

Shell Metacharacters

New Line	End a command line	
Space	Separate elements on a command line	ls /etc
Tab	Separate elements on a command line	ls /etc
#	Start a comment	# This is a comment line
“	Quote multiple characters but allow substitution	echo “message by \$USER”
\$	To dereference a shell variable	echo \$PATH
&	Background execution of a command	command &
‘	Quote multiple characters	echo ‘message’
()	Execute a command list in a sub shell	(command1;command2)
*	Match 0 or more characters	ls *.pdf
[]	Insert wild cards	ls [a-z][0-9].pdf
`	Substitute a command	PS1=`hostname`
{ }	Execute a command list in the current shell	{command1;command2}
	Pipe between commands	command1 command2
;	Separate commands in sequential execution	command1; command2
<	Redirect input	ls < files
>	Redirect output	cat > files
>>	Redirect and append output	ls -l >> files
2>	Redirect error	rm file 2> errors
?	Substitute a wildcard for exactly one character	ls file?.pdf
/	Root directory and separator in a path	/home/username
\	Escape a single character. Also allows continuation of a shell command on the following line.	command arg1 \ arg2 arg3 \

Useful Prompt Characters and their Descriptions (BASH)

\H	Fully qualified domain name of the host, such as moat.cis.uab.edu
\T	Time in 12-hour hh:mm:ss format
\d	The date in “weekday month date” format
\h	Hostname, such as moat
\s	The name of the shell
\t	Time in the 24-hour hh:mm:ss format
\u	Current username
\v	Version of bash
\w	Current working directory