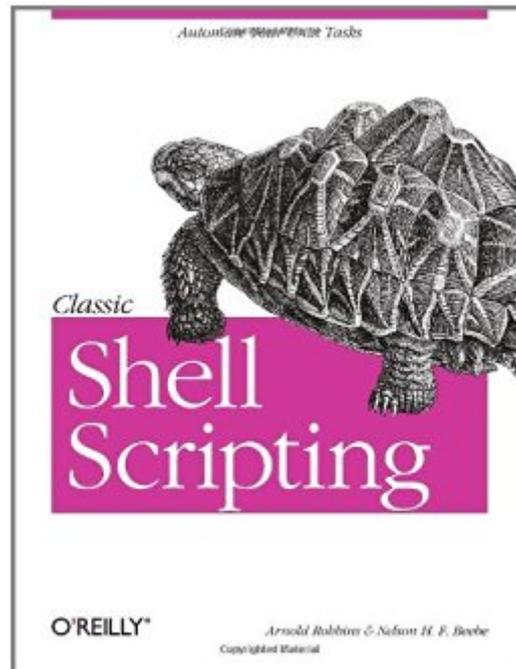# Classic Shell Scripting: Hidden Commands That Unlock The Power Of Unix

Synopsis

Shell scripting skills never go out of style. It's the shell that unlocks the real potential of Unix. Shell scripting is essential for Unix users and system administrators-a way to quickly harness and customize the full power of any Unix system. With shell scripts, you can combine the fundamental Unix text and file processing commands to crunch data and automate repetitive tasks. But beneath this simple promise lies a treacherous ocean of variations in Unix commands and standards. Classic Shell Scripting is written to help you reliably navigate these tricky waters.Writing shell scripts requires more than just a knowledge of the shell language, it also requires familiarity with the individual Unix programs: why each one is there, how to use them by themselves, and in combination with the other programs. The authors are intimately familiar with the tips and tricks that can be used to create excellent scripts, as well as the traps that can make your best effort a bad shell script. With Classic Shell Scripting you'll avoid hours of wasted effort. You'll learn not only write useful shell scripts, but how to do it properly and portably.The ability to program and customize the shell quickly, reliably, and portably to get the best out of any individual system is an important skill for anyone operating and maintaining Unix or Linux systems. Classic Shell Scripting gives you everything you need to master these essential skills.

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Customer Reviews

Classic Shell ScriptingHidden Commands that Unlock the Power of UnixBy Arnold Robbins, Nelson H.F. BeebeFirst Edition May 2005ISBN: 0-596-00595-4558 pages, $34.95[...] I found this to be quite a useful book for learning more about Unix/Linux shell scripting. I would consider this one to be an intermediate level text, and complete beginners might be better served by a more simplified book. There are quite a bit of in-depth details included, and many very nice examples and code snippets. Like all O'Reilly books, it is well organized and formatted, and clearly written. The book opens with a brief history of Unix and how important the shell (and scripting) is to it. There are some comparisons with other programming languages, and why it is sometimes preferable to use a script versus a compiled program. The very basics of how scripts are written and used are also mentioned here, and beginners may want to refer to an additional book for more of the basic instructions. The next few chapters cover mostly text processing with scripts, including searching, sorting, printing, extracting, and counting methods. Good examples are used, including the use of regular expressions and pipes to increase the power of your scripts. Following this, there are several chapters on more advanced scripting, including how to use variables, loops, functions, standard I/O, redirection, wildcards, using "awk", and working with external files. Extensive example code is provided throughout. The remaining chapters of the book get into more advanced subjects such as database manipulation, process control, and increasing the security of scripts. Portability and shells other than bash are also discussed.

"Classic Shell Scripting" by Arnold Robbins and Nelson H. F. Beebe is a decent text on portable shell scripting, which also contains a fair amount of awk. Though written in tutorial form, it explicitly assumes that the reader knows how to use the shell interactively and, as I show below, in some cases implicitly assumes that the reader already knows the basics of shell scripting.The Good: Robbins and Beebe have created a pedagogically sound book which contains tables, fascinating digressions, sidebars (with major options on tools, along with caveats), an annotated bibliography, as well as a glossary. The book can be read straight through, since each chapter builds on the preceding ones, but the aforementioned resources are especially handy when using this book as a reference. Were it not for the tables and sidebars it would be difficult to look up things like how to set the field separator in different tools (-t in sort, -d in cut, -F in awk) or how to ensure case-insensitivity

(-i in grep, -f in sort). The topics the authors cover throughout the book are interesting, but the real meat is in chapters 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, which discuss regular expressions, sed, awk (Robbins is the maintainer of gawk and also the co-author/author of books on awk), control flow, command evaluation, and file manipulation. Most of the other chapters are applications of the topics introduced up to that point, and serve to drive home the lessons already learned (though there are pleasant exceptions to this pattern, e.g. the section on crontab in ch. 13, or the material on the Unix filesystem in Appendix B). The writing is generally relaxed and at times borderline silly, e.g. "exit 42 #Return the answer to the ultimate question" or "root) nasty stuff here #Danger Will Robinson, danger!".

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