Duplicity

Encrypted incremental backups

START HERE

`duplicity <dir> <url>`
Back up (full, then incremental)

`duplicity full <dir> <url>`
Force a new full chain

`duplicity <url> <dir>`
Restore (URL first)

`duplicity list-current-files <url>`
List backed-up files

`duplicity verify <url> <dir>`
Check backup against signatures

`duplicity collection-status <url>`
Show chains and sets

`duplicity remove-older-than 6M --force <url>`
Prune old sets

`duplicity --dry-run <dir> <url>`
Preview without writing

Full whole tree, GPG-encrypted → `incremental` → **Incremental** changes since last set → `more runs` → **Chain** full + its increments → `remove-older-than` → **Pruned** old chains deleted

CONCEPTS

Argument order decides the action: local dir then URL backs up, URL then local dir restores. Delete actions only list until you add --force.

An incremental needs every earlier set of its chain back to the full. Run a fresh full regularly (--full-if-older-than) so restores stay short and safe.

Encryption defaults to a symmetric GnuPG passphrase read from PASSPHRASE. Lose the passphrase or private key and the backup is unreadable.

BACKUP

`duplicity <dir> <url>`
Backup: incremental, or full if none yet

`duplicity full <dir> <url>`
Always start a new full chain

`duplicity --full-if-older-than 1M <dir> <url>`
Auto-full when last full is old
Accepts time strings like 7D, 1M, 1Y.

`duplicity --dry-run <dir> <url>`
Show what would happen

BACKUP (cont.)

`duplicity --exclude <pattern> <dir> <url>`
Skip matching files

`duplicity --include <pattern> --exclude '**' <dir> <url>`
Back up only the included paths
The first matching rule wins, so put includes before the catch-all exclude.

`duplicity --exclude-filelist <file> <dir> <url>`
Read exclude rules from a file

ENCRYPTION

`export PASSPHRASE=<phrase>`
Symmetric GPG passphrase

`duplicity --encrypt-key <key-id> <dir> <url>`
Encrypt to a public key
Repeat the option for several recipients.

`duplicity --sign-key <key-id> <dir> <url>`
Sign the backup
Only one signing key is supported. Set SIGN_PASSPHRASE if the key has one.

ENCRYPTION (cont.)

Back up your GPG private key and passphrase separately from the data, for example with gpg --export-secret-keys.

TARGETS

`file:///<abs-path>`
Local or mounted directory

`sftp://<user>@<host>//<abs-path>`
SFTP; a double slash means absolute
A single slash after the host is relative to the login home.

`s3:///<bucket>/<prefix>`
Amazon S3 (credentials from AWS_* env)

`export FTP_PASSWORD=<pw>`
Backend password via env, not URL
A password in the URL shows up in process listings. Use FTP_PASSWORD or the backend's own variable.

RESTORE AND VERIFY

`duplicity <url> <dir>`
Restore everything (dir must not hold files)

RESTORE AND VERIFY (cont.)

`duplicity restore <url> <dir>`
Same, with the explicit action

`duplicity --path-to-restore <relpath> <url> <dir>`
Restore one file or folder
Give the path relative to the backup root, with no leading slash.

`duplicity -t <time> <url> <dir>`
Restore as of a point in time
Time is an interval (3D), a date (2026-01-31), or now.

`duplicity --force <url> <dir>`
Overwrite existing target files

`duplicity list-current-files <url>`
List files in the latest backup

`duplicity list-current-files -t <time> <url>`
List files as of a time

`duplicity verify <url> <dir>`
Verify against stored signatures

`duplicity verify --compare-data <url> <dir>`
Also compare file contents with local

STATUS AND CLEANUP

`duplicity collection-status <url>`
List chains, sets and volumes

`duplicity remove-older-than <time> --force <url>`
Delete sets older than a time
Without --force it only lists. The newest full chain is never removed.

`duplicity remove-all-but-n-full <n> --force <url>`
Keep only the last n full chains

`duplicity remove-all-inc-of-but-n-full <n> --force <url>`
Drop increments of older chains

`duplicity cleanup --force <url>`
Remove leftovers of failed runs

`duplicity --archive-dir <path> <dir> <url>`
Local signature cache location
Default is ~/.cache/duplicity. It speeds up runs and can be rebuilt from the target.

COMMON OPTIONS

`-v<level>` / `--verbosity <level>`
0 error, 4 notice (default), 8 info, 9 debug

COMMON OPTIONS (cont.)

`-t, --time <time>`
Point in time for restore, list, verify

`duplicity --version`
Print the installed version

RECIPES

Nightly encrypted backup to SFTP

```
export PASSPHRASE=<phrase>
duplicity --full-if-older-than
1M \
  --encrypt-key <key-id> --
exclude '**/.cache' \
  /home/<user> sftp://
<user>@<host>//backups/home
duplicity remove-older-than 6M
--force sftp://<user>@<host>//
backups/home
```

Restore one folder from last week

```
export PASSPHRASE=<phrase>
duplicity -t 7D --path-to-
restore Documents \
  sftp://<user>@<host>//
backups/home /tmp/restore/
Documents
```

Back up only chosen dirs

```
duplicity --include /home/
<user>/Documents \
  --include /home/<user>/
Projects \
  --exclude '**' / file:///mnt/
backup
```