

NAME

diff – compare files line by line

SYNOPSIS

diff [*OPTION*]... *FILES*

DESCRIPTION

Compare *FILES* line by line.

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

--normal

output a normal diff (the default)

-q, --brief

report only when files differ

-s, --report-identical-files

report when two files are the same

-c, -C NUM, --context[=NUM]

output NUM (default 3) lines of copied context

-u, -U NUM, --unified[=NUM]

output NUM (default 3) lines of unified context

-e, --ed

output an ed script

-n, --rcs

output an RCS format diff

-y, --side-by-side

output in two columns

-W, --width=NUM

output at most NUM (default 130) print columns

--left-column

output only the left column of common lines

--suppress-common-lines

do not output common lines

-p, --show-c-function

show which C function each change is in

-F, --show-function-line=RE

show the most recent line matching RE

--label *LABEL*

use *LABEL* instead of file name and timestamp (can be repeated)

-t, --expand-tabs

expand tabs to spaces in output

-T, --initial-tab

make tabs line up by prepending a tab

--tabsize=NUM

tab stops every NUM (default 8) print columns

--suppress-blank-empty

suppress space or tab before empty output lines

-l, --paginate

pass output through 'pr' to paginate it

-r, --recursive
 recursively compare any subdirectories found

--no-dereference
 don't follow symbolic links

-N, --new-file
 treat absent files as empty

--unidirectional-new-file
 treat absent first files as empty

--ignore-file-name-case
 ignore case when comparing file names

--no-ignore-file-name-case
 consider case when comparing file names

-x, --exclude=PAT
 exclude files that match PAT

-X, --exclude-from=FILE
 exclude files that match any pattern in FILE

-S, --starting-file=FILE
 start with FILE when comparing directories

--from-file=FILE1
 compare FILE1 to all operands; FILE1 can be a directory

--to-file=FILE2
 compare all operands to FILE2; FILE2 can be a directory

-i, --ignore-case
 ignore case differences in file contents

-E, --ignore-tab-expansion
 ignore changes due to tab expansion

-Z, --ignore-trailing-space
 ignore white space at line end

-b, --ignore-space-change
 ignore changes in the amount of white space

-w, --ignore-all-space
 ignore all white space

-B, --ignore-blank-lines
 ignore changes where lines are all blank

-I, --ignore-matching-lines=RE
 ignore changes where all lines match RE

-a, --text
 treat all files as text

--strip-trailing-cr
 strip trailing carriage return on input

-D, --ifdef=NAME
 output merged file with '#ifdef NAME' diffs

--GTYPE-group-format=GFMT
 format GTYPE input groups with GFMT

--line-format=LFMT
 format all input lines with LFMT

--LTYPE-line-format=LFMT
 format LTYPE input lines with LFMT

These format options provide fine-grained control over the output of diff, generalizing **-D**/--ifdef.

LTYPE is 'old', 'new', or 'unchanged'.
 GTYPE is LTYPE or 'changed'.

GFMT (only) may contain:

- %< lines from FILE1
- %> lines from FILE2
- %= lines common to FILE1 and FILE2
- %[-][WIDTH][.[PREC]]{doX}LETTER
 printf-style spec for LETTER

LETTERS are as follows for new group, lower case for old group:

- F first line number
- L last line number
- N number of lines = L-F+1
- E F-1
- M L+1

%(A=B?T:E)
 if A equals B then T else E

LFMT (only) may contain:

- %L contents of line
- %l contents of line, excluding any trailing newline
- %[-][WIDTH][.[PREC]]{doX}n
 printf-style spec for input line number

Both GFMT and LFMT may contain:

- %% %
- %c'C' the single character C
- %c'\\OOO'
 the character with octal code OOO
- C the character C (other characters represent themselves)

-d, --minimal
 try hard to find a smaller set of changes

--horizon-lines=NUM
 keep NUM lines of the common prefix and suffix

--speed-large-files
 assume large files and many scattered small changes

--color[=WHEN]
 color output; WHEN is 'never', 'always', or 'auto'; plain **--color** means **--color='auto'**

--palette=PALETTE

the colors to use when **--color** is active; PALETTE is a colon-separated list of terminfo capabilities

--help display this help and exit**-v, --version**

output version information and exit

FILES are 'FILE1 FILE2' or 'DIR1 DIR2' or 'DIR FILE' or 'FILE DIR'. If **--from-file** or **--to-file** is given, there are no restrictions on FILE(s). If a FILE is '−', read standard input. Exit status is 0 if inputs are the same, 1 if different, 2 if trouble.

AUTHOR

Written by Paul Eggert, Mike Haertel, David Hayes, Richard Stallman, and Len Tower.

REPORTING BUGS

Report bugs to: bug-diffutils@gnu.org

GNU diffutils home page: <<https://www.gnu.org/software/diffutils/>>

General help using GNU software: <<https://www.gnu.org/gethelp/>>

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

wdiff(1), **cmp(1)**, **diff3(1)**, **sdiff(1)**, **patch(1)**

The full documentation for **diff** is maintained as a Texinfo manual. If the **info** and **diff** programs are properly installed at your site, the command

info diff

should give you access to the complete manual.