pactl Sound server control

CONCEPTS

pactl talks to a PulseAudio server. On PipeWire the pipewire-pulse service answers the same protocol, so these commands work unchanged.

Card hardware, profile
↓ has
Sink output, port
↓ fed by
Sink input app playback stream
↓ monitor
Source input or sink monitor

Names or numeric indexes both work for devices; indexes change after restarts, names do not. @DEFAULT_SINK@ and @DEFAULT_SOURCE@ avoid looking names up.

Add -f json (or --format=json) for machine-readable output, or use list short for tab-separated columns.

INSPECT

pactl info
Server, version, default sink/source

pactl list short sinks
Output devices, one per line

pactl list short sources
Input devices and monitors

pactl list short cards
Sound cards

pactl list short sink-inputs
Playback streams

pactl list short source-outputs
Recording streams

pactl list sinks
Full detail: ports, volume, state

pactl list short modules
Loaded modules

pactl -f json list sinks
Machine-readable output

DEFAULT DEVICE

pactl get-default-sink
Print default output

DEFAULT DEVICE (cont.)

pactl set-default-sink *<sink>*
Change default output

pactl get-default-source
Print default input

pactl set-default-source *<source>*
Change default input

pactl set-sink-port *<sink>* *<port>*
Switch speakers / headphones

VOLUME AND MUTE

pactl get-sink-volume *<sink>*
Show volume

pactl set-sink-volume *<sink>* **50%**
Absolute volume

pactl set-sink-volume @DEFAULT_SINK@ +5%
Raise by 5 points

pactl set-sink-volume @DEFAULT_SINK@ -5%
Lower by 5 points

pactl set-sink-mute *<sink>* **toggle**
Toggle mute

pactl set-source-volume *<source>* **80%**
Mic level

pactl set-source-mute *<source>* **toggle**
Mute the mic

STREAMS

pactl move-sink-input *<id>* *<sink>*
Send a stream to another output

pactl set-sink-input-volume *<id>* **30%**
Per-app volume

CARDS AND DEVICES

pactl set-card-profile *<card>* *<profile>*
Change profile (e.g. HDMI, A2DP)

MODULES

pactl load-module *<name>* **[args]**
Load; prints module index

pactl unload-module *<id or name>*
Unload by index or name