find Search the file tree

CONCEPTS

find walks every path you give it and tests each file against the expression, left to right. Quote patterns so the shell does not expand them.

Start paths where to look
↓ options
Options depth, symlinks
↓ tests
Tests name, type, size, time
↓ actions
Actions print, exec, delete

Without an action, find prints matches (-print). Test a command with -print before you switch to -delete or -exec.

Examples follow GNU findutils 4.10. BSD and macOS find lack -printf, -regextype and -type f,d, and use find -E for extended regex.

NAME & TYPE

`find <dir> -name '<glob>'`
Match the file name

`find <dir> -iname '<glob>'`
Match name, ignore case

`find <dir> -type f`
Regular files only

`find <dir> -type d`
Directories only

`find <dir> -type l`
Symbolic links only

`find <dir> -path '<glob>'`
Match the whole path

`find <dir> -regex '<regex>'`
Regex on the whole path

`find <dir> -type f,d`
Several types at once

`find <dir> -xtype l`
Broken symlinks

SIZE & TIME

`find <dir> -size +<n>M`
Larger than n MiB

`find <dir> -size -<n>k`
Smaller than n KiB

`find <dir> -empty`
Empty files and directories

SIZE & TIME (cont.)

`find <dir> -mtime -<n>`
Modified in the last n days

`find <dir> -mtime +<n>`
Modified more than n days ago

`find <dir> -mmin -<n>`
Modified in the last n minutes

`find <dir> -newer <file>`
Newer than a reference file

`find <dir> -newermt '<date>'`
Modified after a date

OWNER & PERMISSIONS

`find <dir> -user <name>`
Owned by a user

`find <dir> -group <name>`
Owned by a group

`find <dir> -perm 644`
Exactly these mode bits

`find <dir> -perm -u+x`
All listed bits set

`find <dir> -perm /022`
Any listed bit set

DEPTH & PRUNING

`find <dir> -maxdepth <n>`
Descend at most n levels

`find <dir> -mindepth <n>`
Ignore the top n levels

`find <dir> -name <d> -prune -o -print`
Skip a directory tree

`find <dir> -xdev`
Stay on one filesystem

`find -L <dir>`
Follow symlinks

`find <dir> -name <f> -print -quit`
Stop at first match

COMBINING

`find <dir> -name '*.c' -o -name '*.h'`
Either pattern (OR)

`find <dir> ! -name '<glob>'`
Negate a test

`find <dir> \( <a> -o <b> \) <c>`
Group with parentheses

ACTIONS

`find <dir> -print`
Print matches (default)

`find <dir> -print0`
Print NUL-separated names

`find <dir> -exec <cmd> {} \;`
Run command once per file

`find <dir> -exec <cmd> {} +`
Batch files per command

`find <dir> -ok <cmd> {} \;`
Ask before each run

`find <dir> -execdir <cmd> {} \;`
Run inside the file's directory

`find <dir> -delete`
Delete matches

`find <dir> -printf '<fmt>'`
Custom output format

XARGS

`find <dir> -print0 | xargs -0 <cmd>`
Pipe names safely

`xargs -0 -n <n> <cmd>`
At most n names per run

`xargs -0 -P <n> <cmd>`
Run n jobs in parallel

`xargs -0 -I {} <cmd> {}`
Place name inside a command

`xargs -r <cmd>`
Skip when input is empty

RECIPES

Delete old logs

```
find /var/log/app -name '*.log' -mtime +30 -print
# check the list, then swap in -delete
find /var/log/app -name '*.log' -mtime +30 -delete
```

Replace text in many files

```
find . -name '*.md' -print0 \
  | xargs -0 sed -i 's/<old>/<new>/g'
```

Grep, skipping .git

```
find . -name .git -prune -o -type f \
  -exec grep -l '<text>' {} +
```

Ten biggest files

```
find . -type f -printf '%s %p\n' \
  | sort -nr | head
```