

journalctl Cheatsheet

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Quick reference for viewing and filtering systemd journal logs

journalctl reads the systemd journal and lets you filter logs by unit, time, priority, and more. This cheatsheet covers the most useful log queries and output formats.

Basic Usage

View logs and follow output.

<code>journalctl</code>	Show all logs
<code>journalctl -f</code>	Follow new logs (tail -f)
<code>journalctl -n 50</code>	Show last 50 lines
<code>journalctl -e</code>	Jump to end of logs
<code>journalctl -x</code>	Show explanatory messages

By Unit / Service

Filter by systemd unit.

<code>journalctl -u nginx</code>	Logs for a service
<code>journalctl -u nginx --since today</code>	Logs from today
<code>journalctl -u nginx -f</code>	Follow service logs
<code>journalctl -u nginx -n 100</code>	Last 100 lines for a service

Time Filters

Limit logs by time range.

<code>journalctl --since "2026-02-01"</code>	Logs since date
<code>journalctl --since "1 hour ago"</code>	Logs from last hour
<code>journalctl --since "yesterday"</code>	Logs since yesterday
<code>journalctl --since "2026-02-01 10:00" --until "2026-02-01 12:00"</code>	Logs in time window

Boot Logs

View logs from specific boots.

<code>journalctl -b</code>	Current boot logs
<code>journalctl -b -1</code>	Previous boot logs
<code>journalctl --list-boots</code>	List boot IDs
<code>journalctl -b <ID></code>	Logs for a boot ID

Priority and Kernel

Filter by severity and kernel messages.

<code>journalctl -p err</code>	Errors and above
<code>journalctl -p warning</code>	Warnings and above
<code>journalctl -p 3</code>	Priority number (0-7)
<code>journalctl -k</code>	Kernel messages
<code>journalctl -k -b</code>	Kernel messages for current boot

Output Formats

Change how logs are displayed.

<code>journalctl -o short-iso</code>	ISO timestamps
<code>journalctl -o short-precise</code>	High precision timestamps
<code>journalctl -o json</code>	JSON output
<code>journalctl -o json-pretty</code>	Pretty JSON

Disk Usage and Cleanup

Check size and vacuum old logs.

<code>journalctl --disk-usage</code>	Show journal size
<code>journalctl --vacuum-size=1G</code>	Limit journal to 1 GB
<code>journalctl --vacuum-time=7d</code>	Keep logs for 7 days
<code>journalctl --vacuum-files=10</code>	Keep last 10 journal files