

**NAME**

**fortune** - print a random, hopefully interesting, adage

**SYNOPSIS**

**fortune** [-aDefilosw] [-m *pattern*] [[N%] *file/directory/all*]

**DESCRIPTION**

When **fortune** is run with no arguments it prints out a random epigram. Epigrams are divided into several categories, where each category is subdivided into those which are potentially offensive and those which are not. The options are as follows:

- a Choose from all lists of maxims, both offensive and not. (See the -o option for more information on offensive fortunes.)
- D Enable additional debugging output. Specify this option multiple times for more verbose output. Only available if compiled with -DDEBUG.
- e Consider all fortune files to be of equal size (see discussion below on multiple files).
- f Print out the list of files which would be searched, but do not print a fortune.
- l Long dictums only.
- m *pattern*  
Print out all fortunes which match the regular expression *pattern*. See regex(3) for a description of patterns.
- o Choose only from potentially offensive aphorisms. **Please, please, please request a potentially offensive fortune if and only if you believe, deep down in your heart, that you are willing to be offended. (And that if you are not willing, you will just quit using -o rather than give us grief about it, okay?)**  
  
... let us keep in mind the basic governing philosophy  
of The Brotherhood, as handsomely summarized in these words:  
we believe in healthy, hearty laughter -- at the expense of  
the whole human race, if needs be.  
Needs be.  

--H. Allen Smith, "Rude Jokes"
- s Short apothegms only.

- i** Ignore case for **-m** patterns.
- w** Wait before termination for an amount of time calculated from the number of characters in the message. This is useful if it is executed as part of the logout procedure to guarantee that the message can be read before the screen is cleared.

The user may specify alternate sayings. You can specify a specific file, a directory which contains one or more files, or the special word **all** which says to use all the standard databases. Any of these may be preceded by a percentage, which is a number *N* between 0 and 100 inclusive, followed by a '%'. If it is, there will be an *N* percent probability that an adage will be picked from that file or directory. If the percentages do not sum to 100, and there are specifications without percentages, the remaining percent will apply to those files and/or directories, in which case the probability of selecting from one of them will be based on their relative sizes.

As an example, given two databases *funny* and *not-funny*, with *funny* twice as big, saying

```
fortune funny not-funny
```

will get you fortunes out of *funny* two-thirds of the time. The command

```
fortune 90% funny 10% not-funny
```

will pick out 90% of its fortunes from *funny* (the "10% not-funny" is unnecessary, since 10% is all that is left). The **-e** option says to consider all files equal; thus

```
fortune -e funny not-funny
```

is equivalent to

```
fortune 50% funny 50% not-funny
```

## ENVIRONMENT

**FORTUNE\_PATH** The search path for the data files. It is a colon-separated list of directories in which **fortune** looks for data files. If not set it will default to */usr/share/games/fortune:/usr/local/share/games/fortune*. If none of the directories specified exist, it will print a warning and exit.

**FORTUNE\_SAVESTATE**

If set, fortune will save some state about what fortune it was up to on disk.

**FILES**

*/usr/share/games/fortune/\** the fortunes databases (those files ending "*-o*" contain the **offensive** fortunes)

**EXIT STATUS**

The **fortune** utility exits 0 on success, and >0 if an error occurs. In particular, if **-l**, **-m**, or **-s** is specified, failure to find a matching citation in the selected files counts as an error.

**SEE ALSO**

arc4random\_uniform(3), regcomp(3), regex(3), strfile(8)

**HISTORY**

The **fortune** utility first appeared Version 7 AT&T UNIX.