

## Re: tar command dangerously written

**Source:** <http://unix.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/comp.unix.shell/2005-05/0873.html>

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"danson" <danwatts@gmail.com> writes:

> *My original point still stands though that it would make good sense to  
> prompt an overwrite with the tar command – most user friendly tools  
> will prompt on an overwrite (unless a 'force' is used).*

I disagree.

If I ask tar to create an archive every night, and I discover that my nightly backups have failed except for the first time when no file was there, I would be very upset and it's unfriendliness.

You also should realize that tar is one of the old commands, and the user interface violates nearly every convention. (Perhaps it was created before shells did globbing?) It's one of those mistakes that we had to live with, like using "umount" instead of "unmount."

Besides, It only takes a few shell lines to make tar more friendly. It could prompt you for missing arguments, warn you if you might overwrite a file, etc. And the best part – you can do this to any command. I usually give them a name with a capital letter i.e. Tar, etc. Alternately, you could keep the same names, and put, say, /usr/friendly/bin first in your search path.

Or, you may want to make different commands to do different tar options, like CreateTar and DumpTar.

If the command REQUIRES a friendly interface, there is often no way to turn off the friendliness. In other words, it's much easier to add functionality than to disable built-in functionality.

I once used a GUI that forced me to confirm each and every delete when I asked it to delete 500 files. I had to find a different tool to actually finish the task without developing carpal tunnel. I did not consider this friendly.

If you want to see an example of a dangerous command, consider

comp.unix.shell: Re: tar command dangerously written

tee \*

Just be aware that it can destroy every file in your directory.

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