

Screen Cheatsheet

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Quick reference for GNU Screen sessions, windows, detach/attach, and common key bindings

GNU Screen is a terminal multiplexer that lets you keep shell sessions running in the background, reconnect later, and manage multiple windows in one terminal. This cheatsheet covers the most useful commands and key bindings.

Start and Exit

<code>screen</code>	Start a new screen session
<code>screen -S work</code>	Start session named work
<code>screen -ls</code>	List running sessions
<code>screen -X -S work quit</code>	Stop session work
<code>exit</code>	Exit current shell/window

Attach and Detach

<code>screen -r</code>	Reattach to the only detached session
<code>screen -r work</code>	Reattach to named session
<code>screen -x work</code>	Attach to an already-attached session
<code>screen -d -r work</code>	Detach elsewhere and reattach here
<code>Ctrl+a d</code>	Detach current session

Prefix and Help

Default prefix is `Ctrl+a`.

<code>Ctrl+a</code>	Enter screen command mode
<code>Ctrl+a ?</code>	Show key bindings help
<code>Ctrl+a :</code>	Open command prompt
<code>Ctrl+a "</code>	Show window list

Windows

Ctrl+a c	Create a new window
Ctrl+a n	Next window
Ctrl+a p	Previous window
Ctrl+a Ctrl+a	Switch to last window
Ctrl+a 0-9	Switch to window by number
Ctrl+a A	Rename current window
Ctrl+a k	Kill current window

Navigation and Layout

Ctrl+a w	List windows in status line
Ctrl+a '	Prompt for window number
Ctrl+a S	Split display horizontally
Ctrl+a	Split display vertically
Ctrl+a Tab	Move between split regions
Ctrl+a X	Remove current region
Ctrl+a Q	Remove all regions except current

Copy and Scrollback

Ctrl+a [Enter copy/scrollback mode
Space	Start selection (in copy mode)
Enter	Copy selection (in copy mode)
Ctrl+a]	Paste copied text
Ctrl+a H	Toggle logging to file

Session Management

screen -wipe	Clean dead sessions
Ctrl+a x	Lock session
screen -S work -X stuff 'ls^M'	Send command to session (^M = Enter)
screen -S work -p 0 -X hardcopy	Save current window output

Useful Patterns

<code>screen -dmS job bash -lc 'long-command'</code>	Start detached background job
<code>screen -D -R</code>	Reattach if possible, otherwise create
<code>screen -r work -p 2</code>	Attach directly to window 2
<code>screen -L</code>	Start session with logging enabled

Configuration

<code>~/.screenrc</code>	User configuration file
<code>defscrollback 10000</code>	Increase scrollback history
<code>hardstatus on</code>	Enable status line
<code>startup_message off</code>	Disable startup message