

Learning MS-DOS Basics - A Tutorial

This tutorial gives you an opportunity to try basic MS-DOS commands. By following the procedures in this section, you will learn to:

- View the contents of a directory
- Change from one directory to another
- Create and delete directories
- Change from one drive to another
- Copy files
- Rename files
- Delete files
- Format a floppy disk

The Command Prompt

When you first turn on your computer, you will see some cryptic information flash by. MS-DOS displays this information to let you know how it is configuring your computer. You can ignore it for now. When the information stops scrolling past, you'll see the following:

```
C:\>
```

This is called the **command prompt** or **DOS prompt**. The flashing underscore next to the command prompt is called the **cursor**. The cursor shows where the command you type will appear.

Typing a Command

This section explains how to type a command at the command prompt and demonstrates the "Bad command or file name" message.

- **To type a command at the command prompt**

1. Type the following at the command prompt (you can type the command in either uppercase or lowercase letters):

```
nul
```

If you make a typing mistake, press the **BACKSPACE** key to erase the mistake, and then try again.

2. Press **ENTER**.

You must press **ENTER** after every command you type.

The following message appears:

```
Bad command or file name
```

The "Bad command or file name" message appears when you type something that MS-DOS does not recognize. Because **nul** is not a valid MS-DOS command, MS-DOS displays the "Bad command or file name" message.

3. Now, type the following command at the command prompt:

```
ver
```

The following message appears on your screen:

```
MS-DOS version 6.22
```

Viewing the Contents of a Directory

In this section, you will view the contents of a directory by using the **dir** command. The **dir** command stands for "**directory**."

- **To view the contents of a directory**

1. Type the following at the command prompt:

```
dir
```

A list similar to the following appears:

```
Volume in drive C is MS-DOS_6.22
Volume Serial Number is 1E49-15E2
Directory of C:\

WINDOWS      <DIR>      09-08-92  10:27p
TEMP         <DIR>      05-15-92  12:09p
CONFIG  SYS           278 09-23-92  10:50a
COMMAND COM  53014 09-18-92  6:00a
WINA20  386           9349 11-11-91  5:00a
DOS          <DIR>      09-02-92  4:23p
AUTOEXEC BAT           290 09-23-92  10:54a

              7 file(s) 62931 bytes
              8732672 bytes free
```

This is called a *directory list*. A directory list is a list of all the files and subdirectories that a directory contains. In this case, you see all the files and directories in the main or *root* directory of your drive. All the files and directories on your drive are stored in the root directory.

Changing Directories

Look at the list on your screen. All the names that have **<DIR>** beside them are directories. You can see a list of the files in another directory by changing to that directory, and then using the **dir** command again. In this case, you will change to the **DOS** directory.

Before you begin this section, make sure you have a directory named DOS by carrying out the following procedure.

- **To make sure you have a directory named Windows**

1. If you do not see a line in the directory list indicating that you have a directory named Windows, type the following at the command prompt:

```
dir /s Windows
```

You will see a message that includes a line such as the following:

```
Directory of C:\DIRNAME
```

- **To change from the root directory to the WINDOWS directory**

To change directories, you will use the **cd** command. The **cd** command stands for "*change directory*."

1. Type the following at the command prompt:

```
cd windows
```

The command prompt changes. It should now look like the following:

```
C:\WINDOWS>
```

Next, you will use the **dir** command to view a list of the files in the DOS directory.

- **To view a list of the files in the WINDOWS directory**

1. Type the following at the command prompt:

```
dir
```

A list of the files in the WINDOWS directory appears, but scrolls by too quickly to read. You can modify the **dir** command so that it displays only one screen of information at a time.

- **To view the contents of a directory one screen at a time**

1. Type the following at the command prompt:

```
dir /p
```

One screen of information appears. At the bottom of the screen, you will see the following message:

```
Press any key to continue . . .
```

2. To view the next screen of information, press any key on your keyboard.
Repeat this step until the command prompt appears at the bottom of your screen.

When you typed the **dir** command this time, you included the **/p** switch after the command. A *switch* modifies the way MS-DOS carries out a command. Generally, a switch consists of a forward slash (/) that is followed by one or more letters or numbers. When you used the **/p** switch with the **dir** command, you specified that MS-DOS should pause after it displays each screen of directory list information. The **p** actually stands for "page"

Another helpful switch you can use with the **dir** command is the **/w** switch. The **/w** switch indicates that MS-DOS should show a wide version of the directory list.

- **To view the contents of a directory in wide format**

1. Type the following at the command prompt:

```
dir /w
```

The directory list appears, with the filenames listed in wide format. Note that only filenames are listed. No information about the files' size or date and time of creation appears.

2. If the directory contains more files than will fit on one screen, you can combine the **/p** and **/w** switches as follows:

```
dir /w /p
```

Changing Back to the Root Directory

Next, you will change from the DOS directory to the root directory. The root directory is the directory you were in before you changed to the DOS directory. Before you begin this section, make sure your command prompt looks like the following:

```
C:\DOS>
```

- **To change to the root directory**

1. Type the following at the command prompt:

```
cd \
```

Note that the slash you type in this command is a backslash (\), not a forward slash (/).

No matter which directory you are in, this command always returns you to the root directory of a drive. The root directory does not have a name. It is simply referred to by a backslash (\).

The command prompt should now look like the following:

```
C:\>
```

When your command prompt appears similar to this---that is, when it does not contain the name of a directory---you are in the root directory.

Creating a Directory

In this section, you will create two directories. Creating a directory is helpful if you want to organize related files into groups to make them easy to find. Before you begin this section, make sure the command prompt looks like the following:

```
C:\>
```

To create a directory, you will use the **md** command. The **md** command stands for "make directory."

- **To create and change to a directory named FRUIT**

1. Type the following at the command prompt:

```
md fruit
```

You have now created a directory named FRUIT. You won't see the new FRUIT directory until you carry out the **dir** command in the next step.

2. To confirm that you successfully created the FRUIT directory, type the following at the command prompt:

```
dir
```

or

```
dir /p
```

Look through the directory list. A new entry somewhere in the list should look similar to the following:

```
FRUIT <DIR> 09-25-93 12:09p
```

3. To change to the new FRUIT directory, type the following at the command prompt:

```
cd fruit
```

The command prompt should now look like the following:

```
C:\FRUIT>
```

You will now create a directory within the FRUIT directory, named GRAPES.

- **To create and work with a directory named GRAPES**

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