

NAME

clear - clear the terminal screen

SYNOPSIS

clear [-*Ttype*] [-*V*] [-*x*]

DESCRIPTION

clear clears your screen if this is possible, including its scrollback buffer (if the extended "E3" capability is defined). **clear** looks in the environment for the terminal type given by the environment variable **TERM**, and then in the **terminfo** database to determine how to clear the screen.

clear writes to the standard output. You can redirect the standard output to a file (which prevents **clear** from actually clearing the screen), and later **cat** the file to the screen, clearing it at that point.

OPTIONS

-*T type*

indicates the *type* of terminal. Normally this option is unnecessary, because the default is taken from the environment variable **TERM**. If **-T** is specified, then the shell variables **LINES** and **COLUMNS** will also be ignored.

-*V* reports the version of ncurses which was used in this program, and exits. The options are as follows:

-*x* do not attempt to clear the terminal's scrollback buffer using the extended "E3" capability.

HISTORY

A **clear** command appeared in 2.79BSD dated February 24, 1979. Later that was provided in Unix 8th edition (1985).

AT&T adapted a different BSD program (**tset**) to make a new command (**tput**), and used this to replace the **clear** command with a shell script which calls **tput clear**, e.g.,

```
/usr/bin/tput ${1:+-T$1} clear 2> /dev/null
exit
```

In 1989, when Keith Bostic revised the BSD **tput** command to make it similar to the AT&T **tput**, he added a shell script for the **clear** command:

```
exec tput clear
```

The remainder of the script in each case is a copyright notice.

The ncurses **clear** command began in 1995 by adapting the original BSD **clear** command (with `terminfo`, of course).

The **E3** extension came later:

- ⊕ In June 1999, `xterm` provided an extension to the standard control sequence for clearing the screen. Rather than clearing just the visible part of the screen using

```
printf '\033[2J'
```

one could clear the *scrollback* using

```
printf '\033[3J'
```

This is documented in *XTerm Control Sequences* as a feature originating with `xterm`.

- ⊕ A few other terminal developers adopted the feature, e.g., PuTTY in 2006.
- ⊕ In April 2011, a Red Hat developer submitted a patch to the Linux kernel, modifying its console driver to do the same thing. The Linux change, part of the 3.0 release, did not mention `xterm`, although it was cited in the Red Hat bug report (#683733) which led to the change.
- ⊕ Again, a few other terminal developers adopted the feature. But the next relevant step was a change to the **clear** program in 2013 to incorporate this extension.
- ⊕ In 2013, the **E3** extension was overlooked in **tput** with the "clear" parameter. That was addressed in 2016 by reorganizing **tput** to share its logic with **clear** and **tset**.

PORTABILITY

Neither IEEE Std 1003.1/The Open Group Base Specifications Issue 7 (POSIX.1-2008) nor X/Open Curses Issue 7 documents `tset` or `reset`.

The latter documents **tput**, which could be used to replace this utility either via a shell script or by an alias (such as a symbolic link) to run **tput** as **clear**.

SEE ALSO

tput(1), **terminfo**(5)

This describes **ncurses** version 6.2 (patch 20210220).