

Problem

How do I write a command help in Shell script (bash)?

Solution

Mainly the strategy is:

1. Create a printUsage function.
2. Use getopt to verify the parameters that need arguments.
3. With getopt switch the list of parameter.

Here is a brief example:

```
#####-1#####
function printUsage {
    echo "One line description of the command"
    echo ""
    echo "Usage: `basename $0` [ANY_MANDATORY_ARGUMENTS] [OPTIONS]      "
    echo "Options: "
    echo "  -o | -option OPT_ARGUMENT      description of the option and its argument"
    echo "  -a | -another                 description of the option"
    echo "  -h | -help                   prints this help and exits"
}

#####-2#####
export POSIXLY_CORRECT=1

#this are the options, when the options need an argument, the : is placed next to the option
$LONGOPTS=option:,another,help
$SHORTOPTS=o:ah

getopt -n `basename $0` -Q -u -a -l $LONGOPTS $SHORTOPTS "$@" || {
    printUsage
    exit 1;
}

#####-3#####
set -- `getopt -u -a -l $LONGOPTS $SHORTOPTS "$@"` 

while :
do
    case "$1" in
        --option)      CL_OPTION=$2 ; shift ;;
        -o)           CL_OPTION=$2 ; shift ;;
        --another)    CL_ANOTHER=true ;;
        -a)           CL_ANOTHER=true ;;
        --help)        CL_HELP=true ;;
        -h)           CL_HELP=true ;;
        --) break ;;
        esac
    shift
done
shift

#
# (Note: Rest of command line now in $@ )
#

# restore
export POSIXLY_CORRECT=
unset POSIXLY_CORRECT

if [ "$CL_HELP" ] ; then
    printUsage
    exit 1
fi

#####
```

Things to consider when using 'getopt':

- * If the script needs an argument of the form: "a string with spaces", getopt interpret the argument as "a", discarding the rest of the string. For that kind of cases, is useful to use getopts, although the use is different from the example above. Also, getopts doesn't accept option like words, just letters.

-- CarlitaParedes - 27 Jun 2006

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