xclip X11 clipboard from shell

CONCEPTS

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

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

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.

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)

xclip -r -sel clip
Drop the trailing newline

xclip -f -sel clip
Copy and pass stdin through to stdout

xclip -sel clip -l 1
Exit after one paste

PASTE

xclip -o
Print PRIMARY

xclip -o -sel clip
Print clipboard

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

PASTE (cont.)

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

SELECTIONS & DISPLAY

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

-sel clipboard / -sel c
Ctrl+C clipboard

-d *<host:0>* **/ -display** *<host:0>*
Pick the X display

-verbose
Log activity and paste requests

-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

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

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

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