

## shred (delete a file securely)

When you delete a file using `→rm`, the file's content is *unlinked* from its file name. This means that the file is no longer accessible and can be overwritten. However, the file's content is still there, which means that a malicious individual might be able to retrieve it. If you want to obliterate a file from your hard drive, use the following command:

```
shred -u -n 5 file
```

The switch `-n 5` means that `shred` will overwrite file a total of five times, so it will be nearly impossible to retrieve it. If you leave out this option, the number of overwrites defaults to 3. The more often a file is overwritten, the more difficult it will be to retrieve its contents. The `-u` option means that the file will be deleted (unlinked) after it has been overwritten.

Please bear in mind that no degree of security is absolute. Even a file that has been overwritten several times and unlinked may be recoverable. Still, be careful with `shred`. If you accidentally delete a file with `rm`, you might be able to get it back. If you overwrite it ten times using `shred`, you may need the help of a data forensic laboratory to recover it, if it's possible at all.