Introduction to Bioinformatics – AS 250.265
Handy UNIX Command List

The following table lists some of the UNIX commands you will frequently use in this class. Some help for these commands may be found using Google. In addition, the following concepts will be useful to you as you learn how to work with the Macintosh Terminal.

- In the terminal, remember that you are operating in a particular directory (folder), but you have access to the entire file system. The only difference between the current working directory and other directories is that the files in your current working directory can be accessed without specifying a complete path.

- A path name is constructed from directory names joined by slashes ("/"). For example, if your user name is jsmith, your home directory (the working directory when you open Terminal) has the path name `/Users/jsmith/`.

- A file can be specified by simply the file name (if it is in your working directory), or the complete path name, plus the name of the file. The file "`help.txt`" in jsmith's home directory could be referred to as `/Users/jsmith/help.txt` or simply `help.txt` if your current working directory was /Users/jsmith.

- Your desktop, if your user name is jsmith, has the path `/Users/jsmith/Desktop/`.

- You can quickly access the directory one tier up in the hierarchy by using the `..` reference path from the current working directory. For example, if your working directory is `/Users/jsmith/Desktop`, then `../help.txt` and `/Users/jsmith/help.txt` both refer to the same file.

Command	Description	Finder Equivalent
pwd	Print the current working directory	Examine the top of the folder window
cd <dir>	Change the current working directory	Double-click another folder
ls or ls <dir>	View the files in a directory; default uses current working directory (use ls –F for file/directory info)	Contents of finder window
cp <file> <path>	Copy a file to a new path/location	Drag and drop a file while holding the option key
mkdir <path>	Create a new directory in the current working directory	Select "New Folder" under the File menu
mv <file> <path>	Move or rename a file to a new path/location	Drag and drop a file
rm <file>	Remove (delete) a file. Use rm –r to remove entire directories. Be careful!	Drag a file to the trash and empty it immediately

Command	Description	Finder Equivalent
`less <file>`	Quickly view file; the spacebar advances, and "q" quits.	Open a file in Word
`python`	Run python interactively (CTRL-D quits)	N/A
`python <file>`	Run a file containing python code	N/A
`xemacs <file>`	Open a text file to edit in Xemacs	N/A