

# Welcome to comp.unix.shell [Frequent posting]

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This article is a monthly attempt to remind potential posters about what is appropriate for comp.unix.shell. If you would like to make any suggestions about the content of this article, please contact its maintainer at [tmatimar@isgtec.com](mailto:tmatimar@isgtec.com).

Many FAQs, including this one, are available on the archive site [rtfm.mit.edu](http://rtfm.mit.edu) in the directory `pub/usenet/news.answers`.

The name under which a FAQ is archived appears in the "Archive-Name:" line at the top of the article. This FAQ is archived as "unix-faq/shell/intro".

Companion articles include the answers to some Frequently Asked Questions. You may save yourself a lot of time by reading those articles before posting a question to the net.

If you have not already read the overall Usenet introductory material posted to "news.announce.newusers", please do. Much of this article overlaps with the common sense guidelines posted there.

## Should I Post My Shell Question to the Net?

Often the answer is "No, you can get an answer a lot faster without posting a question." Before you post, you should try –

- o Reading the manual for your system. Some day you may encounter the phrase "RTFM", which stands for "Read the Fine Manual" (except 'F' doesn't really stand for "Fine"). If you ask someone a question and they tell you to RTFM, it's an indication that you haven't done your homework. For instance, if you are trying to make a script run under `csh` instead of `sh`, check the man page for "`csh`". It might tell you what you need to know.

When people use terminology like "read(2)", they are referring to the "read" man page in section 2 of the manual (which you

would see by using "man 2 read").

- o Finding a knowledgeable user at your site. Many sites have at least a few shell experts who will be happy to help you figure out how to specify that a script should be run by csh. Many larger sites, particularly universities, may even have paid consultants whose job is to help you with these problems. Check with them first.
- o Find a good introductory book on Unix shells and shell programming. There are plenty of such books available, and you will save yourself a lot of trouble by having one handy and consulting it frequently. (Question 1.5 in the companion articles will let you know where you can find a list of good books.)

Please remember that the comp.unix.\* newsgroups are read by over 80,000 people around the world, and that posting a question to this group will cost a lot of time and money by the time your article is distributed to Asia, Australia, Europe (west and east), Africa, the middle east, all corners of North, South and Central America and even Antarctica.

Also, some people receive these newsgroups as part of a mailing list rather than a newsgroup. If you're one of these people, please don't send a "Remove me from this list" or "UNSUBSCRIBE" message to the wrong place. Take the time to figure out where you're getting this stuff from, and send your request to the mailing list maintainer, \*not\* to the list or newsgroup itself! Ask your local postmaster for help. (One of the answers in the companion articles deals with the details of the mailing list.)

#### To Which Newsgroup Should I Post My Question?

The choice of newsgroup is harder than it used to be. In the old days, you just had to choose between "comp.unix.questions" and "comp.unix.wizards". Now there are a variety of more specific groups. This group, "comp.unix.shell" is only for questions relating to any of the Unix shells and shell programming. Other groups each have their own mandates.

Choose one of the following groups carefully. If you aren't sure where your question belongs or if your question is not specific to some particular version of Unix, try "comp.unix.questions". Many knowledgeable Unix wizards read that group and will be able to help you.

Here are the capsule descriptions of various groups you might consider (extracted from a monthly posting to "news.announce.newusers")

comp.unix.shell Using and programming any UNIX shell.

comp.unix.questions General questions from UNIX users and sysadmins.  
If your question isn't a really good match for one of

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the groups below, post it here.

news.answers Repository for periodic USENET articles. (Moderated)

This article is crossposted there.

Do not try to post here unless you're posting a list of FAQ's and their answers.

comp.lang.c Discussion about C.

comp.sources.unix Postings of complete, UNIX-oriented sources. (Moderated)

comp.std.unix Discussion for the P1003 committee on UNIX. (Moderated)

comp.unix.admin Administering a Unix-based system.

comp.unix.aix IBM's version of UNIX.

comp.unix.amiga Unix on the Commodore Amiga

comp.unix.aux The version of UNIX for Apple Macintosh II computers.

comp.unix.bsd Discussions relating to BSD UNIX.

comp.unix.internals Discussions on hacking UNIX internals.

comp.unix.large UNIX on mainframes and in large networks.

comp.unix.misc Various topics that don't fit other groups.

comp.unix.programmer Q&A for people programming under Unix.

comp.unix.ultrix Discussions about DEC's Ultrix.

comp.unix.xenix.misc General discussions regarding XENIX (except SCO).

comp.unix.xenix.sco XENIX versions from the Santa Cruz Operation.

comp.os.linux.\* Discussion about Linux ...

comp.lang.perl Discussion about Perl

comp.unix.wizards In-depth discussions of advanced unix topics.

People should not post to this group unless they have used unix as a user, sysadmin and know details of the kernel, and how different unix kernels differ.

In other words, don't post to comp.unix.wizards.

### What Information Should I Include?

It's hard to include too much information. There are hundreds of different systems out there, and they all have less in common than you might think. If you have a problem and are posting an article, please be sure to mention:

- o A descriptive subject line. Many people will decide whether to read your article solely on the basis of the subject line, so it should be a good statement of your problem.

NOT GOOD GOOD

"Help" "How do I port csh scripts to ksh?"

"Csh question" "csh dumps core when I use '\$<'"

- o What computer you are using, what specific version of the operating system it uses, and to what shell the question pertains. For instance,

SunOS 4.0.1, Sun 3/50, tcsh 6.00.03  
4.3BSD-tahoe, Vax 11/780, rc 1.0  
SVR3.2, 3b2, sh 4.2

- o If possible, the *\*exact\** text of any error message you may have encountered.

#### WRONG RIGHT

"My csh script doesn't run" "When I type 'scriptname', I get  
sh: scriptname: This isn't a shell script.  
What does this mean? It isn't in  
the man page. This is using crash 3.14  
under Mueslix 9.3 on a Fax 68086502"

It's a good idea to post unrelated questions in separate articles, so that people can keep different discussions separate. It's also a *\*very\** good idea to include a line or two like this:

"Please mail your answers to me and I'll summarize what I get and post the results to comp.unix.shell."

This prevents many identical responses from different users to the same question from clogging up the newsgroup. And make sure you really summarize what you get – don't just concatenate all the mail you've received.

It's also a good idea to read comp.unix.shell for at least a couple of weeks after you post your article to see what followup articles are posted.

#### Should I Post an Answer to a Question?

It's very tempting to post an answer to a question you read on the net, especially when you think "Aha, finally – a question I can answer!" Consider though that when a simple question is asked, such as the sort answered in the companion articles, many other people around the world already know the answer and may be posting their own reply. In order to avoid dozens of replies to simple questions, please wait a day or so and see if anyone else has already answered the question. If you have something special to contribute, please do so, but make sure you're not duplicating something someone else has already done.

You should feel free to reply to any question >by email<. Even if the user gets 200 responses to his question, at least the load on the rest of the net is minimized.

#### What About Posting Source Code?

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Posting small amounts of example code is fine (use comp.sources.unix to distribute complete programs) – but please make sure that your code runs (or at least compiles) properly. Don't just type it in while editing your posting and hope it will work, no matter how sure you are that it will. We all make mistakes.

What About Those People  
Who Continue to Ask Stupid or Frequently Asked Questions  
In Spite of The Frequently Asked Questions Document?

Just send them a polite mail message, possibly referring them to this document.  
There is no need to flame them on the net – it's busy enough as it is.

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