

cat Cheatsheet

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Quick reference for viewing, combining, and redirecting file content with `cat` in Linux

The `cat` command prints and concatenates file content in Linux. This cheatsheet covers common viewing patterns, line-number options, safe redirection, and practical command combinations.

Basic Syntax

Core `cat` command forms.

<code>cat FILE</code>	Print a file to standard output
<code>cat FILE1 FILE2</code>	Print multiple files in sequence
<code>cat</code>	Read from standard input until EOF
<code>cat -n FILE</code>	Show all lines with line numbers
<code>cat -b FILE</code>	Number only non-empty lines

View File Content

Common read-only usage patterns.

<code>cat /etc/os-release</code>	Print distro information file
<code>cat file.txt</code>	Show full file content
<code>cat file1.txt file2.txt</code>	Show both files in one stream
<code>cat -A file.txt</code>	Show tabs/end-of-line/non-printing chars
<code>cat -s file.txt</code>	Squeeze repeated blank lines

Line Numbering and Visibility

Inspect structure and hidden characters.

<code>cat -n file.txt</code>	Number all lines
<code>cat -b file.txt</code>	Number only non-blank lines
<code>cat -E file.txt</code>	Show <code>\$</code> at end of each line
<code>cat -T file.txt</code>	Show tab characters as <code>^I</code>
<code>cat -v file.txt</code>	Show non-printing characters

Combine Files

Create merged outputs from multiple files.

<code>cat part1 part2 > merged.txt</code>	Merge files into a new file
<code>cat header.txt body.txt footer.txt > report.txt</code>	Build one file from sections
<code>cat a.txt b.txt c.txt > combined.txt</code>	Join several text files
<code>cat file.txt >> archive.txt</code>	Append one file to another
<code>cat *.log > all-logs.txt</code>	Merge matching files (shell glob)

Create and Append Text

Use `cat` with redirection and here-docs.

<code>cat > notes.txt</code>	Create/overwrite a file from terminal input
<code>cat >> notes.txt</code>	Append terminal input to a file
<code>cat <<'EOF' > config.conf</code>	Write multiline text safely with a here-doc
<code>cat <<'EOF' >> config.conf</code>	Append multiline text using a here-doc
<code>cat > script.sh <<'EOF'</code>	Create a script file from inline content

Pipelines and Common Combos

Practical command combinations with other tools.

<code>`cat access.log`</code>	<code>grep 500`</code>
<code>`cat file.txt`</code>	<code>wc -l`</code>
<code>`cat file.txt`</code>	<code>head -n 20`</code>
<code>`cat file.txt`</code>	<code>tail -n 20`</code>
<code>`cat file.txt`</code>	<code>tee copy.txt >/dev/null`</code>

Troubleshooting

Quick checks for common `cat` usage issues.

Permission denied	Check ownership and file mode with <code>ls -l</code> ; run with correct user or <code>sudo</code> if required
Output is too long	Pipe to <code>less</code> (<code>cat file</code>)
Unexpected binary output	Verify file type with <code>file filename</code> before printing
File was overwritten accidentally	Use <code>>></code> to append, not <code>></code> ; enable shell noclobber if needed
Hidden characters break scripts	Inspect with <code>cat -A</code> or <code>cat -vET</code>

Related Guides

Use these guides for full file-view and text-processing workflows.

How to Use the cat Command in Linux	Full <code>cat</code> command guide
head Command in Linux	Show the first lines of files
tail Command in Linux	Follow and inspect recent lines
tee Command in Linux	Write output to file and terminal
wc Command in Linux	Count lines, words, and bytes
Create a File in Linux	File creation methods
Bash Append to File	Safe append patterns