

Unix script question (basic)

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Some time ago on these boards someone suggested a good way of finding out how many columns there were in a file

```
read x < $1
set -- $x
columns=$#
```

I have two questions

1) what effect is set -- \$x having (ie in enabling subsequently for \$# to have meaning)

2) if we were to put this into a loop to read every single row in the file and output the number of columns, can we use a construct like
<command> | while read row

if so what can we have for 'command'? cat looks at a field at a time

thanks.