Linux Delete Folder Recursively Command

Author: Vivek Gite • Last updated: January 31, 2021 • 8 comments

How do I delete folder recursively under Linux operating systems using a bash command line options?

You need to use the `rm` command to remove files or directories (also known as folders) recursively. The `rmdir` command removes only empty directories. So you need to use rm command to delete folder recursively under Linux.

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rm command syntax to delete directories recursively

The syntax is as follows:

Tutorial details	
Difficulty level	Easy
Root privileges	No
Requirements	None
Est. reading time	2m

```
rm -r dirName
## OR ##
rm -r folderName
## OR ##
rm -rf folderName
```

Did you know?
Everything is a file in Linux and Unix-like systems. In other words, your pictures, documents, directories/folders, SSD/hard-drives, NIC, USB devices, keyboards, printers, and some network communications all are files.

Examples that examples how to delete folder recursively

In this example, recursively delete `data` folder in the current home directory:

```
rm -r /home/vivek/data/
```

The specified /home/vivek/data/ will first be emptied of any subdirectories including their subdirectories and files and then data directory removed. The user is prompted for removal of any write-protected files in the directories unless the `-f` (force) option is given on command line:

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```
rm -rf dirname-here
```

OR

```
rm -r -f /path/to/folder/
```

To remove a folder whose name starts with a `-`, for example '`--dsaatia`', use one of these commands:

```
rm -rf -- --dsaatia
```

OR

```
rm -rf ./--dsaatia
```

We can add the `-v` option to see verbose outputs. In other words, the rm command will explain what is being done to our files and folders on Linux. For instance:

```
rm -rfv /path/to/dir1
rm -r -f -v /home/vivek/oldpartpics
```

Removing folders with names containing strange characters

Your folders and files may have while spaces, semicolons, backslashes and other chracters in Linux. For example:

```
ls -l
```

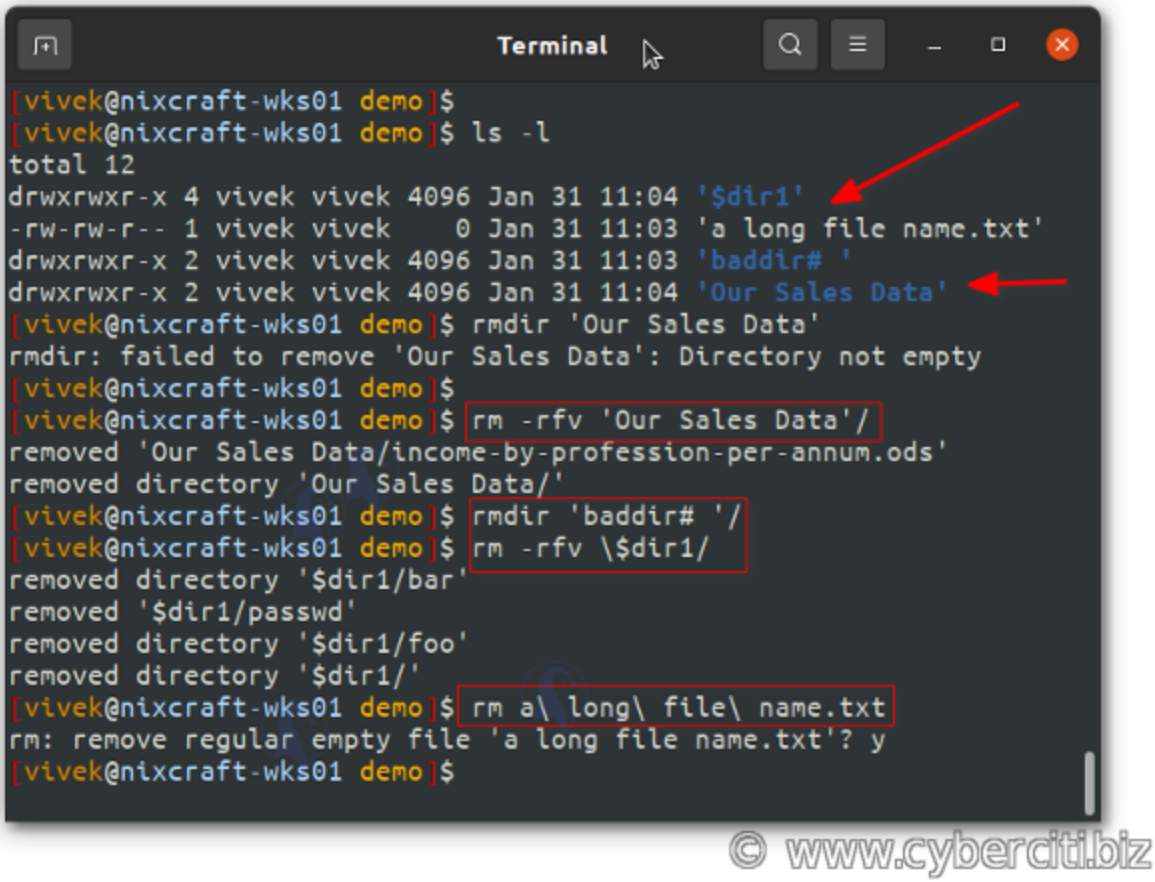
Let us say we have a folder named "`Our Sales Data`" and "`baddir#`" or "`dir2;#`". So how do we delete those directories with special names containing

strange characters? The answer is simple. We try to enclose our troublesome filename or folder name in quotes. For example:

```
rm 'Our Sales Data'
rm -rfv '/path/to/Dir 1 ;'
rm -r -f -v "baddir#"
rm a\ long \dir1 \name
```

Sometimes, we need insert a backslash (`\`) before the meta-character in your filename or folder name:

```
rm \$dir1
```



Deleting folder recursively command summary

rm command options for removing dirs/folders recursively

Command and options	Description
`-f`	Forceful option. Ignore nonexistent files and argume
`-r`	remove directories and their contents recursively
`-v`	Verbose output
`rm -- '-dir1'`	Remove a dir/file whoes name start with a '`-`'
`rm ./-dir1`	Same as above
`rm -rfv 'dir name here'`	Enclose your troublesome filename/folder in quotes
`rm -rfv \$dirname1`	Same as above

See Linux rm(1) command man page or rm command example page for more information:

```
man rm
rm --help
```

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What is the significance of `-r` in the code ?

```
rm -r dirname
```

what is the difference in using `-rf` and `-r` ?

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- `-r` :recursive
- `-f` :force (no prompt)

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You can combine `-f`, `-i`, `-v` and all other such options per your needs.

we can see a list of all options by running bash command

```
rm --help
```

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```
# rm -r dirName
```

on centos ask every file to be deleted

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you have to use “rm -rf dirName” if you not want that system ask you every file to be deleted

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Thank you very much.

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Thanks. Great article.

I have a question. How can I delete all subfolders /wp-content/cache/* in all folders in /home/ directory?

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cd into /home/

```
cd /home/
ls -l
```

Then go to /wp-content/cache/:

```
cd /wp-content/cache/
rm -rfv *
```

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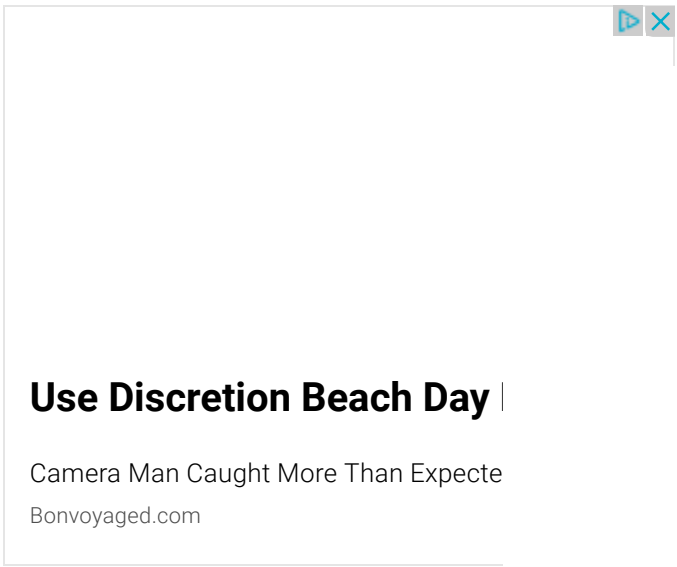

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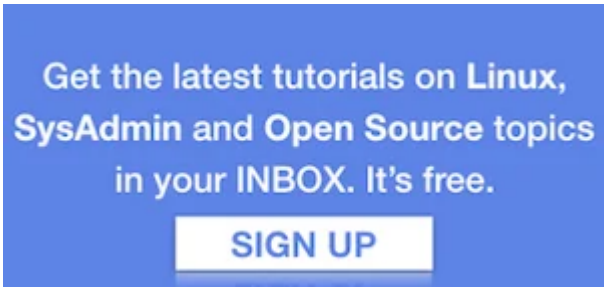

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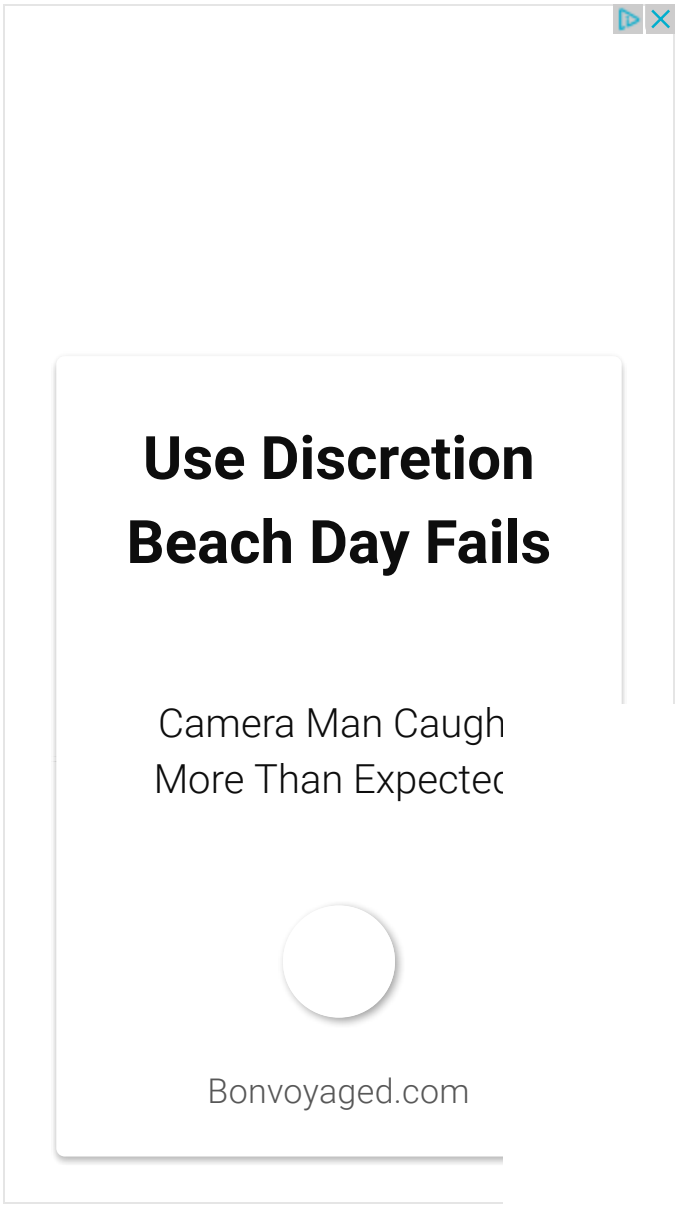

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