

# Grep Cheatsheet

By Dejan Panovski • Updated on Feb 7, 2026 • [Download PDF](#)

## Quick reference for the grep text search command

Grep searches text for patterns and prints matching lines. This cheatsheet covers common grep options for file searches, recursion, context output, and regex patterns.

### Basic Search

Find matching lines in a file.

<code>grep "pattern" file.txt</code>	Search a single file
<code>grep -i "pattern" file.txt</code>	Case-insensitive search
<code>grep -n "pattern" file.txt</code>	Show line numbers
<code>grep -v "pattern" file.txt</code>	Invert match
<code>grep -w "word" file.txt</code>	Match whole words

### Multiple Files

Search across multiple files.

<code>grep "pattern" file1 file2</code>	Search specific files
<code>grep "pattern" *.log</code>	Search by glob
<code>grep -l "pattern" *.log</code>	Show matching filenames
<code>grep -L "pattern" *.log</code>	Show non-matching filenames

### Recursive Search

Search directories recursively.

<code>grep -r "pattern" dir/</code>	Recursive search
<code>grep -R "pattern" dir/</code>	Follow symlinks
<code>grep -r --include="*.conf" "pattern" dir/</code>	Include file types
<code>grep -r --exclude="*.log" "pattern" dir/</code>	Exclude file types

## Context Output

Show lines around matches.

<code>grep -C 3 "pattern" file.txt</code>	3 lines before and after
<code>grep -A 2 "pattern" file.txt</code>	2 lines after
<code>grep -B 2 "pattern" file.txt</code>	2 lines before

## Count and Only Matches

Summarize or extract matches.

<code>grep -c "pattern" file.txt</code>	Count matching lines
<code>grep -o "pattern" file.txt</code>	Only the matching part
<code>grep -m 1 "pattern" file.txt</code>	Stop after 1 match

## Extended Regex

Use more powerful patterns.

<code>[`grep -E "foo bar" file.txt](/post/grep-multiple-patterns/)</code>	
<code>grep -E "colou?r" file.txt</code>	Optional character
<code>grep -E "[0-9]{3}" file.txt</code>	Repetition
<code>grep -E "^start" file.txt</code>	Line starts with
<code>grep -E "end\$" file.txt</code>	Line ends with

## Common Options

Useful flags to remember.

<code>-i</code>	Ignore case
<code>-n</code>	Show line numbers
<code>-v</code>	Invert match
<code>-w</code>	Match whole words
<code>-r</code>	Recursive search
<code>-E</code>	Extended regex
<code>-F</code>	Fixed strings (no regex)
<code>-H</code>	Always show filename
<code>-q</code>	Quiet mode (exit status only)