xclip X11 clipboard from shell

START HERE

`<cmd>` **| xclip -sel clip**
Copy output to clipboard

xclip -sel clip `<file>`
Copy a file's text

xclip -o -sel clip
Paste clipboard to stdout

xclip -o
Print highlighted text

xclip -o | xclip -sel clip
Primary to clipboard

xclip -o -sel clip > `<file>`
Save clipboard to file

xclip -sel clip -t image/png -i `<file>`
Copy an image

xclip -o -t TARGETS -sel clip
List formats on offer

stdin / file your data → **xclip -i** → **X selection** held by xclip → **app pastes** → **Application** requests a target

CONCEPTS

Without -sel, xclip uses PRIMARY (highlight, middle-click), not the Ctrl+C clipboard.

xclip stays in the background to serve pastes; it exits when another program takes the selection.

X11 only. On Wayland use wl-copy and wl-paste from wl-clipboard.

If a selection vanishes after the source exits, that is normal X behaviour: owner serves the data.

COPY

`<cmd>` **| xclip**
Copy output to PRIMARY

`<cmd>` **| xclip -sel clip**
Copy output to clipboard

xclip -sel clip `<file>`
Copy file contents to clipboard

xclip -i
Read stdin into selection (default mode)

COPY (cont.)

xclip -r -sel clip
Drop the trailing newline
Handy for pwd or a path, so pasting into a shell does not run it.

xclip -f -sel clip
Copy and pass stdin through to stdout
Use mid-pipeline: cmd | xclip -f -sel clip | next

xclip -sel clip -l 1
Exit after one paste

xclip -l `<n>` **-verbose** `<file>`
Serve n pastes, log each request

xclip -sensitive -sel clip
Clear the selection after one paste
Implemented as -wait 50; raise -wait if pasting then fails.

xclip -wait `<ms>` **-sel clip**
Clear selection <ms> after first paste

PASTE

xclip -o
Print PRIMARY

xclip -o -sel clip
Print clipboard

PASTE (cont.)

xclip -o -sel clip > `<file>`
Save clipboard to a file

xclip -o -sel sec
Print SECONDARY

xclip -o | xclip -sel clip
Copy PRIMARY to clipboard

xclip -o -sel clip | xclip
Copy clipboard to PRIMARY

$(xclip -o -sel clip)
Use clipboard in a command

xclip -o -sel clip | wc -w
Count words in clipboard

SELECTIONS & DISPLAY

-sel primary / -sel p
Highlighted text (default)

-sel clipboard / -sel c
Ctrl+C clipboard

-sel secondary / -sel s
Rarely used third selection

-d `<host:0>` **/ -display** `<host:0>`
Pick the X display
Defaults to $DISPLAY; needed over ssh without -X.

SELECTIONS & DISPLAY (cont.)

-quiet
Stay in the foreground, show messages

-silent
Fork to background (default)

-verbose
Log activity and paste requests

-noutf8
Legacy non-UTF-8 text handling

-version
Show installed version

-h / -help
Short usage summary

TARGETS & IMAGES

xclip -o -t TARGETS -sel clip
List formats currently offered

xclip -sel clip -t `<type>` **-i** `<file>`
Copy as a given MIME type

xclip -sel clip -t image/png -i `<file>`
Copy an image to clipboard

TARGETS & IMAGES (cont.)

xclip -o -sel clip -t image/png > `<file>`
Save a clipboard image

xclip -sel clip -t text/html `<file>`
Offer a file as HTML

xclip -t text/html -alt-text "`<text>`**"**
Plain-text fallback beside HTML

xclip -o -sel clip -t text/uri-list
Read copied file paths

Without -t the target is STRING. Images and HTML need an explicit MIME type, and the receiving app must support it.

FILE TRANSFER

xclip-copyfile `<file>`
Copy a file or tree into the clipboard

xclip-copyfile -p `<file>`
Same, keeping the path

xclip-cutfile `<file>`
Mark a file for moving

FILE TRANSFER (cont.)

xclip-pastefile
Paste copied files to current dir

These helper scripts need an X11 connection on both ends, so they work between machines too.

RECIPES

Copy a public SSH key

```
xclip -sel clip < ~/.ssh/id_ed25519.pub
# paste into the web form with Ctrl+V
```

Copy your working directory

```
pwd | xclip -r -sel clip
```

Screenshot into clipboard

```
import png:- | xclip -sel clip -t image/png
# then Ctrl+V into chat or editor
```

Fix clipboard text and put it back

```
xclip -o -sel clip | tr -d '\r' | xclip -sel clip
# transform: paste, filter, copy
```

Pick a line with fzf and copy it

```
history | fzf | cut -c8- | xclip -r -sel clip
```