

clear(1)

User commands

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NAME

clear - clear the terminal screen

SYNOPSIS

clear [-x] [-T terminal-type]

clear -V

DESCRIPTION

clear clears your terminal's screen and its scrollback buffer, if any.

clear retrieves the terminal type from the environment variable **TERM**, then consults the terminfo terminal capability database entry for that type to determine how to perform these actions.

The capabilities to clear the screen and scrollback buffer are named **?clear?** and **?E3?**, respectively. The latter is a user-defined capability, applying an extension mechanism introduced in ncurses 5.0 (1999).

OPTIONS

clear recognizes the following options.

-T type produces instructions suitable for the terminal type. **Nor?**

is inferred from the environment variable `TERM`. If this option is specified, `clear` ignores the environment variables `LINES` and `COLUMNS` as well.

`-V` reports the version of `ncurses` associated with this program and exits with a successful status.

`-x` prevents `clear` from attempting to clear the scrollbar buffer.

PORTABILITY

Neither IEEE Std 1003.1/The Open Group Base Specifications Issue 7 (POSIX.1-2008) nor X/Open Curses Issue 7 documents `clear`.

The latter documents `tput`, which could be used to replace this utility either via a shell script or by an alias (such as a symbolic link) to run `tput` as `clear`.

HISTORY

A `clear` command using the `termcap` database and library appeared in 2BSD (1979). Eighth Edition Unix (1985) later included it.

The commercial Unix arm of AT&T adapted a different BSD program (`tset`) to make a new command, `tput`, and replaced the `clear` program with a shell script that called `?tput clear?`.

```
/usr/bin/tput ${1:+-T$1} clear 2> /dev/null
```

```
exit
```

In 1989, when Keith Bostic revised the BSD `tput` command to make it similar to AT&T's `tput`, he added a `clear` shell script as well.

```
exec tput clear
```

The remainder of the script in each case is a copyright notice.

In 1995, `ncurses`'s `clear` began by adapting BSD's original `clear` command to use `terminfo`. The E3 extension came later.

? In June 1999, `xterm` provided an extension to the standard control sequence for clearing the screen. Rather than clearing just the visible part of the screen using

```
printf '\033[2J'
```

one could clear the scrollbar buffer as well by using

```
printf '\033[3J'
```

instead. [?XTerm Control Sequences?](#) documents this feature as orig?

- ? A few other terminal emulators adopted it, such as PuTTY in 2006.
- ? In April 2011, a Red Hat developer submitted a patch to the Linux kernel, modifying its console driver to do the same thing. Documentation of this change, appearing in Linux 3.0, did not mention xterm, although that program was cited in the Red Hat bug report (#683733) motivating the feature.
- ? Subsequently, more terminal developers adopted the feature. The next relevant step was to change the ncurses clear program in 2013 to incorporate this extension.
- ? In 2013, the E3 capability was not exercised by tput clear?. That oversight was addressed in 2016 by reorganizing tput to share its logic with clear and tset.

SEE ALSO

tput(1), xterm(1), terminfo(5)