GNU Make

Build automation

CONCEPTS

A rule says: target is rebuilt when any prerequisite is newer than it. Make compares file timestamps, nothing else. Recipe lines must start with a Tab.

Makefile rules + variables
↓ parse
Goal target default: first rule
↓ compare mtimes
Prerequisites built first, recursively
↓ if stale
Recipe shell lines run

Make walks the dependency graph and runs only stale recipes

Each recipe line runs in its own shell: cd or exported variables do not carry over to the next line. Join lines with && and a trailing backslash, or set .ONESHELL.

RUNNING MAKE

make
Build the first (default) target

make *<target>*
Build a specific target

make -n
Print recipes without running them

make -j*<N>*
Run up to N recipes in parallel

make -f *<file>*
Read this file instead of Makefile

make -C *<dir>*
Change to dir before reading makefiles

make *<VAR>*=*<value>*
Set a variable from the command line

make -k
Keep going after errors

RULES

<target>: *<prereqs>*
Rule header; recipe lines follow, each after a Tab

<target>: | *<dir>*
Order-only prerequisite: must exist, no rebuild trigger

RULES (cont.)

.PHONY: *<target>*
Target is an action, not a file

RECIPE LINES

@*<command>*
Do not echo this line

$(MAKE) -C *<dir>*
Recurse into a subdirectory

$$*<var>*
Literal $ for the shell

VARIABLES

<VAR> **=** *<value>*
Recursive: expanded each time it is used

<VAR> **:=** *<value>*
Simple: expanded once, at assignment

<VAR> **?=** *<value>*
Set only if not already set

<VAR> **+=** *<value>*
Append

$(*<VAR>***) / ${***<VAR>***}**
Use a variable

AUTOMATIC VARIABLES

$@
The target

$<
The first prerequisite

$^
All prerequisites, no duplicates

PATTERNS AND BUILT-INS

%.o: %.c
Pattern rule: any .o from the matching .c

FUNCTIONS

$(wildcard *<glob>***)**
Files matching a glob

$(patsubst *<pat>*,*<repl>*,*<text>***)**
Pattern replace in each word

$(shell *<command>***)**
Output of a shell command