CMake Build system generator

CONCEPTS

CMake does not build anything itself: it generates files for a native tool (Make, Ninja, Visual Studio), which then compiles. Keep the build tree out of the source tree.

CMakeLists.txt project description
↓ configure
Build tree cache + generated files
↓ --build
Binaries via Make/Ninja
↓ ctest / --install
Tests, install results, prefix

Configure once, then build, test and install from the same tree

Cache variables (-D) persist in build/CMakeCache.txt, so later runs reuse them. Use --fresh or delete the build dir to reset.

CONFIGURE

`cmake -S <src> -B <build>`
Configure source into build dir

`cmake -B build -G "<generator>"`
Choose generator (Ninja, Unix Makefiles)

`cmake -B build -D<VAR>=<value>`
Set a cache entry

`cmake -B build -DCMAKE_BUILD_TYPE=<type>`
Debug, Release, RelWithDebInfo

`cmake -B build --fresh`
Drop the cache and reconfigure

`-DCMAKE_EXPORT_COMPILE_COMMANDS=ON`
Write compile_commands.json

BUILD

`cmake --build <dir>`
Build everything

`cmake --build <dir> -j <N>`
Build with N parallel jobs

`cmake --build <dir> -t <target>`
Build one target

`cmake --build <dir> --config <cfg>`
Choose config (multi-config generators)

`cmake --build <dir> -v`
Show full compiler commands

INSTALL AND TEST

`cmake --install <dir>`
Install the project

`cmake --install <dir> --prefix <dir>`
Override the install prefix

`ctest --test-dir <dir>`
Run all tests

`ctest --test-dir <dir> --output-on-failure`
Show output of failing tests

`ctest -R <regex>`
Run tests whose name matches

`ctest -j <N>`
Run tests in parallel

`ctest --rerun-failed`
Run only tests that failed last time

PRESETS

`cmake --list-presets`
List configure presets

`cmake --preset <name>`
Configure with a preset

INSPECT AND DEBUG

`cmake -L -N <dir>`
List cache variables, no reconfigure

CMAKELISTS.TXT

`cmake_minimum_required(VERSION <x.y>)`
Declare the minimum CMake version

`project(<name> VERSION <x.y> LANGUAGES CXX)`
Name the project

`add_executable(<tgt> <sources>)`
Define an executable target

`add_library(<tgt> STATIC|SHARED <sources>)`
Define a library target

`target_link_libraries(<tgt> PRIVATE <lib>)`
Link a dependency

`find_package(<Pkg> REQUIRED)`
Locate an installed package