 - unexpanded variables, maintaining, 249
 - user variables, 242
- VBA, LibreOffice and Office compatibility, 55
- version control
 - configuration files, 320–322
 - systems, 609–610
- vi text editor, 185, 187–188
- video
 - .avi files, 75
 - dvd+rw-tools, 74
 - DVD/CD burning applications

- Brasero, 71
- Linux command line, CD creation, 72–73
- Linux command line, DVD creation, 73–75
- Ubuntu support, 71
- editing, 76, 77
 - Avidemux, 77
 - Blender, 77
 - Cinelerra, 77
 - DaVinci Resolve, 77
 - Kdenlive, 77
 - Lightworks, 77
 - OpenShot Video Editor, 77
 - PiTiVi, 77
 - Shotcut, 77
- .flv files, 75
- .mov files, 75
- .mpeg files, 75
- .ogv/.ogg files, 75
- .qt files, 75
- Totem Movie Player, 76
- ubuntu-restricted-extras, 76
- video drivers (proprietary), installing, 80–81
- viewing
 - in Linux, 76
 - video formats, 75
- VLC, 76
 - .webm files, 75
- viewing
 - command history, 197
 - default file permissions, 124–125
 - video
 - in Linux, 76
 - video formats, 75
- vim text editor, 185
- vimtutor command, 188
- virt-clone, 526
- virt-install, 525–526
- virtual hosting
 - Apache web server, 461–462
 - Nginx web server, 473–474
- VirtualBox, 527–528
- virtualization, 521–523
 - bridged networks, 524–525
 - KVM, 523–526
 - online references, 529
 - VirtualBox, 527–528
 - VM, 522, 525–526, 536
 - connections, 526
 - copying, 526
 - starting, 526
 - stopping, 526
 - virt-clone, 526
 - virt-install, 525–526
 - vmbuilder, 525
 - VMware, 528
 - Xen, 528
- virus scanners, email, 562
- viruses, 385
- Visual Studio Code, 606
- visudo command, 135–136
- VLC, 76
- VM, 522, 536
 - connections, 526
 - copying, 526
 - KVM, 523–526
 - starting, 526
 - stopping, 526
 - virt-clone, 526
 - vmbuilder, 525
- vmstat command, 286
- VMware, 528
- VNC, 375–377
- vncviewer, 297

VPN, 563, 572–573
 configuring
 clients, 573–575
 servers, 575–577
 servers, online references, 577
 vulnerability assessments, 381–382

W

waking computers from sleep, 231–233
 war driving, 383
 Warsaw, 82
 .wav files, 65
 Wayland, 32
 web browsers
 Chrome, 53–54
 Chromium, 53–54
 database access, 503
 Firefox, 52–53
 online references, 54
 .webm files, 75
 web resources
 Apache web server, 466
 backups, 324
 BIND, 595
 boot process, 278–279
 cloud computing, 541
 command line, 139, 165, 200
 containers, 534
 desktop environments, 50
 DNS, 595
 file sharing, 435
 games, 89
 HTTP servers, 482
 kernels, 419–420
 LDAP, 585
 Linux, 23, 28
 multimedia applications, 77
 MySQL, 493, 507
 network printers, 435
 networks, 369–370
 Nginx web server, 477
 NoSQL databases, 519–520
 performance tuning, 396–400
 PostgreSQL, 493, 507
 programming, 618–619
 programming languages, 633–634
 QA, 647
 remote access, 377–378
 security, 391–392
 sets of servers, 545
 shell scripts, 270
 software management, 104
 sound, 65
 Squid, 577
 system monitoring, 299
 system resource management, 104
 testing, 647
 Ubuntu, 22, 28, 30
 Ubuntu development, 643
 user accounts, 224
 virtualization, 529
 VPN, 577
 Wayland, 32
 web browsers, 54, 61
 web server stacks, 441
 X server, 40
 web server stacks, 437
 LAMP, 437–439
 LEMP, 439
 MEAN, 437
 online references, 441

web servers

Apache web server

- access control, 452, 455
- configuring, 446–449, 450–452
- development of, 443–444
- file system authentication, 452–455
- .htaccess configuration files, 450–452, 469
- HTTPS, 464–466
- installing, 444
- logging, 463–464
- modules, 455–461
- MPM, 449–450
- online references, 466
- overview of, 444
- runtime servers, 446–449
- security, 444, 452–455
- starting/stopping, 444–446
- threads, 468
- virtual hosting, 461–462

C10K problem, 467–468

event handlers, 468–469

Nginx web server, 467–469

- building sources, 469–470
- configuring, 470–473
- HTTPS, 476–477
- installing, 469–470
- modules, 475
- online references, 477
- PHP, 474–475
- uninstalling, 470
- virtual hosting, 473–474

threads, 468

wget command, 164

whatis command, 160

whereis command, 112, 160

which command, 164

while statements, 261, 262

wide column stores, 517

widgets, 42

wildcard characters. *See also* symbols

- commands and, 235
- directories, 133

Wildfly, 482

window managers

- changing, 39
- X server, 33–34

Windows

- CrossOver Office, 61
- dual-boot systems, 6
- games, 88–89
- productivity applications, 61
- Wine, 61

Wine, 61

wireless networks, 361

- configuring, 20
- interfaces, 340
- security, 382–383
- selecting protocols, 363
- Ubuntu support, 361–363

Wireshark, 298, 330

worms, 380

writing, shell scripts, 237–239

WYGIWYW, 60

WYSIWYG, 60

X

X server, 32, 33

- benefits of, 33–34
- components of, 33–34
- display manager, 39
- display managers, 33

- distributed processing, 32–33
- online references, 40
- starting, 39
- terminal clients, 33–34
- /usr directory, 33
- window manager, 33–34
- xorg.conf files, 33–34
 - components of, 34–35
 - Device section, 37–38
 - Files section, 35–36
 - InputDevice section, 36–37
 - Module section, 36
 - Monitor section, 37
 - Screen section, 38–39
 - ServerLayout section, 35
- Xara Xtreme, 70
- xconfig command, 414–417
- xDSL Internet access, 365
- Xen, 528
- Xfce, 46
- XML, 59
 - DocBook, Publican, 59–60
 - gedit, 59
 - Publican, 59–60
 - XML Copy Editor, 60

- XML Copy Editor, 60
- X.Org, 33
- xorg.conf files, 33–34
 - components of, 34–35
 - Device section, 37–38
 - Files section, 35–36
 - InputDevice section, 36–37
 - Module section, 36
 - Monitor section, 37
 - Screen section, 38–39
 - ServerLayout section, 35
- Xubuntu, 46–47
- xz command, 192

Y

- YAML, /etc/netplan/*.yaml files, 353–355
- Yaws, 480

Z

- Zabbix, 299
- zsh, 226