How to Convert a Row to a Column in Linux File?

written by sysadmin | 20 August 2025

The previous article explained how to convert a column into a row in a Linux file. This article will explain how to convert a row into a column.

Problem

How to convert a row to a column in a Linux file?

Solution

Suppose you have a **test.txt** file as below:

```
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$ cat test.txt
Ubuntu Debian CentOS Red Gentoo Fedora OpenSUSE Scientific CloudLinux Elementary
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$
```

The test.txt file

Use the command below to convert the file into a column:

```
tr -s ' '  '\n' < test.txt
```

Then the file will become like the image below:

```
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$ cat test.txt
Ubuntu Debian CentOS Red Gentoo Fedora OpenSUSE Scientific CloudLinux Elementary
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$ tr -s ' '  '\n' < test.txt
Ubuntu
Debian
CentOS
Red
Gentoo
Fedora
OpenSUSE
Scientific
CloudLinux
Elementary
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$
```

Using the tr command

Or you can use the command below:

```
fmt -1 test.txt
```

so that the file will be as shown in the image below:

```
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$ cat test.txt
Ubuntu Debian CentOS Red Gentoo Fedora OpenSUSE Scientific CloudLinux Elementary
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$ fmt -1 test.txt
Ubuntu
Debian
CentOS
Red
Gentoo
Fedora
OpenSUSE
Scientific
CloudLinux
Elementary
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$
```

Using the fmt command

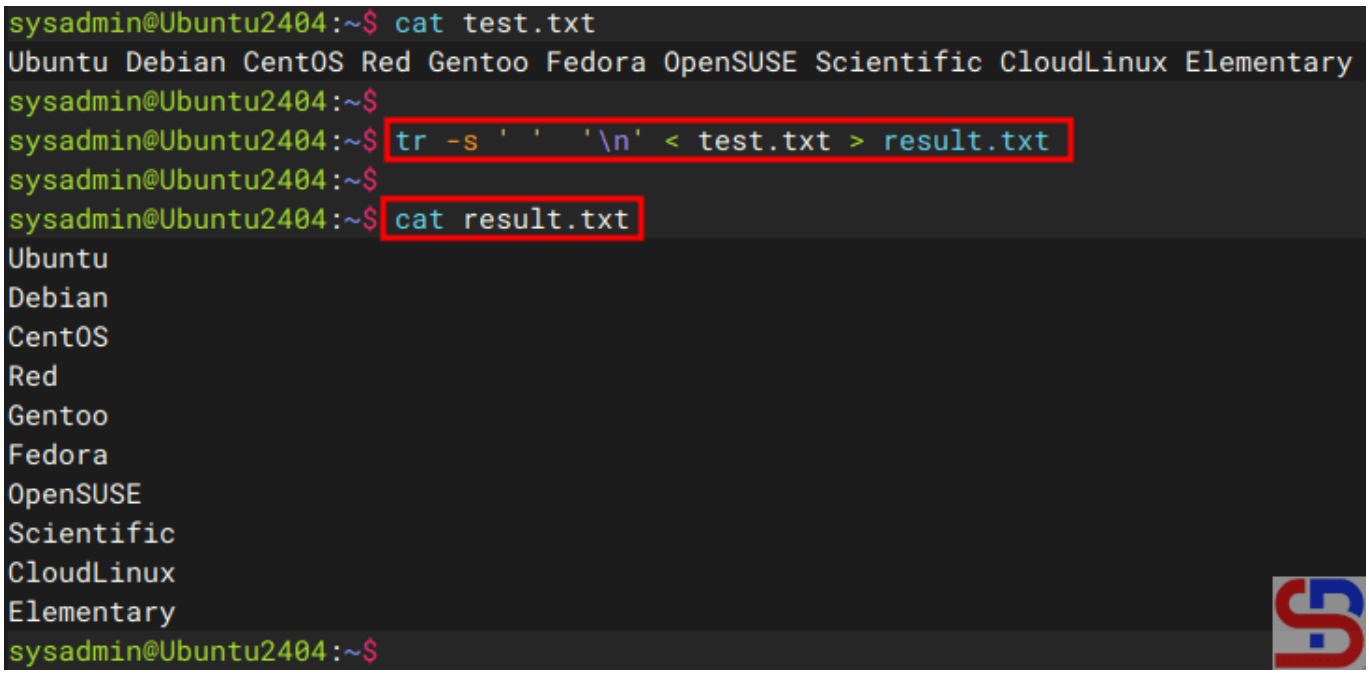
Note

If you want to enter the results in a file, for example, the result.txt file, then you can use the standard output

redirection or stdout on Linux. For example, you use the tr command to change the file, so you can use the command below:

```
tr -s ' '  '\n' < test.txt > result.txt
```

Then the results of these changes are in the result.txt file as shown below:



Using the redirection to save the result

Likewise, by using another command above, you can simply add stdout at the end of the command.

References

unix.stackexchange.com
odin.mdacc.tmc.edu