

How to Convert the Space(s) to a Comma in a Linux File?

written by sysadmin | 25 August 2025

I want to convert the space(s) in a Linux file to a comma.

Problem

How to convert the space(s) to a comma in a Linux file?

Solution

For example, you have a **test.txt** file as shown in the image below:

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

A terminal window showing the command 'cat test.txt' and its output, which is a single line of Linux distributions: 'Ubuntu Debian CentOS Red Gentoo Fedora OpenSUSE Scientific CloudLinux Elementary'. The prompt is 'sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~\$'.

The test.txt file

Use the command below if you want to convert the space to a comma:

```
tr -s '[:blank:]' ',' < test.txt
```

So that your file will convert to the image below:

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

A terminal window showing the command 'tr -s '[:blank:]' ',' < test.txt' and its output, which is the same line of Linux distributions as before, but with spaces replaced by commas: 'Ubuntu,Debian,CentOS,Red,Gentoo,Fedora,OpenSUSE,Scientific,CloudLinux,Elementary,'. The prompt is 'sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~\$'.

Convert a space to a comma

Not only that, the command can also be used if you have a file that has irregular spaces 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:~$ tr -s '[:blank:]' ',' < test.txt
Ubuntu,Debian,CentOS,Red,Gentoo,Fedora,OpenSUSE,Scientific,CloudLinux,Elementary,
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$

```

Convert an irregular space to a comma

Even the above command can also convert the free space created using the **Tab** key, 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:~$ tr -s '[:blank:]' ',' < test.txt
Ubuntu,Debian,CentOS,Red,Gentoo,Fedora,OpenSUSE,Scientific,CloudLinux,Elementary,
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$

```

Convert a Tab space to a comma

You can also use the below command in addition to the above command to make the space(s) in a Linux file a comma:

```
sed 's/\s\+/,/g' < test.txt
```

```

sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$ cat test.txt
Ubuntu  Debian  CentOS  Red      Gentoo  Fedora  OpenSUSE  Scientific  CloudLinux  Elementary
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$ sed 's/\s\+/,/g' < test.txt
Ubuntu,Debian,CentOS,Red,Gentoo,Fedora,OpenSUSE,Scientific,CloudLinux,Elementary,
sysadmin@Ubuntu2404:~$

```

Convert the space(s) using the sed command

Note

If you want the free space to convert to something other than a comma, for example, to a colon (:), Then convert the comma in both commands above to become a colon as in the command below:

```
tr -s '[:blank:]' ':' < test.txt
```

```

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

```

Convert the space(s) to a colon

References

unix.stackexchange.com
stackoverflow.com