

# How to Delete/Remove Users in Linux (userdel Command)

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Linux is a multi-user system, which means that more than one person can interact with the same system at the same time. As a system administrator, you have the responsibility to manage the system's users and groups by [creating new users](#) and assign them to different [groups](#) .

Occasionally, you might need to delete a user account. Perhaps because the user moved away from the organization, or it was created for a specific service that no longer runs on the system.

In Linux, you can delete a user account and all its associated files using the `userdel` command.

This tutorial covers the `userdel` command and its options.

## userdel Command Syntax

The syntax for the `userdel` command is as follows:

```
userdel [OPTIONS] USERNAME
```

To delete users using the `userdel` command, you need to be logged in as root or a user with [sudo](#) access.

## How to Delete User in Linux

To delete a user account named `username` using the `userdel` command you would run:

```
$ userdel username
```

When invoked, the command reads the content of the `/etc/login.defs` file. Properties defined in this file override the default behavior of `userdel` . If `USERGROUPS_ENAB` is set to `yes` in this file, `userdel` deletes the group with the same name as the user, only if no other user is a member of this group.

The command removes the user entries from the `/etc/passwd` and `/etc/shadow` files.

In most Linux distributions, when removing a user account with `userdel` , the user home and mail spool directories are not removed.

Use the `-r` (`--remove`) option to force `userdel` to remove the user's home directory and mail spool:

```
$ userdel -r username
```

The command above does not remove the user files located in other file systems. You have to search for and [delete the files](#) manually.

If the user you want to remove is still logged in, or if there are [running processes](#) that belong to this user, the `userdel` command does not allow to remove the user.

In this situation, it is recommended to log out the user and kill all user's running processes with the [killall](#) command:

```
$ sudo killall -u username
```

Once done, you can remove the user.

Another option is to use the `-f` (`--force`) option that tells `userdel` to forcefully remove the user account, even if the user is still logged in or if there are running processes that belong to the user.

```
$ userdel -f username
```

## Conclusion

In this tutorial, you learned how to delete user accounts in Linux using the `userdel` command. The same syntax applies for any Linux distribution, including Ubuntu, CentOS, RHEL, Debian, Fedora, and Arch Linux.

`userdel` is a low-level utility, Debian and Ubuntu users will more likely use the friendlier [deluser](#) command instead.

Feel free to leave a comment if you have any questions.

terminal

user

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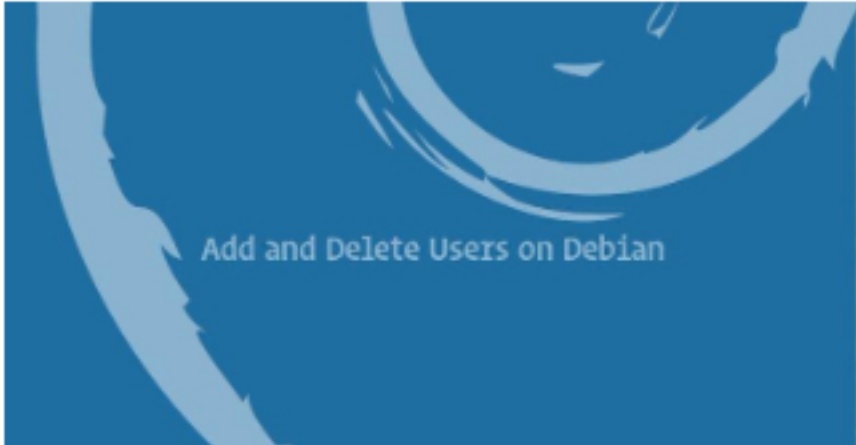
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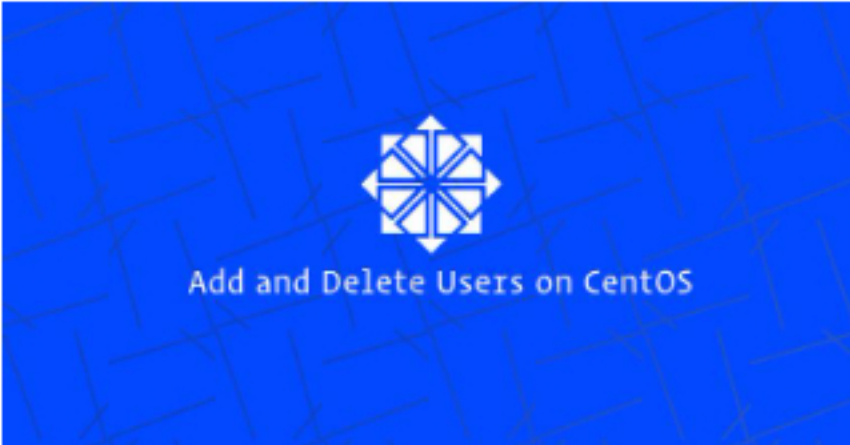
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