less Terminal pager

CONCEPTS

less is a pager: it reads lazily, so huge files open at once and you can scroll back, which a plain cat cannot do.

Input file or pipe
↓ read
Buffer lazy, scrollable
↓ show
Screen keys, search, options

Keys are case sensitive. Many accept a count first: 10j moves 10 lines, 50% jumps halfway.

MOVING

Space / **f**
Forward one screen

b
Back one screen

j / **Enter**
Forward one line

k / **y**
Back one line

d
Forward half a screen

u
Back half a screen

g / **<**
Go to the first line

G / **>**
Go to the last line

<n>g
Go to line <n>

<n>%
Go to <n> percent into the file

Right / **Left**
Scroll sideways half a screen

SEARCHING

/<pattern>
Search forward

?<pattern>
Search backward

SEARCHING (cont.)

n
Next match

N
Previous match

&<pattern>
Show only matching lines

ESC-u
Toggle match highlighting

Searches are regular expressions. With -i they ignore case unless the pattern has capitals.

FILES AND COMMANDS

F
Follow the end, like tail -f

:n
Next file

:p
Previous file

:e › *<file>*
Open another file

-<flag>
Toggle an option live

h
Show help

q
Quit

OPTIONS

less -S *<file>*
Chop long lines instead of wrapping

less -N *<file>*
Show line numbers

less -R
Pass ANSI colours through

less -i
Ignore case when searching

less +F *<file>*
Start in follow mode

less +/*<pattern>* *<file>*
Start at first match