

CP(1)

User Commands

CP(1)

NAME

cp - copy files and directories

SYNOPSIS

cp [OPTION]... [-T] SOURCE DEST

cp [OPTION]... SOURCE... DIRECTORY

cp [OPTION]... -t DIRECTORY SOURCE...

DESCRIPTION

Copy **SOURCE** to **DEST**, or multiple **SOURCE(s)** to **DIRECTORY**.

Mandatory arguments to long options are mandatory for short options too.

-a, --archive

same as **-dR --preserve=all**

--attributes-only

don't copy the file data, just the attributes

--backup[=CONTROL]

make a backup of each existing destination file

Linux UBUNTU Manual Pages

-b like **--backup** but does not accept an argument

--copy-contents

copy contents of special files when recursive

-d same as **--no-dereference --preserve=links**

--debug

explain how a file is copied. Implies **-v**

-f, --force

if an existing destination file cannot be opened, remove it and try again (this option is ignored when the **-n** option is also used)

-i, --interactive

prompt before overwrite (overrides a previous **-n** option)

-H follow command-line symbolic links in SOURCE

-l, --link

hard link files instead of copying

-L, --dereference

-n, --no-clobber

do not overwrite an existing file and do not fail (overrides a
-u or previous -i option). See also --update; equivalent to
--update=none.

-P, --no-dereference

never follow symbolic links in SOURCE

-p same as --preserve=mode,ownership,timestamps

--preserve[=ATTR_LIST]

preserve the specified attributes

--no-preserve=ATTR_LIST

don't preserve the specified attributes

--parents

use full source file name under DIRECTORY

-R, -r, --recursive

copy directories recursively

--reflink[=WHEN]

--remove-destination

remove each existing destination file before attempting to open it (contrast with --force)

--sparse=WHEN

control creation of sparse files. See below

--strip-trailing-slashes

remove any trailing slashes from each SOURCE argument

-s, --symbolic-link

make symbolic links instead of copying

-S, --suffix=SUFFIX

override the usual backup suffix

-t, --target-directory=DIRECTORY

copy all SOURCE arguments into DIRECTORY

-T, --no-target-directory

treat DEST as a normal file

--update[=UPDATE]

DATE={all,none,older(default)}. See below

-u equivalent to **--update[=older]**

-v, --verbose

explain what is being done

-x, --one-file-system

stay on this file system

-Z set SELinux security context of destination file to default type

--context[=CTX]

like **-Z**, or if **CTX** is specified then set the **SELinux** or **SMACK** security context to **CTX**

--help display this help and exit

--version

output version information and exit

ATTR_LIST is a comma-separated list of attributes. Attributes are 'mode' for permissions (including any ACL and xattr permissions), 'ownership' for user and group, 'timestamps' for file timestamps, 'links'

attributes, and 'all' for all attributes.

By default, sparse SOURCE files are detected by a crude heuristic and the corresponding DEST file is made sparse as well. That is the behavior selected by `--sparse=auto`. Specify `--sparse=always` to create a sparse DEST file whenever the SOURCE file contains a long enough sequence of zero bytes. Use `--sparse=never` to inhibit creation of sparse files.

`UPDATE` controls which existing files in the destination are replaced. 'all' is the default operation when an `--update` option is not specified, and results in all existing files in the destination being replaced. 'none' is similar to the `--no-clobber` option, in that no files in the destination are replaced, but also skipped files do not induce a failure. 'older' is the default operation when `--update` is specified, and results in files being replaced if they're older than the corresponding source file.

When `--reflink[=always]` is specified, perform a lightweight copy, where the data blocks are copied only when modified. If this is not possible the copy fails, or if `--reflink=auto` is specified, fall back to a standard copy. Use `--reflink=never` to ensure a standard copy is performed.

The backup suffix is '~', unless set with `--suffix` or `SIM?`

--backup option or through the `VERSION_CONTROL` environment variable.

Here are the values:

`none, off`

never make backups (even if --backup is given)

`numbered, t`

make numbered backups

`existing, nil`

numbered if numbered backups exist, simple otherwise

`simple, never`

always make simple backups

As a special case, `cp` makes a backup of `SOURCE` when the `force` and `backup` options are given and `SOURCE` and `DEST` are the same name for an existing, regular file.

AUTHOR

Written by Torbjorn Granlund, David MacKenzie, and Jim Meyering.

REPORTING BUGS

GNU coreutils online help: <<https://www.gnu.org/software/coreutils/>>

Linux UBUNTU Manual Pages

COPYRIGHT

Copyright ? 2023 Free Software Foundation, Inc. License GPLv3+: GNU
GPL version 3 or later <<https://gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>>.

This is free software: you are free to change and redistribute it.

There is NO WARRANTY, to the extent permitted by law.

SEE ALSO

`install(1)`

Full documentation <<https://www.gnu.org/software/coreutils/cp>>
or available locally via: `info '(coreutils) cp invocation'`

GNU coreutils 9.4

June 2025

CP(1)