Short UNIX background

A modern Linux distribution will offer a graphical user interface, very much like Windows or Apple operating systems. In the system that is installed here, you have access to a File browser, Office applications, an editor and many other programs. Linux really comes to life, if you forget all about the mouse and type commands in a command line based window. Fortunately one does not have to memorize too many commands.

Syntax of these instructions:

<text>   A text in pointy brackets has to be replaced by a suitable command name or
             file name. Do not type the pointed brackets.
[text]   Optional text. Do not type the brackets.
"text"   Text to be typed as is. Omit the "

Important Unix commands

- man <command>
  Display information (=manual) for command <command>
- info <command>
  Display information for command <command>, modern version
- ls
  List the content of a directory
- cd [<PATH>/]<dirname>
  Change into another directory
- cp <from> <to>
  copy a file from to
- mkdir [<PATH>/]<dirname>
  create a new directory
- rmdir [<PATH>/]<dirname>
  removes a directory
- rm <name>
  removes a file called <name>.Warning: Unix usually does NOT ask "do you want to do this?, are you sure?, do you really want to do this?" ! What's gone is gone!

Most of the commands offer many more options. Just try it out, in many cases a parameter "- help" or „- - help" will give a short summary of the available options.

Examples
ls -a   List all files, that includes hidden files
ls -l   List a long listing that includes many details
ls -R   List recursively into sub directories as well

Unix offers many possibilities to work in a flexible manner with file names:

*   character string of any length
?   exactly one character
[a-z,A-Z]   a character from interval a-z or A-Z. You may provide a single interval as well,
             and also a range of numbers.

Examples

ls *.mac   List all files that end in ".mac"
ls data.0[0-9]1   List all files called data.001, data.011, to data.091
                  files called data.002 etc. are omitted

If you start a program that will open its own window, it is often convenient to add a space and then the "&" sign after the command name as in: "emacs &". This allows you to continue to use the command line window from which you started the program, which would otherwise be blocked by the program.