

## less (view file by pages)

This command is a so-called pager. It displays a file one page at a time. Sure, this can also be done with a text editor, but if you don't want to change the file anyway, firing up *less* tends to be quicker and safer because you cannot make any accidental changes. Moreover, on most desktop systems the →[man](#) command uses *less* to display manual pages, so you should become familiar with the pager in any case. I use *less* like this:

```
less -M file.txt
```

The *-M* option makes *less* display a verbose prompt giving detailed information about the page in view, for example:

```
file.txt lines 20-60/183 32%
```

This prompt tells me that *file.txt* has 183 lines and I'm viewing lines 20 to 60, which means that I have scrolled 32% into the file. Because I always want a verbose prompt, I keep the following →[alias](#) definition in my `~/.bashrc` configuration file:

```
alias less='less -M'
```

Although you can use the mouse wheel to scroll around in *less*, using the keyboard is much quicker. Ctrl-f scrolls one page forward and Ctrl-b takes you one page back. The keys j and k scroll forward and backward one line respectively. Press lower-case g to jump to the beginning of the file and upper-case G to go to the end. If you're a touch typist, you can navigate files with *less* at lightning speed without ever lifting your hands off the keyboard's home row. The h key ("help") will display the full list of key bindings. Press q to quit *less*.