sort, uniq, cut and tr Slice and count text

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

sort -h *<file>*
Human sizes such as 2K, 1G

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

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

sort -f *<file>*
Ignore case

sort -M *<file>*
Sort by month name

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

SORTING BY KEY

sort -k *<n> <file>*
Sort from field n to end of line

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

sort -t *<sep>* **-k** *<n> <file>*
Set the field separator

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 -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

CUT

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

cut -d *<sep>* **-f** *<list> <file>*
Fields with a custom delimiter

CUT (cont.)

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

cut -f 2- *<file>*
From field 2 to the end

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

cut -s -f *<list> <file>*
Skip lines with no delimiter

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.

ALSO HANDY

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

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

wc -l *<file>*
Count lines