

An intro to grep

Nicky Chorley

October 2015

What is it?

- A command line tool for searching text.
- The name comes from “**g**lobally search for a **r**egular **e**xpression and **p**rint the matching lines”.
- On Unix-like systems (Linux, Mac, ...), you should have `grep`.
- `git` also has a `grep` subcommand.
- A verb: “I grepped the logs, but couldn’t find anything”.

Examples

- To print lines containing ERROR in the file my-log:
`$ grep ERROR my-log`
- The above is case-sensitive. The `-i` option can be used to ignore case:
`$ grep -i ERROR my-log`
- To print 5 lines after each match:
`$ grep -A 5 ERROR my-log`
- Similarly, one can use `-B` to print some lines before each match, or `-C` to print some lines either side of each match.

Other useful options

- `-n` prefixes each match line with its line number.
- `--color=WHEN` colours the output. `WHEN` may be `always`, `auto` or `never`.
- `-m M` will stop after the first `M` matches.
- `-v` will print lines that **don't** match.

- The manual page describes all the options: `$ man grep`.

- We haven't talked about regular expressions!
- See my talks page: <http://nicky.xyphias.com/talks> for slides and code.