

Why you need the command line. How many reasons can I come up with before breakfast?

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1. The Command Line makes Linux tutorials easy.

When a tutorial gives you instructions in line commands, you don't have to learn the commands. You don't have to understand the commands. You don't even have to type the commands! All you really have to do is copy the commands and paste them into the terminal window. That's easier than instructions that have to give you a road map on how to find the button.

2. The Command Line is fun.

This one is pretty counterintuitive, but the command line allows you to take a creative approach to problem solving that is enjoyable.

3. Conversely, the Command Line allows you to cut a straight line through some of the most tedious, repetitive computing drudge work that you'll ever have to face.

I'm talking about organizing your files, sorting, moving, and processing large numbers of files. I used to spend hours on these tasks, and I hated it. These are what the command line excels at. You save time, but you cut down dramatically on the boredom.

4. Any command can be a script.

If you know how to use the command line, you know how to automate the command line with crude, simplistic shell scripts that most real programmers will look at with disdain, but which work anyway. And once again, you don't have to understand the commands.

A couple of years ago, I found this tutorial in my favorite Linux forum about how to process avi files into DVDs. From this, I was able to write a script that I have used to automatically process avi files into DVD images in batches of a dozen at a time. I just copy the files into the directories and start the script and let it run for a couple of days, and then burn 12 DVDs bangbangbang, all at once.

Now, here's the part that's kind of cool, even if it makes me look dumb: I don't understand the commands! I don't know how my own script works! I just copied the commands from the tutorial into a text file in a certain sequence, made it executable, and ran it. The commands in the script did whatever the hell it is they do, while I did other things. And now I have a bunch of DVDs to watch.

So easy... and so powerful!

Time for pancakes.

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