

ps (list running processes)

This command provides a list of processes running on the system. It's usually called like this:

```
ps aux
```

The letters *a*, *u* and *x* are options for the *ps* command. They lack the familiar dash (-) because *ps* originates from the Unix-like operating system BSD, where option letters are not preceded by a dash. You'll rarely see *ps* used with options other than *aux* – they have become a kind of standard. Their meaning is as follows:

- **a:** List all processes that run on a terminal.
- **u:** Print an additional output column for the user controlling a process.
- **x:** List all processes without a controlling terminal.

Used together, the options *a* and *x* make *ps* list all processes running on the system.

You'll often use *ps* to find out the ID of a running process, for instance in order to terminate it using →[*kill*](#). Combine *ps* with *grep* to output only the processes that match a particular search string, like so:

```
ps aux | grep PROCNAME
```

This will only show *ps* output lines that contain the keyword *PROCNAME*. You'll see this combination of *ps* and *grep* very often in all sorts of documentation. However, there's a faster way to get at the ID of a process:

```
pgrep -l PROCNAME
```

This has the same effect as the command line above, but output is restricted to process names and IDs.