

Useless Use of *

Jan Schaumann

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PGP: 136D 027F DC29 8402 7B42 47D6 7C5B 64AF AF22 6A4C

whoami

```
$ ME=$(id -un)
$ grep ${ME} /etc/passwd | cut -d: -f5
Jan Schaumann
$
```

whoami

```
$ ME=$(id -un)
$ grep ${ME} /etc/passwd | cut -d: -f5
Jan Schaumann
$ groups ${ME}
netbsd sa yahoo
$
```

whoami

```
$ ME=$(id -un)
$ grep ${ME} /etc/passwd | cut -d: -f5
Jan Schaumann
$ groups ${ME}
netbsd sa yahoo
$
```



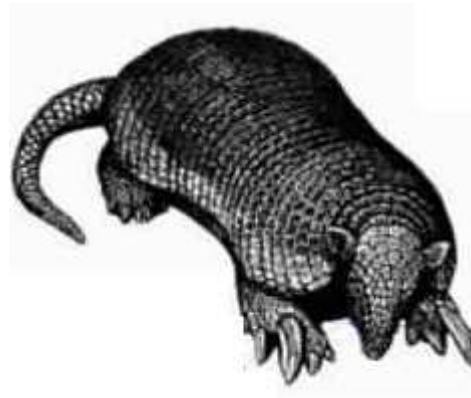
whoami

```
$ ME=$(id -un)
$ grep ${ME} /etc/passwd | cut -d: -f5
Jan Schaumann
$ groups ${ME}
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whoami

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$ ME=$(id -un)
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```



whoami

```
$ ME=$(id -un)
$ grep ${ME} /etc/passwd | cut -d: -f5
Jan Schaumann
$ groups ${ME}
netbsd sa yahoo
$
```

The image shows the classic Yahoo! logo in a purple, serif font. The letters are bold and slightly irregular, with a registered trademark symbol (®) at the end of the word.

whoami

```
$ ME=$(id -un)
$ grep ${ME} /etc/passwd | cut -d: -f5
Jan Schaumann
$ groups ${ME}
netbsd sa yahoo
$
```

<http://pipes.yahoo.com>

Useless Use of... what?

Back in the day...

Useless Use of... what?

Back in the day...



DILBERT: © Scott Adams, Inc. / Dist. by UFS, Inc.

Useless Use of... what?

Back in the day...



The Operator

Useless Use of... what?

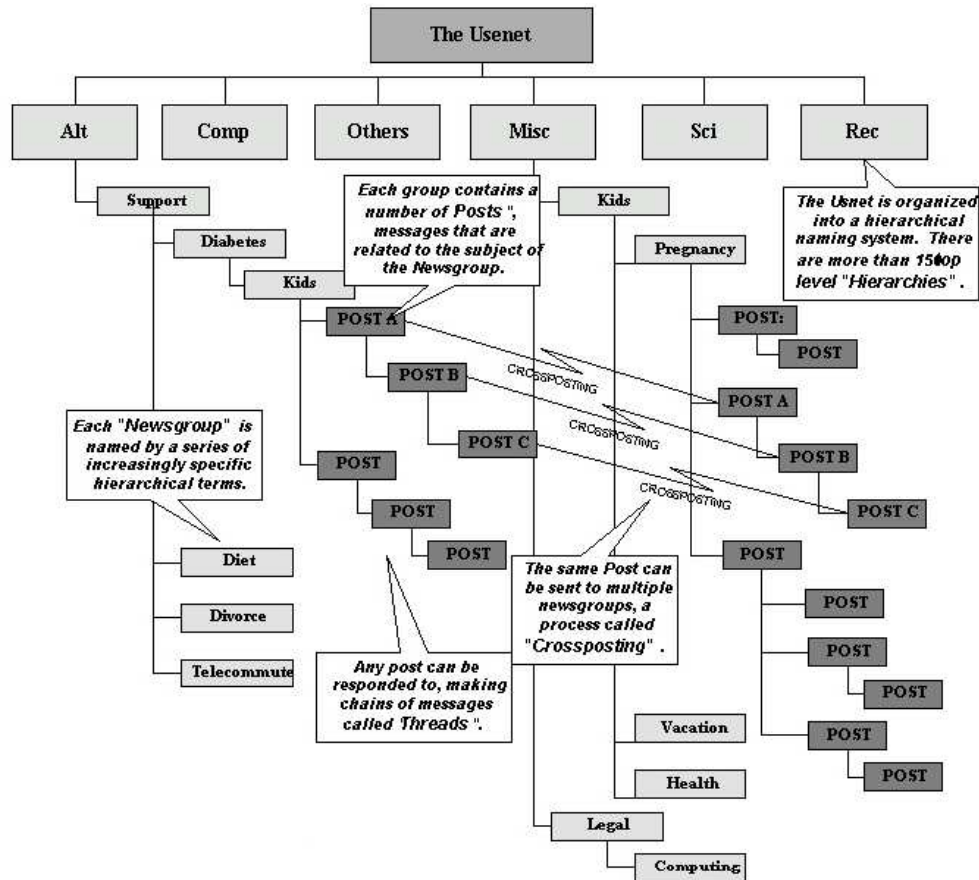
Back in the day...



BOFH

Useless Use of... what?

Back in the day...



Useless Use of... what?

Back in the day...



Useless Use of... what?

Back in the day...



Useless Use of... what?

Back in the day...



Useless Use of... what?

```
comp.unix.shell
```

Useless Use of... what?

I have a bunch of text files that contain strings containing /u. I no longer want them to contain /u ex: /u/appl/ should be /appl/....

Should I use awk? sed? Help!

Useless Use of... what?

- > I have a bunch of text files that contain strings
- > containing /u. I no longer want them to contain
- > /u ex: /u/appl/ should be /appl/....
- >
- > Should I use awk? sed? Help!

```
cat file | sed -e "s!/u/!/!"
```

Useless Use of Cat



Useful Use of Cat (?)

The obvious:

```
cat file | grep pattern
```

```
cat file | awk '{ print $2; }'
```

Useless Use of Cat

The obvious:

```
cat file | grep pattern
```

```
cat file | awk '{ print $2; }'
```



Useless Use of Cat

The obvious:

```
cat file | grep pattern  
grep pattern file
```

```
cat file | awk '{ print $2; }'  
awk '{ print $2; }' < file
```



Useful Use of Cat (?)

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | wc -l
```

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | wc -w
```


Useless Use of Cat

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | wc -l
```

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | wc -w
```



Useless Use of Cat

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | wc -l  
awk 'END { print NR }' file1 file2 file3
```

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | wc -w  
awk '{w = w + NF} END { print w }' file1 file2 file3
```



Useful Use of Cat (?)

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | grep pattern  
if [ $(cat files | grep -c pattern) -gt 0 ]; then
```

Useless Use of Cat

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | grep pattern  
if [ $(cat files | grep -c pattern) -gt 0 ]; then
```



Useless Use of Cat

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | grep pattern
```

```
grep -h pattern file1 file2 file3
```

```
if [ $(cat files | grep -c pattern) -gt 0 ]; then
```



Useless Use of Cat

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | grep pattern  
grep -h pattern file1 file2 file3  
awk '/pattern/ { print }' file1 file2 file3
```

```
if [ $(cat files | grep -c pattern) -gt 0 ]; then
```



Useless Use of Cat

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | grep pattern  
grep -h pattern file1 file2 file3  
awk '/pattern/ { print }' file1 file2 file3
```

```
if [ $(cat files | grep -c pattern) -gt 0 ]; then  
if [ -n "$(grep -l pattern files)" ]; then
```



Useless Use of Cat

```
cat file1 file2 file3 | grep pattern  
grep -h pattern file1 file2 file3  
awk '/pattern/ { print }' file1 file2 file3
```

```
if [ $(cat files | grep -c pattern) -gt 0 ]; then  
if [ -n "$(grep -l pattern files)" ]; then  
if grep pattern files >/dev/null 2>&1; then
```



Useful Use of Cat

- concatenate and print files

Useful Use of Cat

- concatenate and print files (D'oh!)

```
cat * > file
```

Useful Use of Cat

- concatenate and print files (D'oh!)

```
cat * > file
```

- feed file as input to another command in a particular order

Useful Use of Cat

- concatenate and print files (D'oh!)

```
cat * > file
```

- feed file as input to another command in a particular order

```
{ echo $VAR1; cat file; cmd1; } | command
```

Useful Use of Cat

- concatenate and print files (D'oh!)

```
cat * > file
```

- feed file as input to another command in a particular order

```
{ echo $VAR1; cat file; cmd1; } | command
```

- use as a NOOP

Useful Use of Cat

- concatenate and print files (D'oh!)

```
cat * > file
```

- feed file as input to another command in a particular order

```
{ echo $VAR1; cat file; cmd1; } | command
```

- use as a NOOP

```
if condition; then
    cmd1 | cmd2 | cmd3
else
    cmd1 | cmd3
fi
```

Useful Use of Cat

- concatenate and print files (D'oh!)

```
cat * > file
```

- feed file as input to another command in a particular order

```
{ echo $VAR1; cat file; cmd1; } | command
```

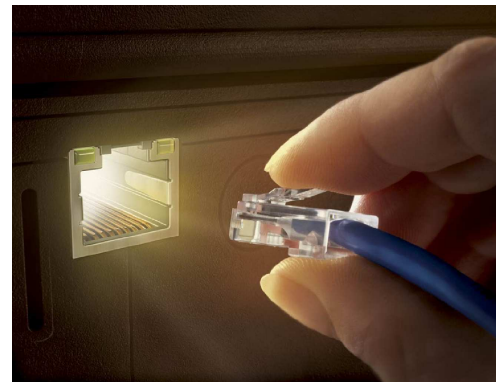
- use as a NOOP

```
if condition; then
    filter=cmd2
else
    filter=cat
fi
cmd1 | ${filter} | cmd3
```

Useful Use of Cat



CAT5



CAT6

Why bother?

Why bother?



\$2.95

Why bother?



\$5.90

Why bother?

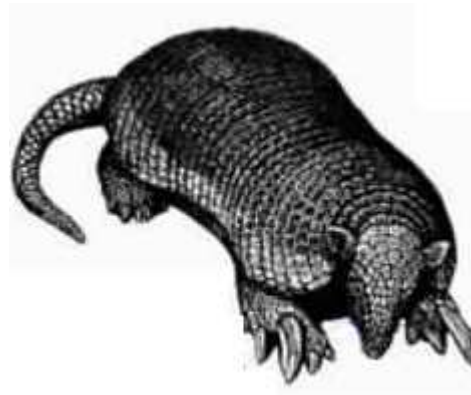


Why bother?

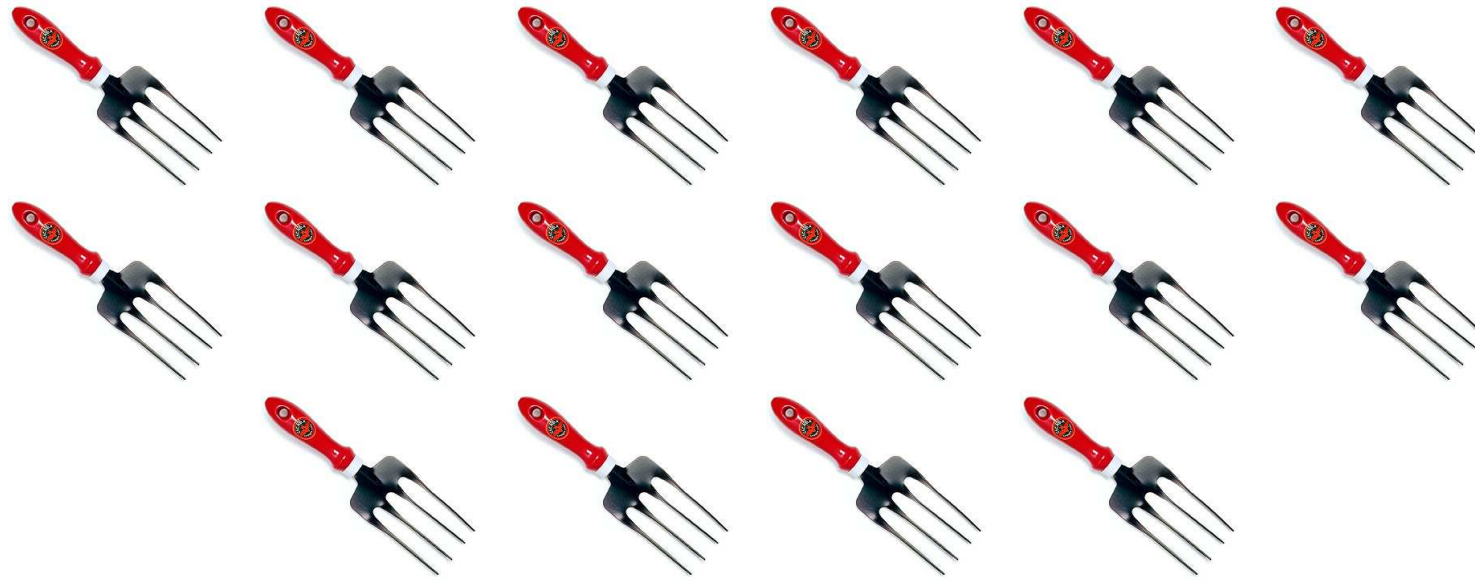


\$23.60

Why bother?

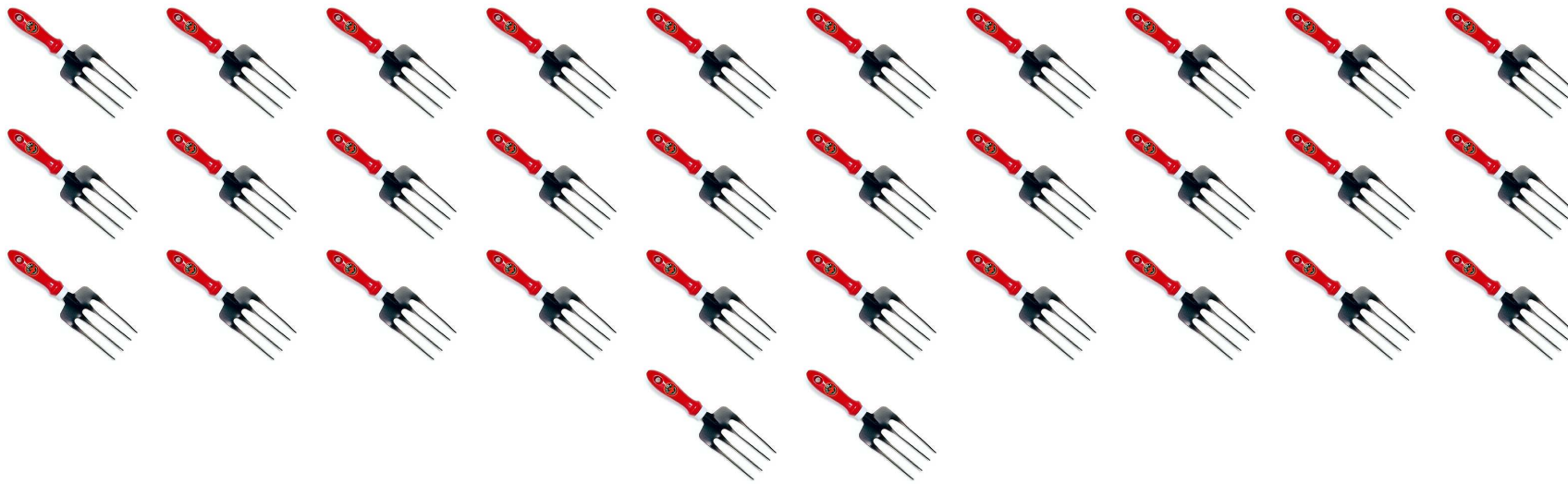


Why bother?



\$47.20

Why bother?

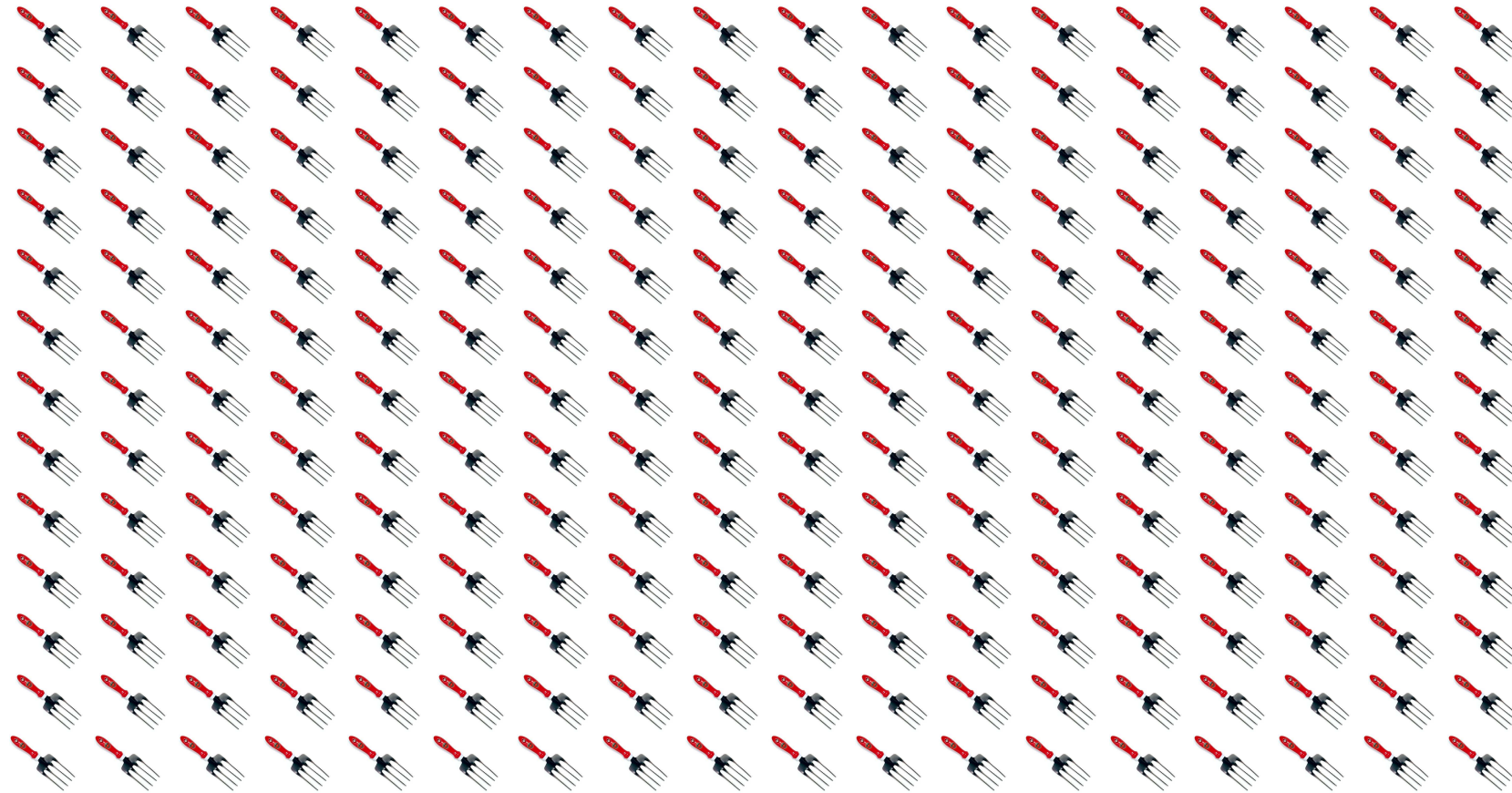


\$94.4

Why bother?

YAHOO!

Why bother?



But...

But...

... I run my scripts only once!

But...

... I have super fast hardware!

But...

... I have super fast hardware!

```
$ uptime
```

```
10:36AM up 254 days, 4 users, load averages: 80.12, 75.51, 72.40
```

```
$
```

But...

... nobody else but me uses my code!

Oh, really?

Unfortunately, you really have no control over your code:

Oh, really?

Unfortunately, you really have no control over your code:

- code grows

Oh, really?

Unfortunately, you really have no control over your code:

- code grows
- code is reused

Oh, really?

Unfortunately, you really have no control over your code:

- code grows
- code is reused
- code moves with you

Oh, really?

Unfortunately, you really have no control over your code:

- code grows
- code is reused
- code moves with you
- code is left behind

Oh, really?

Unfortunately, you really have no control over your code:

- code grows
- code is reused
- code moves with you
- code is left behind



It's alive!

Oh, really?



Oh, really?



Useless Use of *

Useless Use of Cat

Useless Use of *

Useless Use of *

Useless Use of Grep



Useless Use of Grep

Of course, all use of `grep(1)` is useless!

Useless Use of Grep

Of course, all use of `grep(1)` is useless!

```
echo g/RE/p | ed -s file
```

Useful Use of Grep (?)

```
host hostname | grep 'has address' | awk '{ print $NF }'  
echo ${string} | grep 'pattern' | sed -e 's/foo/bar/'
```

Useless Use of Grep

```
host hostname | grep 'has address' | awk '{ print $NF }'  
echo ${string} | grep 'pattern' | sed -e 's/foo/bar/'
```



Useless Use of Grep

```
host hostname | grep 'has address' | awk '{ print $NF }'
```

```
host hostname | awk '/has address/ { print $NF }'
```

```
echo ${string} | grep 'pattern' | sed -e 's/foo/bar/'
```



Useless Use of Grep

```
host hostname | grep 'has address' | awk '{ print $NF }'  
host hostname | awk '/has address/ { print $NF }'
```

```
echo ${string} | grep 'pattern' | sed -e 's/foo/bar/'  
echo ${string} | sed -ne '/pattern/ s/foo/bar/p'
```



Useful Use of Grep (?)

```
grep pattern1 file ... | grep -v pattern2
```

```
grep pattern1 file | grep -v ^# | grep -v pattern2
```

Useless Use of Grep

```
grep pattern1 file ... | grep -v pattern2  
grep pattern1 file | grep -v ^# | grep -v pattern2
```



Useless Use of Grep

```
grep pattern1 file ... | grep -v pattern2  
awk '/pattern1/ && !/pattern2/ { print }' file ...
```

```
grep pattern1 file | grep -v ^# | grep -v pattern2
```



Useless Use of Grep

```
grep pattern1 file ... | grep -v pattern2  
awk '/pattern1/ && !/pattern2/ { print }' file ...
```

```
grep pattern1 file | grep -v ^# | grep -v pattern2  
awk '/pattern1/ && !/^#)|(pattern2)/ { print }' file
```



Useful Use of Sed (?)

```
for p in $(echo ${PATH} | sed -e 's/:/ /'); do
    ls ${p}
done
```

Useless Use of Sed

```
for p in $(echo ${PATH} | sed -e 's/:/ /'); do  
    ls ${p}  
done
```



Useless Use of Sed

```
for p in $(echo ${PATH} | sed -e 's/:// /'); do  
IFS=":"; for p in ${PATH}; do  
    ls ${p}  
done
```



Useless Use of Sed

```
for p in $(echo ${PATH} | sed -e 's/:// /'); do  
IFS=":"; for p in ${PATH}; do  
    ls ${p}  
done | awk 'BEGIN { srand() } { if (NR == int(rand()*100)) { print } }'
```



Sed

Useless Use of Sed

```
for p in $(echo ${PATH} | sed -e 's/:// /'); do  
IFS=":"; for p in ${PATH}; do  
    ls ${p}  
done | awk 'BEGIN { srand() } { if (NR == int(rand()*100)) { print } }'
```



Mknod ?

Useless Use of Sed

```
for p in $(echo ${PATH} | sed -e 's/:// /'); do  
IFS=":"; for p in ${PATH}; do  
    ls ${p}  
done | awk 'BEGIN { srand() } { if (NR == int(rand()*100)) { print } }'
```



Groff ?

Useless Use of Sed

```
for p in $(echo ${PATH} | sed -e 's/:// /'); do  
IFS=":"; for p in ${PATH}; do  
    ls ${p}  
done | awk 'BEGIN { srand() } { if (NR == int(rand()*100)) { print } }'
```



Shlock ?

Useless Use of Sed

```
for p in $(echo ${PATH} | sed -e 's/:/ /'); do  
IFS=":"; for p in ${PATH}; do  
    ls ${p}  
done | awk 'BEGIN { srand() } { if (NR == int(rand()*100)) { print } }'
```



Route ?

Useless Use of Sed

```
for p in $(echo ${PATH} | sed -e 's/:// /'); do  
IFS=":"; for p in ${PATH}; do  
    ls ${p}  
done | awk 'BEGIN { srand() } { if (NR == int(rand()*100)) { print } }'
```



Dump ?

Useless Use of Sed



Useful Use of Sed (?)

```
VAR1="foo-bar-baz"  
VAR2=$(echo ${VAR1} | sed -e 's/-baz//')
```

Useless Use of Sed

```
VAR1="foo-bar-baz"  
VAR2=$(echo ${VAR1} | sed -e 's/-baz//')
```



Useless Use of Sed

```
VAR1="foo-bar-baz"
```

```
VAR2=$(echo ${VAR1} | sed -e 's/-baz//')
```

```
VAR2=${VAR1%-baz}
```



Useful Use of Sed (?)

Looping over values in a variable:

```
VAR1="foo-bar-baz"  
for i in $(echo ${VAR1} | sed -e 's/-/ /g'); do  
    the_needful $i  
done
```

Useless Use of Sed

Looping over values in a variable:

```
VAR1="foo-bar-baz"
```

```
for i in $(echo ${VAR1} | sed -e 's/--/ /g'); do
```

```
IFS=-
```

```
for i in ${VAR1}; do
```

```
    the_needful $i
```

```
done
```



Useful Use of Sed (?)

Assigning variables:

```
VAR1="foo-bar-baz"
```

```
VAR_A=$(echo ${VAR} | sed -e 's/-*//')
```

```
VAR_B=$(echo ${VAR} | sed -e 's/[^-]*-\([^-]*\)-.*/\1/')
```

```
VAR_C=$(echo ${VAR} | sed -e 's/.*-//')
```

Useless Use of Sed

Assigning variables:

```
VAR1="foo-bar-baz"
```

```
VAR_A=$(echo ${VAR} | sed -e 's/-*//')
```

```
VAR_B=$(echo ${VAR} | sed -e 's/[^-]*=[^ ]=.*\/\1/')
```

```
VAR_C=$(echo ${VAR} | sed -e 's/.*-//')
```

```
IFS=-
```

```
set -- ${VAR1}
```

```
VAR_A="${1}"
```

```
VAR_B="${2}"
```

```
VAR_C="${3}"
```



Useless Use of ...

Dude, IFS + shell is Teh Roxor!!!1

Look, Ma: Reading a CSV with Shell Only!

```
IFS=","  
while read -r field1 waste field3 field4 waste; do  
    echo "${field1}: ${field4} --> ${field3}"  
done <file
```

Useless Use of Shell Only

```
$ cat >script.sh
IFS=","
while read -r waste field2 field3 waste; do
    echo "${field1}: ${field4} --> ${field3}"
done <file
^D
$ wc -l file
111061 file
$ time sh script.sh >/dev/null
12.33s real    3.30s user    8.54s system
$
```

Useless Use of Shell Only

Awk to the rescue!

```
$ cat >script2.sh
awk -F"," '{ print $1 ": " $4 " --> " $3 }' <file
^D
$ time sh script2.sh >/dev/null
    1.08s real    1.08s user    0.00s system
$
```


Useful Use of Ls (?)

```
for file in $(ls *pattern*); do
    the_needful
done
```

Useless Use of Ls

```
for file in $(ls *pattern*); do  
for file in *pattern*; do  
  
    the_needful  
  
done
```



Useful Use of Wc (?)

```
VAR=$(cat file | wc -l | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

Useful Use of Wc (?)

```
VAR=$(cat file | wc -l | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```



Useless Use of ... ?

```
VAR=$(cat file | wc -l | sed -e 's/ */g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file | sed -e 's/ */g')
```



Useless Use of ... ?

```
VAR=$(cat file | wc -l | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```



Useless Use of ... ?

```
VAR=$(cat file | wc -l | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(awk 'END { print NR }' file)
```



Useless Use of Sed

```
VAR=$(cat file | wc -l | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file)
```



Useless Use of Sed

```
VAR=$(cat file | wc -l | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file)
```

```
echo "${VAR}"
```



Useless Use of Sed

```
VAR=$(cat file | wc -l | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file | sed -e 's/ *//g')
```

```
VAR=$(wc -l <file)
```

```
echo "${VAR}"
```

```
echo ${VAR}
```



Useful Use of Head (?)

```
command1 | head -1 | sed -e 's/pattern/string/'
```

```
command1 | head -10 | sed -e 's/pattern/string/'
```

Useless Use of Head

```
command1 | head -1 | sed -e 's/pattern/string/'  
command1 | sed -e 's/pattern/string/;q'
```

```
command1 | head -10 | sed -e 's/pattern/string/'
```



Useless Use of Head

```
command1 | head -1 | sed -e 's/pattern/string/'  
command1 | sed -e 's/pattern/string;;q'
```

```
command1 | head -10 | sed -e 's/pattern/string/'  
command1 | awk '{ if (NR <= 10) { print gensub("pattern","string",0); } }'
```



Useful Use of Tail (?)

```
command1 | tail -1 | sed -e 's/pattern/string'
```

Useless Use of Tail

```
command1 | tail -1 | sed -e 's/pattern/string/'
```

```
command1 | awk 'END { print gensub("pattern","string",0); exit; }'
```



Useful Use of Tail (?)

```
command1 | tail -10 | sed -e 's/pattern/string'
```


Useful Use of Tail

```
command1 | tail -10 | sed -e 's/pattern/string/'
```



Useful Use of Expr (?)

```
echo $(expr $i + $i)
```

Useless Use of Expr

```
echo $(expr $i + $i)
```

```
echo $(( $i + $i ))
```

Useless Use of Expr

```
echo $(expr $i + $i)  
echo $(( $i + $i ))  
echo $(( $i << 1 ))
```

This even lets you do binary manipulation (binary and, or, xor, not, leftshift, rightshift).

Useless Use of Expr

```
echo $(expr $i + $i)  
echo $(( $i + $i ))  
echo $(( $i << 1 ))
```

This even lets you do binary manipulation (binary and, or, xor, not, leftshift, rightshift).

```
$ x=5  
$ y=12  
$ x=$(( ${x} ^ ${y} ))  
$ y=$(( ${x} ^ ${y} ))  
$ x=$(( ${x} ^ ${y} ))  
$ echo "x=${x}; y=${y}"  
x=12; y=5  
$
```

Most Egregiously Useless Use of Perl

```
perl -e "print \"y\\n\\n\";" | cmd
```

Most Egregiously Useless Use of Perl

```
perl -e "print \"y\\n\\n\";" | cmd
```

```
( echo y; echo n; ) | cmd
```

Most Egregiously Useless Use of Perl

```
perl -e "print \"y\\n\\n\";" | cmd
```

```
( echo y; echo n; ) | cmd
```

```
{ echo y; echo n; } | cmd
```

```
printf "y\\n\\n" | cmd
```


Shell Coding: Performance

- avoid file I/O
- avoid Useless Use of *:
 - use builtins when you can
 - avoid builtins when it makes sense
 - use the right tool for the job
- avoid spawning subshells (+1 fork) or pipes (n+1 forks)

Shell Coding: Performance

- avoid file I/O
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 - avoid builtins when it makes sense
 - use the right tool for the job
- avoid spawning subshells (+1 fork) or pipes (n+1 forks)

cut -f2 vs. awk '{print \$2}'

```
$ stat -f "%z      %N" /usr/bin/awk /usr/bin/cut
133487 /usr/bin/awk
12590  /usr/bin/cut
$
```

Testing Shell Code

- make your code modular
- clearly define each function:
 - pre-conditions
 - valid input
 - post-conditions
- prepare valid input and desired output of each function
- prepare invalid input and desired output of each function

Shell Coding Style

Writing Shell Code is just like writing any other code:

- `set -eu (perl-mongers: think -w and use strict;)`

Shell Coding Style

Writing Shell Code is just like writing any other code:

- `set -eu` (perl-mongers: think `-w` and use `strict`;)

```
$ cat >script.sh
```

```
set -u
```

```
echo ${FOO}
```

```
echo "done"
```

```
^D
```

```
$ sh script.sh
```

```
script.sh: FOO: parameter not set
```

```
$ echo $?
```

```
2
```

```
$
```

Shell Coding Style

Writing Shell Code is just like writing any other code:

- `set -eu` (perl-mongers: think `-w` and use `strict`;)

```
$ cat >script.sh
```

```
set -e
```

```
ls /nowhere
```

```
echo "done"
```

```
^D
```

```
$ sh script.sh
```

```
ls: /nowhere: No such file or directory
```

```
$
```

Shell Coding Style

Writing Shell Code is just like writing any other code:

- `set -eu` (perl-mongers: think `-w` and use `strict`;)

```
$ cat >script.sh
```

```
set -e
```

```
if ! ls /nowhere; then
```

```
    echo "ls failed"
```

```
fi
```

```
echo "done"
```

```
^D
```

```
$ sh script.sh
```

```
ls: /nowhere: No such file or directory
```

```
ls failed
```

```
done
```

```
$
```

Shell Coding Style

Writing Shell Code is just like writing any other code:

- `set -eu` (perl-mongers: think `-w` and use `strict`;))
- use readonly variables

```
$ cat >script.sh
readonly VAR="foo"
VAR="bar"
echo ${VAR}
^D
$ sh script.sh
script.sh: VAR: is read only
$
```


Shell Coding Style

Writing Shell Code is just like writing any other code:

- `set -eu` (perl-mongers: think `-w` and use `strict`;))
- use `readonly` variables
- use `local` variables

Shell Coding Style: local variables

```
$ cat s.sh
func () {
    input="${1}"
    # do something with ${input}
}
$ cat script.sh
. ./s.sh
input="var1 var2 var3"
for var in ${input}; do
    func "${var}"
done
echo ${input}
$ sh script.sh
var3
$
```

Shell Coding Style: local variables

```
$ cat s.sh
func () {
    local input="${1}"
    # do something with ${input}
}
$ cat script.sh
. ./s.sh
input="var1 var2 var3"
for var in ${input}; do
    func "${var}"
done
echo ${input}
$ sh script.sh
var1 var2 var3
$
```

Shell Coding Style

Writing Shell Code is just like writing any other code:

- `set -eu` (perl-mongers: think `-w` and use `strict`;))
- use `readonly` variables
- use `local` variables
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Bad:

```
# this adds 1 to num
num=$(( ${num} + 1 ))
```

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Better:

```
input="pair1l:pair1r pair2l:pair2r"  
# extract first pair in input string, throw away rest  
p1l=${input%%:*}  
rest=${input#*:}  
p1r=${rest% *}
```

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- write your code in a modular way

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- use `local` variables
- comment your code
- write your code in a modular way
- write test cases for your shell code
- be consistent in your style
- be consistent in your user interface
- be willing to sacrifice performance for readability

Shell Coding: Performance vs. Readability

```
awk -F: -v ME="{ME}" '{ if ($0 ~ ME) { print $5 } }' file
```

VS.

```
grep {ME} file | cut -d: -f5
```

```
awk '{w = w + NF} END { print w }' file1 file2 file3
```

VS.

```
cat file1 file2 file2 | wc -w
```

The KISS Principle



Keep It Simple, Stupid!

Useless Use of time (?)



Thanks!