

Permissions: who can control what

Unix/IP Preparation Course

**May 29, 2011
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania**



Goal

Understand the following:

- The Unix security model
 - How a program is allowed to run
 - Where user and group information is stored
 - Details of file permissions
- 

Users and Groups

Unix understands Users and Groups

- A user can belong to several groups
 - A file can belong to only one user and one group at a time
 - A particular user, the superuser "*root*" has extra privileges (uid = "0" in /etc/passwd)
 - Only root can change the ownership of a file
- 

Users and Groups cont.

User information in `/etc/passwd`

Password info is in `/etc/master.passwd`

Group information is in `/etc/group`

`/etc/passwd` and `/etc/group` divide data fields using “:”

`/etc/passwd:`

```
ausert*:1000:1000:A. User:/home/user:/usr/local/bin/bash
```

`/etc/group:`

```
users*:99:ausert
```



A program runs...

A program may be run by a user, when the system starts or by another process.

Before the program can execute the kernel inspects several things:

- Is the file containing the program accessible to the user or group of the process that wants to run it?
 - Does the file containing the program permit execution by that user or group (or anybody)?
 - In most cases, while executing, a program inherits the privileges of the user/process who started it.
- 

A program in detail

When we type:

```
ls -l /usr/bin/top
```

We'll see:

```
-r-xr-xr-x 1 root wheel 46424 Nov 21 28 2009 /usr/bin/top
```

What does all this mean?



Access rights

- Files are owned by a *user* and a *group* (ownership)
 - Files have permissions for the user, the group, and *other*
 - “*other*” permission is often referred to as “world”
 - The permissions are *Read*, *Write* and *Execute* (R, W, X)
 - The user who owns a file is always allowed to change its permissions
- 

Some special cases

When looking at the output from “`ls -l`” in the first column you might see:

d = directory
- = regular file
l = symbolic link
s = Unix domain socket
p = named pipe
c = character device file
b = block device file



Some special cases cont

In the Owner, Group and other columns you might see:

s = setuid	[when in Owner column]
s = setgid	[when in Group column]
t = sticky bit	[when at end]

Some References

<http://www.tuxfiles.org/linuxhelp/filepermissions.html>

<http://www.cs.uregina.ca/Links/class-info/330/Linux/linux.html>

http://www.onlamp.com/pub/a/bsd/2000/09/06/FreeBSD_Basics.html



File permissions

There are two ways to set permissions when using the `chmod` command:

Symbolic mode:

testfile has permissions of `-r--r--r--`

		<u>U</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>O</u> *
\$ <code>chmod g+x testfile</code>	<code>==></code>	<code>-r--r-xr--</code>		
\$ <code>chmod u+wx testfile</code>	<code>==></code>	<code>-rwxr-xr--</code>		
\$ <code>chmod ug-x testfile</code>	<code>==></code>	<code>-rw--r--r--</code>		

U=user, G=group, O=other (world)



File permissions cont.

Absolute mode:

We use octal (base eight) values represented like this:

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Permission</u>	<u>Value</u>
R	read	4
W	write	2
X	execute	1
-	none	0

For each column, User, Group or Other you can set values from 0 to 7.

Here is what each means:

0= ---	1= --x	2= -w-	3= -wx
4= r--	5= r-x	6= rw-	7= rwx



File permissions cont.

Numeric mode cont:

Example index.html file with typical permission values:

```
$ chmod 755 index.html
```

```
$ ls -l index.html
```

```
-rwxr-xr-x  1 root  wheel  0 May 24 06:20 index.html
```

```
$ chmod 644 index.html
```

```
$ ls -l index.html
```

```
-rw-r--r--  1 root  wheel  0 May 24 06:20 index.html
```



Inherited permissions

Two critical points:

1. The permissions of a directory affect whether someone can see its contents or add or remove files in it.
2. The permissions on a file determine what a user can do to the data in the file.

Example:

If you don't have write permission for a directory, then you can't delete a file in the directory. If you have write access to the file you can update the data in the file.



Conclusion

To reinforce these concepts let's do some exercises.

In addition, a very nice reference on using the `chmod` command is:

An Introduction to Unix Permissions -- Part Two

By Dru Lavigne

http://www.onlamp.com/pub/a/bsd/2000/09/13/FreeBSD_Basics.html

