

NAME

visudo — edit the sudoers file

SYNOPSIS

visudo [-chqsV] [[-f] *sudoers*]

DESCRIPTION

visudo edits the *sudoers* file in a safe fashion, analogous to [vipw\(8\)](#). **visudo** locks the *sudoers* file against multiple simultaneous edits, provides basic sanity checks, and checks for parse errors. If the *sudoers* file is currently being edited you will receive a message to try again later.

visudo parses the *sudoers* file after editing and will not save the changes if there is a syntax error. Upon finding an error, **visudo** will print a message stating the line number(s) where the error occurred and the user will receive the “What now?” prompt. At this point the user may enter ‘e’ to re-edit the *sudoers* file, ‘x’ to exit without saving the changes, or ‘Q’ to quit and save changes. The ‘Q’ option should be used with extreme caution because if **visudo** believes there to be a parse error, so will **sudo** and no one will be able to run **sudo** again until the error is fixed. If ‘e’ is typed to edit the *sudoers* file after a parse error has been detected, the cursor will be placed on the line where the error occurred (if the editor supports this feature).

There are two *sudoers* settings that determine which editor **visudo** will run.

editor A colon (‘:’) separated list of editors allowed to be used with **visudo**. **visudo** will choose the editor that matches the user’s SUDO_EDITOR, VISUAL or EDITOR environment variable if possible, or the first editor in the list that exists and is executable. Note that the SUDO_EDITOR, VISUAL and EDITOR environment variables are not preserved by default when the *env_reset sudoers* option is enabled. The default editor path is */usr/bin/editor* which can be set at compile time via the `--with-editor` configure option.

env_editor

If set, **visudo** will use the value of the SUDO_EDITOR, VISUAL or EDITOR environment variables before falling back on the default editor list. Note that this may create a security hole as it allows the user to run any arbitrary command as root without logging. A safer alternative is to place a colon-separated list of editors in the *editor* variable. **visudo** will then only use SUDO_EDITOR, VISUAL or EDITOR if they match a value specified in *editor*. If the *env_reset* flag is enabled, the SUDO_EDITOR, VISUAL and/or EDITOR environment variables must be present in the *env_keep* list for the *env_editor* flag to function when **visudo** is invoked via **sudo**. The default value is *on*, which can be set at compile time via the `--with-env-editor` configure option.

The options are as follows:

-c, --check

Enable *check-only* mode. The existing *sudoers* file (and any other files it includes) will be checked for syntax errors. If the path to the *sudoers* file was not specified, **visudo** will also check the file owner and mode. A message will be printed to the standard output describing the status of *sudoers* unless the `-q` option was specified. If the check completes successfully, **visudo** will exit with a value of 0. If an error is encountered, **visudo** will exit with a value of 1.

-f *sudoers*, --file=*sudoers*

Specify an alternate *sudoers* file location, see below. As of version 1.8.27, the *sudoers* path can be specified without using the `-f` option.

-h, --help

Display a short help message to the standard output and exit.

-q, --quiet

Enable *quiet* mode. In this mode details about syntax errors are not printed. This option is only useful when combined with the `-c` option.

`-s, --strict`

Enable *strict* checking of the *sudoers* file. If an alias is referenced but not actually defined or if there is a cycle in an alias, **visudo** will consider this a parse error. Note that it is not possible to differentiate between an alias and a host name or user name that consists solely of uppercase letters, digits, and the underscore ('_') character.

`-V, --version`

Print the **visudo** and *sudoers* grammar versions and exit.

A *sudoers* file may be specified instead of the default, */etc/sudoers*. The lock file used is the specified *sudoers* file with ".tmp" appended to it. In *check-only* mode only, '-' may be used to indicate that *sudoers* will be read from the standard input. Because the policy is evaluated in its entirety, it is not sufficient to check an individual *sudoers* include file for syntax errors.

Debugging and sudoers plugin arguments

visudo versions 1.8.4 and higher support a flexible debugging framework that is configured via Debug lines in the [sudo.conf\(5\)](#) file.

Starting with **sudo** 1.8.12, **visudo** will also parse the arguments to the *sudoers* plugin to override the default *sudoers* path name, UID, GID and file mode. These arguments, if present, should be listed after the path to the plugin (i.e., after *sudoers.so*). Multiple arguments may be specified, separated by white space. For example:

```
Plugin sudoers_policy sudoers.so sudoers_mode=0400
```

The following arguments are supported:

`sudoers_file=pathname`

The *sudoers_file* argument can be used to override the default path to the *sudoers* file.

`sudoers_uid=uid`

The *sudoers_uid* argument can be used to override the default owner of the *sudoers* file. It should be specified as a numeric user ID.

`sudoers_gid=gid`

The *sudoers_gid* argument can be used to override the default group of the *sudoers* file. It must be specified as a numeric group ID (not a group name).

`sudoers_mode=mode`

The *sudoers_mode* argument can be used to override the default file mode for the *sudoers* file. It should be specified as an octal value.

For more information on configuring [sudo.conf\(5\)](#), please refer to its manual.

ENVIRONMENT

The following environment variables may be consulted depending on the value of the *editor* and *env_editor sudoers* settings:

SUDO_EDITOR Invoked by **visudo** as the editor to use

VISUAL Used by **visudo** if SUDO_EDITOR is not set

EDITOR Used by **visudo** if neither SUDO_EDITOR nor VISUAL is set

FILES

/etc/sudo.conf Sudo front end configuration

/etc/sudoers List of who can run what

/etc/sudoers.tmp Lock file for visudo

DIAGNOSTICS

In addition to reporting *sudoers* parse errors, **visudo** may produce the following messages:

sudoers file busy, try again later.

Someone else is currently editing the *sudoers* file.

/etc/sudoers.tmp: Permission denied

You didn't run **visudo** as root.

you do not exist in the passwd database

Your user ID does not appear in the system passwd database.

Warning: {User,Runas,Host,Cmnd}_Alias referenced but not defined

Either you are trying to use an undeclared {User,Runas,Host,Cmnd}_Alias or you have a user or host name listed that consists solely of uppercase letters, digits, and the underscore ('_') character. In the latter case, you can ignore the warnings (**sudo** will not complain). The message is prefixed with the path name of the *sudoers* file and the line number where the undefined alias was used. In *-s* (strict) mode these are errors, not warnings.

Warning: unused {User,Runas,Host,Cmnd}_Alias

The specified {User,Runas,Host,Cmnd}_Alias was defined but never used. The message is prefixed with the path name of the *sudoers* file and the line number where the unused alias was defined. You may wish to comment out or remove the unused alias.

Warning: cycle in {User,Runas,Host,Cmnd}_Alias

The specified {User,Runas,Host,Cmnd}_Alias includes a reference to itself, either directly or through an alias it includes. The message is prefixed with the path name of the *sudoers* file and the line number where the cycle was detected. This is only a warning unless **visudo** is run in *-s* (strict) mode as **sudo** will ignore cycles when parsing the *sudoers* file.

unknown defaults entry "name"

The *sudoers* file contains a Defaults setting not recognized by **visudo**.

SEE ALSO

[vi\(1\)](#), [sudo.conf\(5\)](#), [sudoers\(5\)](#), [sudo\(8\)](#), [vipw\(8\)](#)

AUTHORS

Many people have worked on **sudo** over the years; this version consists of code written primarily by:

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See the CONTRIBUTORS file in the **sudo** distribution (<https://www.sudo.ws/contributors.html>) for an exhaustive list of people who have contributed to **sudo**.

CAVEATS

There is no easy way to prevent a user from gaining a root shell if the editor used by **visudo** allows shell escapes.

BUGS

If you feel you have found a bug in **visudo**, please submit a bug report at <https://bugzilla.sudo.ws/>

SUPPORT

Limited free support is available via the sudo-users mailing list, see <https://www.sudo.ws/mailman/listinfo/sudo-users> to subscribe or search the archives.

DISCLAIMER

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