

How to Change the Color of Comments in the vi Application?

written by sysadmin | 29 March 2025

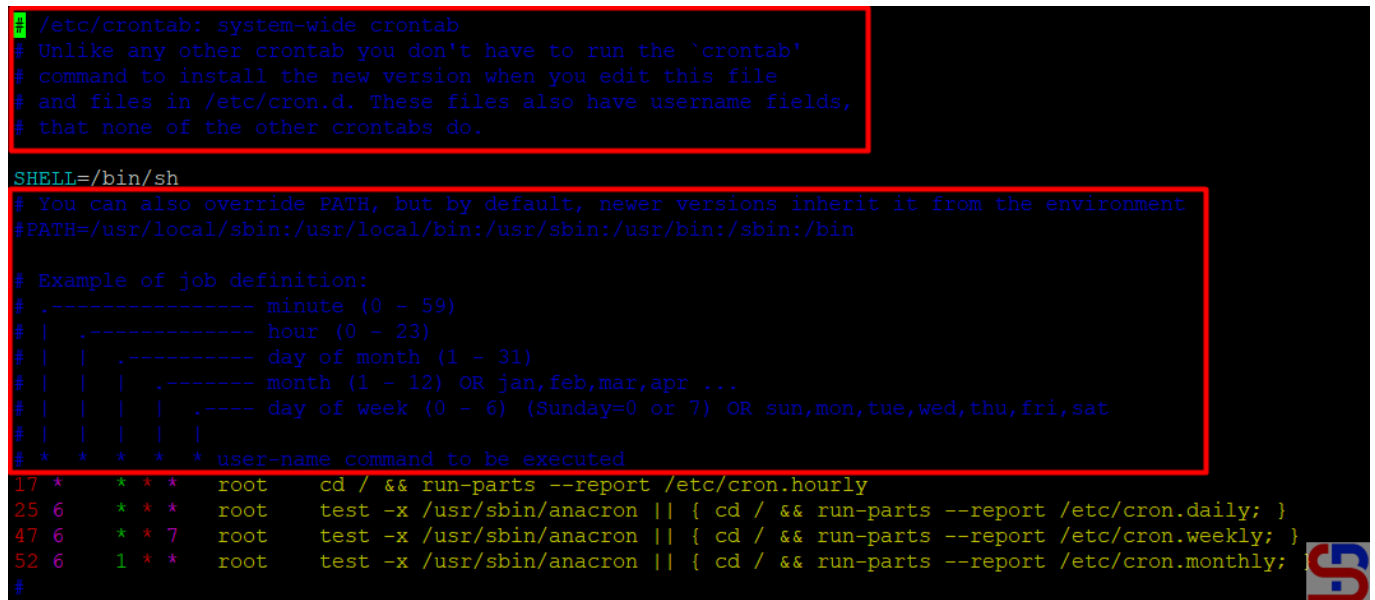
By default, if you open the vi application on Linux (especially using PuTTY), the color for comments is blue. However, sometimes this makes it very difficult for me to read the comments, especially if the background color of the terminal is black.

Problem

How to change the color of comments in the vi application?

Solution

Below is an image of a `/etc/crontab` file opened using Putty:



```
/etc/crontab: system-wide crontab
# Unlike any other crontab you don't have to run the `crontab'
# command to install the new version when you edit this file
# and files in /etc/cron.d. These files also have username fields,
# that none of the other crontabs do.

SHELL=/bin/sh
# You can also override PATH, but by default, newer versions inherit it from the environment
#PATH=/usr/local/sbin:/usr/local/bin:/usr/sbin:/usr/bin:/sbin:/bin

# Example of job definition:
# .----- minute (0 - 59)
# | .----- hour (0 - 23)
# | | .----- day of month (1 - 31)
# | | | .----- month (1 - 12) OR jan,feb,mar,apr ...
# | | | | .---- day of week (0 - 6) (Sunday=0 or 7) OR sun,mon,tue,wed,thu,fri,sat
# | | | | |
# * * * * * user-name command to be executed
17 * * * * root    cd / && run-parts --report /etc/cron.hourly
25 6 * * * root    test -x /usr/sbin/anacron || { cd / && run-parts --report /etc/cron.daily; }
47 6 * * 7 root    test -x /usr/sbin/anacron || { cd / && run-parts --report /etc/cron.weekly; }
52 6 1 * * root    test -x /usr/sbin/anacron || { cd / && run-parts --report /etc/cron.monthly; }
```

Comment color in the vi application

For me, it's very difficult to read the comments in the Linux file if they're blue like in the image above. So, if you want to change the color of comments in the vi application, for example, if you want to change the color of

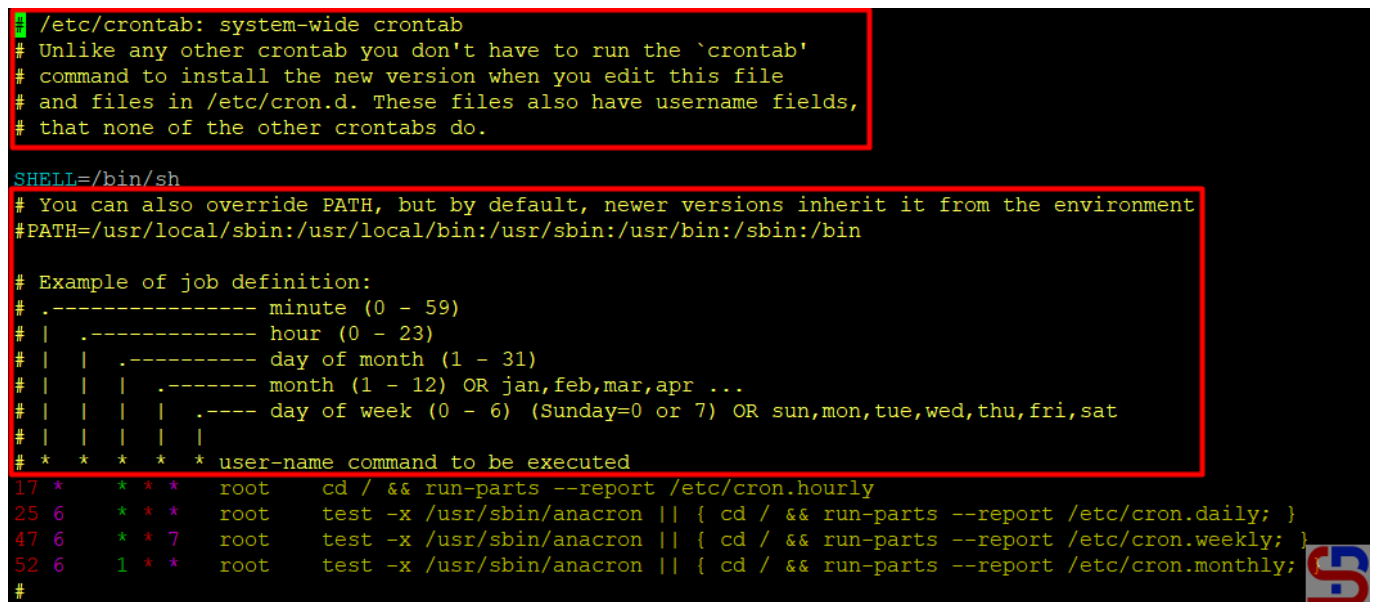
comments to yellow, then open the .vimrc file by:

```
vi ~/.vimrc
```

Type the script below into the file:

```
highlight Comment ctermfg=yellow
```

After that, open the file using the vi application, and the comments on the file should change to yellow as in the image below:

A screenshot of a terminal window displaying the contents of the /etc/crontab file. The file is a system-wide crontab. Comments are highlighted in yellow, and the terminal background is black. The content includes instructions on how to use the crontab file, environment variables like SHELL and PATH, and several cron job definitions for root user, including hourly, daily, weekly, and monthly reports using run-parts.

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#
```

Comment color after configuration in the vi application

You can see that the comment color is changed to yellow after you configure **the .vimrc** file.

Info

Please note that the steps above only change per user. If you want all users to change the comment color to yellow then place the above command in the **/etc/vim/vimrc.local** file.

Note

Currently, the vi application can support up to 256 colors that can be used in the vi application. So if you want to

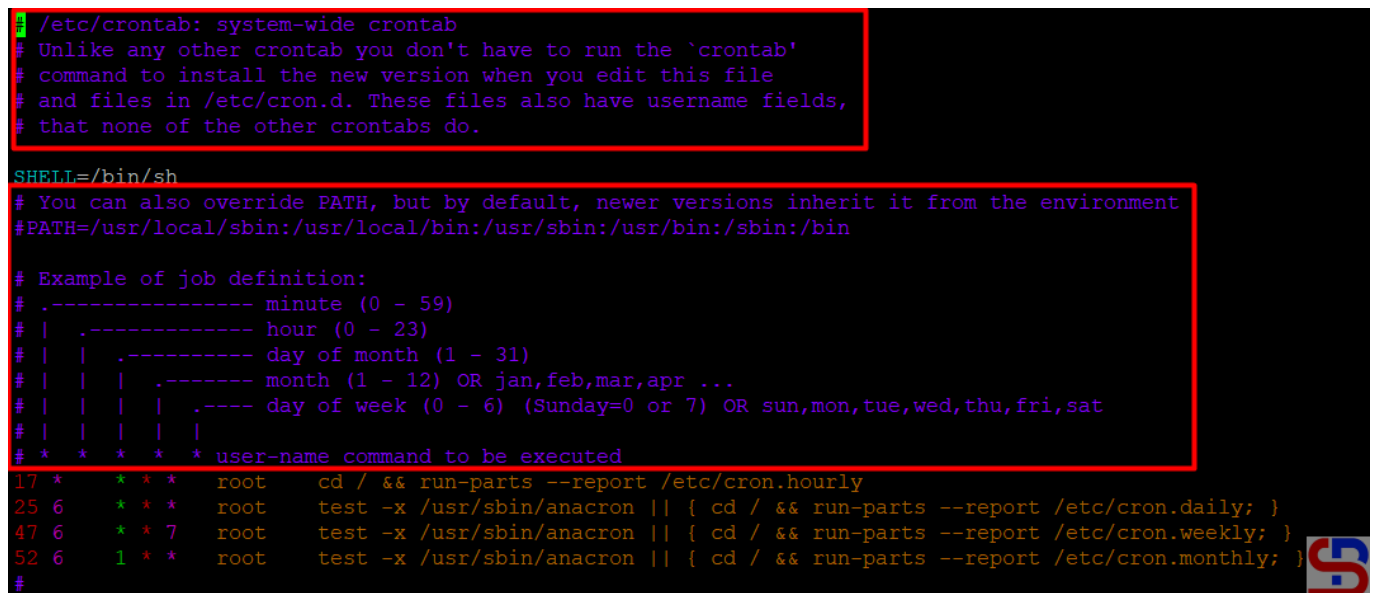
use more colors supported by the vi application, in the `.vimrc` file type the script below:

```
set t_Co=256
```

Then you can choose the colors on this page, for example, you want to use purple for comments, then enter the script below in the `.vimrc` file:

```
set t_Co=256
highlight Comment ctermfg=93
```

Then the comments in the vi/vim application should be purple as in the image below:

A screenshot of a terminal window with a black background. The text is displayed in various colors: green for the prompt, purple for comments, and yellow for other text. The file being edited is /etc/crontab. The comments are highlighted in purple, demonstrating the effect of the vimrc configuration. The terminal shows the following content:

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#
```

Change the color of comments in the vi

References

spinspire.com
linode.com