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Red Hat Enterprise Linux Release 9.2 Manual Pages on 'tabs.1p' command

\$ man tabs.1p

TABS(1P) POSIX Programmer's Manual TABS(1P)

PROLOG

This manual page is part of the POSIX Programmer's Manual. The Linux implementation of this interface may differ (consult the corresponding Linux manual page for details of Linux behavior), or the interface may not be implemented on Linux.

NAME

tabs ? set terminal tabs

SYNOPSIS

tabs [-n|-a|-a2|-c|-c2|-c3|-f|-p|-s|-u] [-T type]

tabs [-T type] n[[sep[+n]...]

DESCRIPTION

The tabs utility shall display a series of characters that first clears the hardware terminal tab settings and then initializes the tab stops at the specified positions and optionally adjusts the margin.

The phrase "tab-stop position N" shall be taken to mean that, from the start of a line of output, tabbing to position N shall cause the next character output to be in the (N+1)th column position on that line. The maximum number of tab stops allowed is terminal-dependent.

It need not be possible to implement tabs on certain terminals. If the terminal type obtained from the TERM environment variable or -T option represents such a terminal, an appropriate diagnostic message shall be written to standard error and tabs shall exit with a status greater

than zero.

OPTIONS

The tabs utility shall conform to the Base Definitions volume of POSIX.1?2017, Section 12.2, Utility Syntax Guidelines, except for various extensions: the options -a2, -c2, and -c3 are multi-character.

The following options shall be supported:

- n Specify repetitive tab stops separated by a uniform number of column positions, n, where n is a single-digit decimal number. The default usage of tabs with no arguments shall be equivalent to tabs -8. When -0 is used, the tab stops shall be cleared and no new ones set.
- a 1,10,16,36,72
Assembler, applicable to some mainframes.
- a2 1,10,16,40,72
Assembler, applicable to some mainframes.
- c 1,8,12,16,20,55
COBOL, normal format.
- c2 1,6,10,14,49
COBOL, compact format (columns 1 to 6 omitted).
- c3 1,6,10,14,18,22,26,30,34,38,42,46,50,54,58,62,67
COBOL compact format (columns 1 to 6 omitted), with more tabs than -c2.
- f 1,7,11,15,19,23
FORTRAN
- p 1,5,9,13,17,21,25,29,33,37,41,45,49,53,57,61
PL/1
- s 1,10,55
SNOBOL
- u 1,12,20,44
Assembler, applicable to some mainframes.
- T type Indicate the type of terminal. If this option is not supplied and the TERM variable is unset or null, an unspecified default terminal type shall be used. The setting of type shall

take precedence over the value in TERM.

OPERANDS

The following operand shall be supported:

`n[[sep[+]n]...]`

A single command line argument that consists of one or more tab-stop values (`n`) separated by a separator character (`sep`) which is either a `<comma>` or a `<blank>` character. The application shall ensure that the tab-stop values are positive decimal integers in strictly ascending order. If any tab-stop value (except the first one) is preceded by a `<plus-sign>`, it is taken as an increment to be added to the previous value. For example, the tab lists `1,10,20,30` and `"110+10+10"` are considered to be identical.

STDIN

Not used.

INPUT FILES

None.

ENVIRONMENT VARIABLES

The following environment variables shall affect the execution of tabs:

LANG Provide a default value for the internationalization variables that are unset or null. (See the Base Definitions volume of POSIX.1?2017, Section 8.2, Internationalization Variables for the precedence of internationalization variables used to determine the values of locale categories.)

LC_ALL If set to a non-empty string value, override the values of all the other internationalization variables.

LC_CTYPE Determine the locale for the interpretation of sequences of bytes of text data as characters (for example, single-byte as opposed to multi-byte characters in arguments).

LC_MESSAGES

Determine the locale that should be used to affect the format and contents of diagnostic messages written to standard error.

NLSPATH Determine the location of message catalogs for the processing of LC_MESSAGES.

TERM Determine the terminal type. If this variable is unset or null, and if the -T option is not specified, an unspecified default terminal type shall be used.

ASYNCHRONOUS EVENTS

Default.

STDOUT

If standard output is a terminal, the appropriate sequence to clear and set the tab stops may be written to standard output in an unspecified format. If standard output is not a terminal, undefined results occur.

STDERR

The standard error shall be used only for diagnostic messages.

OUTPUT FILES

None.

EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

None.

EXIT STATUS

The following exit values shall be returned:

0 Successful completion.

>0 An error occurred.

CONSEQUENCES OF ERRORS

Default.

The following sections are informative.

APPLICATION USAGE

This utility makes use of the terminal's hardware tabs and the stty tabs option.

This utility is not recommended for application use.

Some integrated display units might not have escape sequences to set tab stops, but may be set by internal system calls. On these terminals, tabs works if standard output is directed to the terminal; if output is directed to another file, however, tabs fails.

EXAMPLES

None.

RATIONALE

Consideration was given to having the `tput` utility handle all of the functions described in `tabs`. However, the separate `tabs` utility was retained because it seems more intuitive to use a command named `tabs` than `tput` with a new option. The `tput` utility does not support setting or clearing `tabs`, and no known historical version of `tabs` supports the capability of setting arbitrary tab stops.

The System V `tabs` interface is very complex; the version in this volume of POSIX.1-2017 has a reduced feature list, but many of the features omitted were restored as part of the XSI option even though the supported languages and coding styles are primarily historical.

There was considerable sentiment for specifying only a means of resetting the `tabs` back to a known state?presumably the "standard" of `tabs` every eight positions. The following features were omitted:

- * Setting tab stops via the first line in a file, using `--file`.

Since even the SVID has no complete explanation of this feature, it is doubtful that it is in widespread use.

In an early proposal, a `-t tablist` option was added for consistency with `expand`; this was later removed when inconsistencies with the historical list of `tabs` were identified.

Consideration was given to adding a `-p` option that would output the current tab settings so that they could be saved and then later restored. This was not accepted because querying the tab stops of the terminal is not a capability in historical `terminfo` or `termcap` facilities and might not be supported on a wide range of terminals.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

None.

SEE ALSO

`expand`, `stty`, `tput`, `unexpand`

The Base Definitions volume of POSIX.1-2017, Chapter 8, Environment Variables, Section 12.2, Utility Syntax Guidelines

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