

**NAME**

m4 – macro processor

**SYNOPSIS**

**m4** [*OPTION*]... [*FILE*]...

**DESCRIPTION**

Process macros in FILES. If no FILE or if FILE is ‘-’, standard input is read.

Mandatory or optional arguments to long options are mandatory or optional for short options too.

**Operation modes:**

- help** display this help and exit
- version**  
output version information and exit
- E, --fatal-warnings**  
once: warnings become errors, twice: stop execution at first error
- i, --interactive**  
unbuffer output, ignore interrupts
- P, --prefix-builtins**  
force a ‘m4\_’ prefix to all builtins
- Q, --quiet, --silent**  
suppress some warnings for builtins
- warn-macro-sequence[=*REGEXP*]**  
warn if macro definition matches REGEXP,  
default `\${{[^}]*}\|[0-9][0-9]+}`
- W, --word-regexp=*REGEXP***  
use REGEXP for macro name syntax

**Preprocessor features:**

- D, --define=NAME[=*VALUE*]**  
define NAME as having VALUE, or empty
- I, --include=*DIRECTORY***  
append DIRECTORY to include path
- s, --synclines**  
generate ‘#line NUM "FILE"’ lines
- U, --undefine=NAME**  
undefine NAME

**Limits control:**

- g, --gnu**  
override **-G** to re-enable GNU extensions
- G, --traditional**  
suppress all GNU extensions
- H, --hashsize=*PRIME***  
set symbol lookup hash table size [509]
- L, --nesting-limit=*NUMBER***  
change nesting limit, 0 for unlimited [0]

**Frozen state files:**

- F, --freeze-state=*FILE***  
produce a frozen state on FILE at end

**-R, --reload-state=FILE**  
 reload a frozen state from FILE at start

#### Debugging:

**-d, --debug[=FLAGS]**  
 set debug level (no FLAGS implies 'aeq')

**--debugfile[=FILE]**  
 redirect debug and trace output to FILE (default stderr, discard if empty string)

**-l, --arglength=NUM**  
 restrict macro tracing size

**-t, --trace=NAME**  
 trace NAME when it is defined

#### FLAGS is any of:

a show actual arguments

c show before collect, after collect and after call

e show expansion

f say current input file name

i show changes in input files

l say current input line number

p show results of path searches

q quote values as necessary, with a or e flag

t trace for all macro calls, not only traceon'ed

x add a unique macro call id, useful with c flag

V shorthand for all of the above flags

If defined, the environment variable 'M4PATH' is a colon-separated list of directories included after any specified by '-I'.

Exit status is 0 for success, 1 for failure, 63 for frozen file version mismatch, or whatever value was passed to the m4exit macro.

#### AUTHOR

Written by Rene' Seindal.

#### REPORTING BUGS

Report bugs to: [bug-m4@gnu.org](mailto:bug-m4@gnu.org)  
 GNU M4 home page: <<http://www.gnu.org/software/m4/>>  
 General help using GNU software: <<http://www.gnu.org/gethelp/>>

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#### SEE ALSO

The full documentation for **m4** is maintained as a Texinfo manual. If the **info** and **m4** programs are properly installed at your site, the command

**info m4**

should give you access to the complete manual.