

# Linux UBUNTU Manual Pages

WHATIS(1)

Manual pager utils

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## NAME

**whatis - display one-line manual page descriptions**

## SYNOPSIS

```
whatis [-dlv?V] [-r|-w] [-s list] [-m system[,...]] [-M path] [-L lo?
cale] [-C file] name ...
```

## DESCRIPTION

Each manual page has a short description available within it. **whatis** searches the manual page names and displays the manual page descriptions of any name matched.

**name** may contain wildcards (-w) or be a regular expression (-r). Using these options, it may be necessary to quote the name or escape (\) the special characters to stop the shell from interpreting them.

**index databases** are used during the search, and are updated by the **mandb** program. Depending on your installation, this may be run by a periodic cron job, or may need to be run manually after new manual pages have been installed. To produce an old style text **whatis** data base from the relative index database, issue the command:

where `manpath` is a manual page hierarchy such as `/usr/man`.

## OPTIONS

**-d, --debug**

Print debugging information.

**-v, --verbose**

Print verbose warning messages.

**-r, --regex**

Interpret each name as a regular expression. If a name matches any part of a page name, a match will be made. This option causes `whatis` to be somewhat slower due to the nature of database searches.

**-w, --wildcard**

Interpret each name as a pattern containing shell style wildcards. For a match to be made, an expanded name must match the entire page name. This option causes `whatis` to be somewhat slower due to the nature of database searches.

**-l, --long**

Do not trim output to the terminal width. Normally, output will

poorly-written NAME sections.

**-s list, --sections=list, --section=list**

Search only the given manual sections. list is a colon- or comma-separated list of sections. If an entry in list is a simple section, for example "3", then the displayed list of descriptions will include pages in sections "3", "3perl", "3x", and so on; while if an entry in list has an extension, for example "3perl", then the list will only include pages in that exact part of the manual section.

**-m system[,...], --systems=system[,...]**

If this system has access to other operating systems' manual page names, they can be accessed using this option. To search NewOS's manual page names, use the option -m NewOS.

The system specified can be a combination of comma delimited operating system names. To include a search of the native operating system's manual page names, include the system name man in the argument string. This option will override the \$SYSTEM environment variable.

**-M path, --manpath=path**

Specify an alternate set of colon-delimited manual page hierar?

ment variable, unless it is empty or unset, in which case it will determine an appropriate manpath based on your \$PATH environment variable. This option overrides the contents of \$MANPATH.

## **-L locale, --locale=locale**

whatis will normally determine your current locale by a call to the C function `setlocale(3)` which interrogates various environment variables, possibly including `$LC_MESSAGES` and `$LANG`. To temporarily override the determined value, use this option to supply a locale string directly to `whatis`. Note that it will not take effect until the search for pages actually begins. Output such as the help message will always be displayed in the initially determined locale.

## **-C file, --config-file=file**

Use this user configuration file rather than the default of `~/.manpath`.

## **-?, --help**

Print a help message and exit.

## **--usage**

Print a short usage message and exit.

**-V, --version**

Display version information.

## EXIT STATUS

- 0** Successful program execution.
- 1** Usage, syntax or configuration file error.
- 2** Operational error.
- 16** Nothing was found that matched the criteria specified.

## ENVIRONMENT

**SYSTEM** If **\$SYSTEM** is set, it will have the same effect as if it had been specified as the argument to the **-m** option.

## MANPATH

If **\$MANPATH** is set, its value is interpreted as the colon-delimited manual page hierarchy search path to use.

See the **SEARCH PATH** section of **manpath(5)** for the default behavior and details of how this environment variable is handled.

## MANWIDTH

(see the `--long` option). If it is not set, the terminal width will be calculated using the value of `$COLUMNS`, and `ioctl(2)` if available, or falling back to 80 characters if all else fails.

## FILES

`/usr/share/man/index.(bt|db|dir|pag)`

A traditional global index database cache.

`/var/cache/man/index.(bt|db|dir|pag)`

An FHS compliant global index database cache.

`/usr/share/man/.../whatis`

A traditional `whatis` text database.

## SEE ALSO

`apropos(1)`, `man(1)`, `mandb(8)`

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## BUGS

<https://gitlab.com/man-db/man-db/-/issues>

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