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.

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)

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

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

xclip -sensitive -sel clip
Clear the selection after one paste

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

PASTE

xclip -o
Print PRIMARY

xclip -o -sel clip
Print clipboard

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

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

-quiet
Stay in the foreground, show messages

-silent
Fork to background (default)

-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

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

xclip-pastefile
Paste copied files to current dir

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
```