

## Re: An end to tweaking?

**Source:** <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/comp.os.linux.misc/2005-07/0875.html>

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On Mon, 11 Jul 2005 09:01:52 -0700, comp.os.spil wrote:

>  
> *I used to write batch files under DOS. I even had Neil Rubenking's*  
> *Batch File Lab Notes, which had so much info it boggled my mind. The*  
> *original batch language was \*very\* sparse, but he got it to count four*  
> *digits with recursive algorithms and make the screen sprout legs and*  
> *tap dance with ansi.sys commands and debug scripts.*

Doing /anything/ recursive with DOS batch makes my head hurt. ;) It was a very, very sparse language indeed, and perhaps the best that could be said about it is that going from DOS batch to VMS is easier than going from the average Unix shell to VMS.

But who needs to move to VMS these days?

>  
> *Fast forward to today and we have a guy named "tab" complaining about*  
> *"endless" tweaking. Shirley, there must be an end to tweaking*  
> *somewhere.*  
>  
> *(1) Once you have written the shell script (I assume it's the*  
> *equivalent to batch processing, I hope it's better) you should just*  
> *start \*using\* the computer. The Matrix thread from a couple of weeks*  
> *ago suggested you can load drivers, thunks, and needed utilities to run*  
> *an app, then unload them when it's finished so you can run another app.*  
> *All without rebooting.*

True. And yes, bash (the default shell under Linux) is /much/ better than DOS batch. For example:

```
# Mass-convert all .gif files in the current directory to .png files.
```

```
for i in *.gif # Iterate over all files that end in .gif.
do
  n=`basename $i .gif` # Remove the extension.
  giftopnm $i | pnmtopng > $n.png # Do the conversion with pipes.
done
```

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You can save that to a file and it will be a first-class command from then on. You don't need to care that it's written in shell instead of C or Perl or COBOL. You can write it all out on the command-line, too, if you don't expect you'll ever need to mass-convert .gifs to .pngs again.

(Pardon me if I ramble for a while. I don't know if DOS batch had pipes.)

That last command bears some extra commentary: It is actually two programs, one feeding data to the other without needing to create a temporary file on disk. Piping information around is a huge advantage of the Unix command line environment.

>  
> *(2) One thing I don't like about Linux is the Unix command names. I'm  
> guessing this is part of that learning curve I've heard so much about.  
> DOS command names were easier to memorize. Now, I can call a shell  
> script anything I want, just like the old DOS batch files, right? I'm  
> guessing this is what the rest of you are doing.*

The names come with time. You can create aliases and hide them behind obfuscation, but in the long run it's better to learn the actual commands.

And you can indeed call a shell script anything you want. That is certainly what I am doing, at any rate.

>  
> *So what I want is to tweak when I change something, then just go. Is  
> that possible with Linux? With any distro? With any shell?*

Yes, yes, and yes. :)

(Some shells are better than others, but a discussion of that inevitably ends in flamewar. I personally like zsh, others swear by ksh, and some think bash is best. A few prefer tcsh, but the tcsh programming language is completely different from what I've shown you.)

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