

# less Cheatsheet

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Quick reference for navigating, searching, and controlling output with the less pager in Linux

The `less` command is a pager for viewing text one screen at a time. This cheatsheet covers navigation keys, search patterns, startup options, and practical workflows for logs and command output.

## Basic Usage

Common ways to open files and piped output in `less`.

<code>less file.txt</code>	Open a file in the pager
<code>less /var/log/syslog</code>	Read a system log file
<code>command   less</code>	Pipe command output into <code>less</code>
<code>less +G file.txt</code>	Open a file and jump to the end
<code>less +/pattern file.txt</code>	Open a file and jump to first match

## Navigation Keys

Move through content quickly in the pager.

Space	Move forward one page
b	Move backward one page
Enter	Move forward one line
k / y	Move backward one line
d / u	Move forward / backward half a page
g	Jump to top of file
G	Jump to bottom of file
50g	Jump to line 50
F	Follow mode — stream new content as it is appended (press <code>Ctrl+C</code> to stop)
q	Quit <code>less</code>

## Search and Match Navigation

Find text and move between matches.

<code>/pattern</code>	Search forward for <b>pattern</b>
<code>?pattern</code>	Search backward for <b>pattern</b>
<code>n</code>	Next match in current search direction
<code>N</code>	Previous match in current search direction
<code>&amp;pattern</code>	Show only lines matching <b>pattern</b>
<code>&amp;</code> (empty)	Clear <b>&amp;pattern</b> filtered view

## Useful Options

Flags that improve readability in daily use.

<code>less -N file.txt</code>	Show line numbers
<code>less -S file.txt</code>	Disable line wrap (horizontal scrolling)
<code>less -R file.txt</code>	Show ANSI colors in output
<code>less -i file.txt</code>	Case-insensitive search by default
<code>less -F file.txt</code>	Quit automatically if content fits one screen
<code>less -X file.txt</code>	Keep screen content after quitting

## Log and Output Workflows

Practical examples for troubleshooting and analysis.

<code>less +F /var/log/syslog</code>	Follow a log file live (like <code>tail -f</code> ); press <code>Ctrl+C</code> to stop and search
<code>journalctl -xe   less</code>	Page through recent systemd logs
<code>dmesg   less</code>	Inspect kernel messages page by page
<code>ps aux   less</code>	Browse long process listings
<code>git log   less</code>	Read long commit history safely
<code>grep -R "ERROR" /var/log   less</code>	Review search results interactively

## Troubleshooting

Quick fixes for common `less` issues.

Search does not find expected text	Retry with exact case or use <code>-i</code> for case-insensitive search
Color codes look broken	Use <code>less -R</code> when input includes ANSI colors
Lines wrap and are hard to read	Use <code>less -S</code> and move sideways with arrow keys
Pager exits immediately	Content may fit one screen; remove <code>-F</code> if you need manual paging
You opened from pipe and lost context	Rerun command with <code>  less</code> and search using <code>/pattern</code>

## Related Guides

Use these guides for deeper command and text-processing workflows.

<a href="#">less Command in Linux</a>	Full <code>less</code> tutorial with examples
<a href="#">head Command in Linux</a>	Show the first lines of files
<a href="#">tail Command in Linux</a>	Follow file growth and recent lines
<a href="#">grep Command in Linux</a>	Search text patterns in files
<a href="#">wc Command in Linux</a>	Count lines, words, and bytes