

SFTP Cheatsheet

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Quick reference for the Linux sftp client, covering login, navigation, transfers, and remote file management over SSH

SFTP is a secure file transfer client that runs over SSH. This cheatsheet covers the most common interactive commands for connecting to a remote server, moving files in both directions, and managing permissions inside an active session.

Connect and Authenticate

Open an SFTP session against a remote host.

<code>sftp user@hostname</code>	Connect to remote server
<code>sftp user@192.168.1.10</code>	Connect by IP
<code>sftp -P 2222 user@hostname</code>	Connect to a custom SSH port
<code>sftp -i ~/.ssh/id_ed25519 user@hostname</code>	Connect with a specific key
<code>sftp -b commands.txt user@hostname</code>	Run commands from a batch file
<code>quit</code>	Quit session
<code>bye</code>	Quit session (alias for <code>quit</code>)

Local and Remote Paths

Navigate directories on both sides of the session.

<code>pwd</code>	Show remote working directory
<code>lpwd</code>	Show local working directory
<code>cd /remote/path</code>	Change remote directory
<code>lcd /local/path</code>	Change local directory
<code>ls</code>	List remote files
<code>lls</code>	List local files
<code>ls -la</code>	Long listing of remote files

Download Files

Pull files from the remote server to the local system.

<code>get file.txt</code>	Download one file
<code>get remote.txt local.txt</code>	Download and rename locally
<code>get -r remote_dir</code>	Download a directory recursively
<code>get -P file.txt</code>	Preserve file permissions and timestamps
<code>mget *.log</code>	Download multiple files matching a pattern
<code>reget large.iso</code>	Resume an interrupted download

Upload Files

Push local files to the remote server.

<code>put file.txt</code>	Upload one file
<code>put local.txt remote.txt</code>	Upload with a remote name
<code>put -r local_dir</code>	Upload a directory recursively
<code>put -P file.txt</code>	Preserve permissions and timestamps
<code>mput *.txt</code>	Upload multiple files
<code>reput large.iso</code>	Resume an interrupted upload

Remote File Management

Manage files and directories on the SFTP server.

<code>mkdir dirname</code>	Create remote directory
<code>rmdir dirname</code>	Remove empty remote directory
<code>rm file.txt</code>	Delete remote file
<code>rename old.txt new.txt</code>	Rename remote file
<code>ln source link</code>	Create a hard link on the remote
<code>ln -s source link</code>	Create a symbolic link on the remote
<code>df -h</code>	Show remote filesystem usage

Permissions and Ownership

Adjust permissions and ownership on remote files.

chmod 644 file.txt	Change remote file mode
chown 1000 file.txt	Change remote owner by UID
chgrp 1000 file.txt	Change remote group by GID
umask 022	Set default permission mask

Session Helpers

Inspect and control the active session.

!command	Run a local shell command
!	Drop into a local shell
version	Show SFTP protocol version
progress	Toggle transfer progress meter
help or ?	List available SFTP commands

Non-Interactive and Scripting

Use SFTP from scripts and automated jobs.

sftp -b script.txt user@host	Run a batch file of commands
sftp -q user@host	Quiet mode (suppress banner and progress)
sftp -o IdentityFile=key user@host	Pass any <code>ssh_config</code> option
echo "get file.txt" sftp -b - user@host	Pipe commands via stdin

Related Tools

Other ways to move files between systems.

scp	Secure copy over SSH
rsync	Efficient sync and incremental transfer
ssh	Underlying secure shell protocol
ftp	Legacy unencrypted file transfer