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r/linuxquestions



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greenleafvolatile

copying all file

Hey,

I wanted to copy all all files from one directory to another, like this:

```
cp -i /source/. /destination
```

I knew the source had no subdirectories and I wanted a prompt if files needed to be overwritten.

Now, this didnt work got the error " -r not specified, omitting directory /source/"

It worked with -r. I dont understand why though, there wre

Cheers,



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8



6



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```
cp -i /source/* /destination
```

As for why you're seeing the behavior you're seeing... Hopefully someone can help clear this up for me, because I got a bit confused while looking into it.

The simple explanation would be that `.` represents a directory, and `cp` will not copy any directories without the `-r` option. That being said, `cp` doesn't really seem to handle it as a directory. This seems to be because the trailing `.` character isn't expanded by the shell, and is instead interpreted by `cp` internally.

The way `cp` handles it is... weird. It seems like kind of a special case. Practically it can be used to specify hidden files in a recursive copy.

`cp -r /source/. /destination` will copy all files in the source directory **including** hidden files. `cp -r /source/* /destination` will copy all files in the source directory **excluding** hidden files. In both cases the directory itself isn't copied, just the contents.

In the example above the `.` does not seem to represent a directory. It behaves more like a special wildcard character that includes hidden files. That would indicate that `cp` doesn't consider it a directory, and so `-r` should not be required... I don't really understand WHY it behaves that way and I can't seem to find any good explanation for it anywhere.

So good question. I'm stumped. Hopefully someone else can elaborate.

↑ 2 ↓ ...

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CubE2016 • 7y ago

It is early and with one eye open look into "rsync".

↑ 6 ↓ ...



skidnik • 7y ago

there's another way around, if you want to omit `-r`:

```
shopt -s dotglobs
```

this will set the `*` to also match all dotfiles and dotdirs except `'.'` and `'..'` until you log out

```
cp dir/* /path/to/dest/
```

↑ 1 ↓ ...



technics303 • 7y ago

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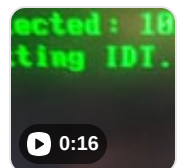
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