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Red Hat Enterprise Linux Release 9.2 Manual Pages on 'select.2' command

\$ man select.2

SELECT(2) Linux Programmer's Manual SELECT(2)

NAME

select, pselect, FD_CLR, FD_ISSET, FD_SET, FD_ZERO - synchronous I/O multiplexing

SYNOPSIS

```
#include <sys/select.h>

int select(int nfds, fd_set *readfds, fd_set *writefds,
           fd_set *exceptfds, struct timeval *timeout);

void FD_CLR(int fd, fd_set *set);

int FD_ISSET(int fd, fd_set *set);

void FD_SET(int fd, fd_set *set);

void FD_ZERO(fd_set *set);

int pselect(int nfds, fd_set *readfds, fd_set *writefds,
            fd_set *exceptfds, const struct timespec *timeout,
            const sigset_t *sigmask);
```

Feature Test Macro Requirements for glibc (see `feature_test_macros(7)`):

`pselect(): _POSIX_C_SOURCE >= 200112L`

DESCRIPTION

`select()` allows a program to monitor multiple file descriptors, waiting until one or more of the file descriptors become "ready" for some class of I/O operation (e.g., input possible). A file descriptor is `considered ready` if it is possible to perform a corresponding I/O operation (e.g., `read(2)`, or a sufficiently small `write(2)`) without blocking.

select() can monitor only file descriptors numbers that are less than FD_SETSIZE; poll(2) and epoll(7) do not have this limitation. See BUGS.

File descriptor sets

The principal arguments of select() are three "sets" of file descriptors (declared with the type fd_set), which allow the caller to wait for three classes of events on the specified set of file descriptors.

Each of the fd_set arguments may be specified as NULL if no file descriptors are to be watched for the corresponding class of events.

Note well: Upon return, each of the file descriptor sets is modified in place to indicate which file descriptors are currently "ready". Thus, if using select() within a loop, the sets must be reinitialized before each call. The implementation of the fd_set arguments as value-result arguments is a design error that is avoided in poll(2) and epoll(7).

The contents of a file descriptor set can be manipulated using the following macros:

FD_ZERO()

This macro clears (removes all file descriptors from) set. It should be employed as the first step in initializing a file descriptor set.

FD_SET()

This macro adds the file descriptor fd to set. Adding a file descriptor that is already present in the set is a no-op, and does not produce an error.

FD_CLR()

This macro removes the file descriptor fd from set. Removing a file descriptor that is not present in the set is a no-op, and does not produce an error.

FD_ISSET()

select() modifies the contents of the sets according to the rules described below. After calling select(), the FD_ISSET() macro can be used to test if a file descriptor is still present in a set. FD_ISSET() returns nonzero if the file descriptor fd

is present in set, and zero if it is not.

Arguments

The arguments of select() are as follows:

readfds

The file descriptors in this set are watched to see if they are ready for reading. A file descriptor is ready for reading if a read operation will not block; in particular, a file descriptor is also ready on end-of-file.

After select() has returned, readfds will be cleared of all file descriptors except for those that are ready for reading.

writefds

The file descriptors in this set are watched to see if they are ready for writing. A file descriptor is ready for writing if a write operation will not block. However, even if a file descriptor indicates as writable, a large write may still block.

After select() has returned, writefds will be cleared of all file descriptors except for those that are ready for writing.

exceptfds

The file descriptors in this set are watched for "exceptional conditions". For examples of some exceptional conditions, see the discussion of POLLPRI in poll(2).

After select() has returned, exceptfds will be cleared of all file descriptors except for those for which an exceptional condition has occurred.

nfds

This argument should be set to the highest-numbered file descriptor in any of the three sets, plus 1. The indicated file descriptors in each set are checked, up to this limit (but see BUGS).

timeout

The timeout argument is a timeval structure (shown below) that specifies the interval that select() should block waiting for a file descriptor to become ready. The call will block until either:

- ? a file descriptor becomes ready;
- ? the call is interrupted by a signal handler; or
- ? the timeout expires.

Note that the timeout interval will be rounded up to the system clock granularity, and kernel scheduling delays mean that the blocking interval may overrun by a small amount.

If both fields of the timeval structure are zero, then select() returns immediately. (This is useful for polling.)

If timeout is specified as `NULL`, `select()` blocks indefinitely waiting for a file descriptor to become ready.

pselect()

The `pselect()` system call allows an application to safely wait until either a file descriptor becomes ready or until a signal is caught.

The operation of `select()` and `pselect()` is identical, other than these three differences:

? select() uses a timeout that is a struct timeval (with seconds and microseconds), while pselect() uses a struct timespec (with seconds and nanoseconds).

? select() may update the timeout argument to indicate how much time was left. pselect() does not change this argument.

? select() has no sigmask argument, and behaves as pselect() called with NULL sigmask.

sigmask is a pointer to a signal mask (see `sigprocmask(2)`); if it is not `NULL`, then `pselect()` first replaces the current signal mask by the one pointed to by `sigmask`, then does the "select" function, and then restores the original signal mask. (If `sigmask` is `NULL`, the signal mask is not modified during the `pselect()` call.)

Other than the difference in the precision of the timeout argument, the following pselect() call:

```
ready = pselect(nfds, &readfds, &writefds, &exceptfds,  
                timeout, &sigmask);
```

is equivalent to atomically executing the following calls:

sigset_t origmask;

```
pthread_sigmask(SIG_SETMASK, &sigmask, &origmask);
ready = select(nfds, &readfds, &writefds, &exceptfds, timeout);
pthread_sigmask(SIG_SETMASK, &origmask, NULL);
```

The reason that pselect() is needed is that if one wants to wait for either a signal or for a file descriptor to become ready, then an atomic test is needed to prevent race conditions. (Suppose the signal handler sets a global flag and returns. Then a test of this global flag followed by a call of select() could hang indefinitely if the signal arrived just after the test but just before the call. By contrast, pselect() allows one to first block signals, handle the signals that have come in, then call pselect() with the desired sigmask, avoiding the race.)

The timeout

The timeout argument for select() is a structure of the following type:

```
struct timeval {
    time_t    tv_sec;      /* seconds */
    suseconds_t tv_usec;   /* microseconds */
};
```

The corresponding argument for pselect() has the following type:

```
struct timespec {
    time_t    tv_sec;      /* seconds */
    long      tv_nsec;     /* nanoseconds */
};
```

On Linux, select() modifies timeout to reflect the amount of time not slept; most other implementations do not do this. (POSIX.1 permits either behavior.) This causes problems both when Linux code which reads timeout is ported to other operating systems, and when code is ported to Linux that reuses a struct timeval for multiple select()s in a loop without reinitializing it. Consider timeout to be undefined after select() returns.

RETURN VALUE

On success, select() and pselect() return the number of file descriptors contained in the three returned descriptor sets (that is, the to?

tal number of bits that are set in readfds, writefds, exceptfds). The return value may be zero if the timeout expired before any file descriptors became ready.

On error, -1 is returned, and errno is set to indicate the error; the file descriptor sets are unmodified, and timeout becomes undefined.

ERRORS

EBADF An invalid file descriptor was given in one of the sets. (Perhaps a file descriptor that was already closed, or one on which an error has occurred.) However, see BUGS.

EINTR A signal was caught; see signal(7).

EINVAL nfds is negative or exceeds the RLIMIT_NOFILE resource limit (see getrlimit(2)).

EINVAL The value contained within timeout is invalid.

ENOMEM Unable to allocate memory for internal tables.

VERSIONS

pselect() was added to Linux in kernel 2.6.16. Prior to this, pselect() was emulated in glibc (but see BUGS).

CONFORMING TO

select() conforms to POSIX.1-2001, POSIX.1-2008, and 4.4BSD (select() first appeared in 4.2BSD). Generally portable to/from non-BSD systems supporting clones of the BSD socket layer (including System V variants). However, note that the System V variant typically sets the timeout variable before returning, but the BSD variant does not.

pselect() is defined in POSIX.1g, and in POSIX.1-2001 and POSIX.1-2008.

NOTES

An fd_set is a fixed size buffer. Executing FD_CLR() or FD_SET() with a value of fd that is negative or is equal to or larger than FD_SETSIZE will result in undefined behavior. Moreover, POSIX requires fd to be a valid file descriptor.

The operation of select() and pselect() is not affected by the O_NONBLOCK flag.

On some other UNIX systems, select() can fail with the error EAGAIN if the system fails to allocate kernel-internal resources, rather than

ENOMEM as Linux does. POSIX specifies this error for poll(2), but not for select(). Portable programs may wish to check for EAGAIN and loop, just as with EINTR.

The self-pipe trick

On systems that lack pselect(), reliable (and more portable) signal trapping can be achieved using the self-pipe trick. In this technique, a signal handler writes a byte to a pipe whose other end is monitored by select() in the main program. (To avoid possibly blocking when writing to a pipe that may be full or reading from a pipe that may be empty, nonblocking I/O is used when reading from and writing to the pipe.)

Emulating usleep(3)

Before the advent of usleep(3), some code employed a call to select() with all three sets empty, nfds zero, and a non-NULL timeout as a fairly portable way to sleep with subsecond precision.

Correspondence between select() and poll() notifications

Within the Linux kernel source, we find the following definitions which show the correspondence between the readable, writable, and exceptional condition notifications of select() and the event notifications provided by poll(2) and epoll(7):

```
#define POLLIN_SET (EPOLL RDNORM | EPOLL RDBAND | EPOLLIN |
                  EPOLLHUP | EPOLLERR)
                  /* Ready for reading */

#define POLLOUT_SET (EPOLL WRBAND | EPOLL WRNORM | EPOLLOUT |
                  EPOLLERR)
                  /* Ready for writing */

#define POLLEX_SET (EPOLL PRI)
                  /* Exceptional condition */
```

Multithreaded applications

If a file descriptor being monitored by select() is closed in another thread, the result is unspecified. On some UNIX systems, select() unblocks and returns, with an indication that the file descriptor is ready (a subsequent I/O operation will likely fail with an error, un?

less another process reopens file descriptor between the time `select()` returned and the I/O operation is performed). On Linux (and some other systems), closing the file descriptor in another thread has no effect on `select()`. In summary, any application that relies on a particular behavior in this scenario must be considered buggy.

C library/kernel differences

The Linux kernel allows file descriptor sets of arbitrary size, determining the length of the sets to be checked from the value of `nfds`.

However, in the glibc implementation, the `fd_set` type is fixed in size.

See also [BUGS](#).

The `pselect()` interface described in this page is implemented by glibc.

The underlying Linux system call is named `pselect6()`. This system call has somewhat different behavior from the glibc wrapper function.

The Linux `pselect6()` system call modifies its `timeout` argument. However, the glibc wrapper function hides this behavior by using a local variable for the `timeout` argument that is passed to the system call.

Thus, the glibc `pselect()` function does not modify its `timeout` argument; this is the behavior required by [POSIX.1-2001](#).

The final argument of the `pselect6()` system call is not a `sigset_t *` pointer, but is instead a structure of the form:

```
struct {  
    const kernel_sigset_t *ss; /* Pointer to signal set */  
    size_t ss_len;           /* Size (in bytes) of object  
                             pointed to by 'ss' */  
};
```

This allows the system call to obtain both a pointer to the signal set and its size, while allowing for the fact that most architectures support a maximum of 6 arguments to a system call. See `sigprocmask(2)` for a discussion of the difference between the kernel and libc notion of the signal set.

Historical glibc details

Glibc 2.0 provided an incorrect version of `pselect()` that did not take a `sigmask` argument.

In glibc versions 2.1 to 2.2.1, one must define `_GNU_SOURCE` in order to obtain the declaration of `pselect()` from `<sys/select.h>`.

BUGS

POSIX allows an implementation to define an upper limit, advertised via the constant `FD_SETSIZE`, on the range of file descriptors that can be specified in a file descriptor set. The Linux kernel imposes no fixed limit, but the glibc implementation makes `fd_set` a fixed-size type, with `FD_SETSIZE` defined as 1024, and the `FD_*`() macros operating according to that limit. To monitor file descriptors greater than 1023, use `poll(2)` or `epoll(7)` instead.

According to POSIX, `select()` should check all specified file descriptors in the three file descriptor sets, up to the limit `nfds-1`. However, the current implementation ignores any file descriptor in these sets that is greater than the maximum file descriptor number that the process currently has open. According to POSIX, any such file descriptor that is specified in one of the sets should result in the error `EBADF`.

Starting with version 2.1, glibc provided an emulation of `pselect()` that was implemented using `sigprocmask(2)` and `select()`. This implementation remained vulnerable to the very race condition that `pselect()` was designed to prevent. Modern versions of glibc use the (race-free) `pselect()` system call on kernels where it is provided.

On Linux, `select()` may report a socket file descriptor as "ready for reading", while nevertheless a subsequent read blocks. This could for example happen when data has arrived but upon examination has the wrong checksum and is discarded. There may be other circumstances in which a file descriptor is spuriously reported as ready. Thus it may be safer to use `O_NONBLOCK` on sockets that should not block.

On Linux, `select()` also modifies timeout if the call is interrupted by a signal handler (i.e., the `EINTR` error return). This is not permitted by POSIX.1. The Linux `pselect()` system call has the same behavior, but the glibc wrapper hides this behavior by internally copying the timeout to a local variable and passing that variable to the system call.

EXAMPLES

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <sys/select.h>

int
main(void)
{
    fd_set rfds;
    struct timeval tv;
    int retval;
    /* Watch stdin (fd 0) to see when it has input. */
    FD_ZERO(&rfds);
    FD_SET(0, &rfds);
    /* Wait up to five seconds. */
    tv.tv_sec = 5;
    tv.tv_usec = 0;
    retval = select(1, &rfds, NULL, NULL, &tv);
    /* Don't rely on the value of tv now! */
    if (retval == -1)
        perror("select()");
    else if (retval)
        printf("Data is available now.\n");
    /* FD_ISSET(0, &rfds) will be true. */
    else
        printf("No data within five seconds.\n");
    exit(EXIT_SUCCESS);
}
```

SEE ALSO

accept(2), connect(2), poll(2), read(2), recv(2), restart_syscall(2),
send(2), sigprocmask(2), write(2), epoll(7), time(7)

For a tutorial with discussion and examples, see [select_tut\(2\)](#).

COLOPHON

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