sort, uniq, cut and tr Slice and count text

START HERE

`sort` *`<file>`*
Sort lines alphabetically

`tr -d '\r'`
Delete characters

`sort -n / -h`
Numeric / human sizes

`sort -t: -k3 -n /etc/passwd`
Sort by a field

`sort` *`<file>`* `| uniq -c | sort -rn`
Frequency count

`sort -u` *`<file>`*
Sort and drop duplicates

`cut -d, -f1,3` *`<file>`*
Pick CSV columns

`tr a-z A-Z`
Translate characters

cut pick columns → *lines* → **sort** order / group → *adjacent* → **uniq** collapse, count → *counts* → **sort -rn** rank by count

CONCEPTS

These are line filters: each reads stdin or files and writes stdout, so they chain with pipes. tr reads stdin only.

uniq only merges adjacent lines, so sort first (or use sort -u).

Sort order depends on the locale. Use LC_ALL=C for plain byte order, and it is also much faster.

SORTING

`sort` *`<file>`*
Sort lines alphabetically

`sort -r` *`<file>`*
Reverse the order

`sort -n` *`<file>`*
Numeric sort
Without -n, 10 sorts before 9.

`sort -h` *`<file>`*
Human sizes such as 2K, 1G
Pairs well with du -h output.

`sort -u` *`<file>`*
Keep one of each equal line

`sort -V` *`<file>`*
Version sort (1.2 before 1.10)

`sort -f` *`<file>`*
Ignore case

SORTING (cont.)

`sort -b` *`<file>`*
Ignore leading blanks

`sort -s` *`<file>`*
Stable: keep input order on ties

`sort -o` *`<file>`* *`<file>`*
Write result in place
Plain > redirect would empty the input first.

SORTING BY KEY

`sort -k` *`<n>`* *`<file>`*
Sort from field n to end of line
Use -k n,n to sort on that field alone.

`sort -k` *`<n>`*`,`*`<n>`* *`<file>`*
Sort on field n only

`sort -t` *`<sep>`* `-k` *`<n>`* *`<file>`*
Set the field separator
Without -t, fields split where blanks meet text.

`sort -k` *`<n>`*`n,`*`<n>`* *`<file>`*
Numeric on one field

`sort -k` *`<a>`*`,`*`<a>`* `-k` *`<b>`*`nr,`*`<b>`* *`<file>`*
Primary then secondary key

`sort -t$'\t' -k` *`<n>`* *`<file>`*
Tab-separated (bash quoting)

Key options like n or r placed on a -k override the global ones for that key only.

UNIQ

`uniq` *`<file>`*
Collapse adjacent duplicates

`uniq -c` *`<file>`*
Prefix each line with its count

`uniq -d` *`<file>`*
Only repeated lines, one each

`uniq -u` *`<file>`*
Only lines that never repeat

`uniq -D` *`<file>`*
Every repeated line, all copies

`uniq -i` *`<file>`*
Ignore case

`uniq -f` *`<n>`* *`<file>`*
Skip first n fields when comparing

`sort` *`<file>`* `| uniq -c | sort -rn`
Rank lines by frequency

`sort` *`<a>`* *`<b>`* `| uniq -d`
Lines present in both sorted lists
Only exact if each list has no internal duplicates; otherwise use comm.

CUT

`cut -f` *`<list>`* *`<file>`*
Select tab-separated fields

`cut -d` *`<sep>`* `-f` *`<list>`* *`<file>`*
Fields with a custom delimiter
The delimiter must be a single character.

CUT (cont.)

`cut -c` *`<list>`* *`<file>`*
Select by character position

`cut -f 2-` *`<file>`*
From field 2 to the end
Ranges: N, N-M, N-, -M, comma separated.

`cut -f` *`<list>`* `--complement` *`<file>`*
All fields except these

`cut -s -f` *`<list>`* *`<file>`*
Skip lines with no delimiter
Otherwise such lines are printed whole.

`cut --output-delimiter=`*`<str>`* `-f` *`<list>`*
Change the output separator

cut cannot reorder columns and treats every delimiter separately, so runs of spaces give empty fields. Use awk for those.

TR

`tr` *`<set1>`* *`<set2>`*
Translate characters one to one

`tr a-z A-Z`
Lowercase to uppercase

`tr '[:lower:]' '[:upper:]'`
Case change using classes

`tr -d` *`<set>`*
Delete these characters

TR (cont.)

`tr -d '\r'`
Strip carriage returns

`tr -s` *`<set>`*
Squeeze repeats into one

`tr -s ' '`
Collapse runs of spaces

`tr -cd '[:alnum:]'`
Keep only letters and digits

`tr -c` *`<set1>`* *`<set2>`*
Replace everything not in the set

`tr '\n' ' '`
Join lines with spaces

`tr ',' '\n'`
Split on commas into lines

`tr -cs '[:alpha:]' '\n'`
One word per line

tr works on single characters, not words or patterns. For strings or regexes use sed.

Common tr classes

Class	Matches
`[:alpha:]`	letters
`[:digit:]`	digits
`[:alnum:]`	letters and digits
`[:space:]`	all whitespace
`[:blank:]`	space and tab
`[:punct:]`	punctuation
`[:upper:]` `[:lower:]`	case pairs

ALSO HANDY

`paste` *`<a>`* *`<b>`*
Join files side by side with tabs

`paste -sd,` *`<file>`*
Join all lines with commas

`paste -d` *`<sep>`* *`<a>`* *`<b>`*
Custom join character

`wc -l` *`<file>`*
Count lines

`wc -w` *`<file>`*
Count words

`comm -12` *`<a>`* *`<b>`*
Lines common to two sorted files

RECIPES

Top 10 client IPs in a log

```
awk '{print $1}' access.log \
  | sort | uniq -c | sort -rn |
head -10
```

Biggest directories first

```
du -sh * | sort -rh | head
```

Sort a CSV by column 3, numerically, keep header

```
head -1 <f.csv>; tail -n +2
<f.csv> \
  | sort -t, -k3,3 -n
```

Unique words in a text, most common first

```
tr -cs '[:alpha:]' '\n' <
<file> | tr A-Z a-z \
  | sort | uniq -c | sort -rn |
head
```