First-Time Git Setup

Now that you have Git on your system, you'll want to do a few things to customize your Git environment. You should have to do these things only once on any given computer; they'll stick around between upgrades. You can also change them at any time by running through the commands again.

Git comes with a tool called `git config` that lets you get and set configuration variables that control all aspects of how Git looks and operates. These variables can be stored in three different places:

1. `/etc/gitconfig` file: Contains values applied to every user on the system and all their repositories. If you pass the option `--system` to `git config`, it reads and writes from this file specifically. (Because this is a system configuration file, you would need administrative or superuser privilege to make changes to it.)
2. `~/.gitconfig` or `~/.config/git/config` file: Values specific personally to you, the user. You can make Git read and write to this file specifically by passing the `--global` option, and this affects *all* of the repositories you work with on your system.
3. `config` file in the Git directory (that is, `.git/config`) of whatever repository you're currently using: Specific to that single repository. You can force Git to read from and write to this file with the `--local` option, but that is in fact the default. (Unsurprisingly, you need to be located somewhere in a Git repository for this option to work properly.)

Each level overrides values in the previous level, so values in `.git/config` trump those in `/etc/gitconfig`.

On Windows systems, Git looks for the `.gitconfig` file in the `$HOME` directory (`C:\Users\$USER` for most people). It also still looks for `/etc/gitconfig`, although it's relative to the MSys root, which is wherever you decide to install Git on your Windows system when you run the installer. If you are using version 2.x or later of Git for Windows, there is also a system-level config file at `C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Application Data\Git\config` on Windows XP, and in `C:\ProgramData\Git\config` on Windows Vista and newer. This config file can only be changed by `git config -f <file>` as an admin.

You can view all of your settings and where they are coming from using:

```
git config --list --show-origin
```

Your Identity

The first thing you should do when you install Git is to set your user name and email address. This is important because every Git commit uses this information, and it's immutably baked into the

commits you start creating:

```
git config --global user.name "John Doe"
git config --global user.email johndoe@example.com
```

Again, you need to do this only once if you pass the `--global` option, because then Git will always use that information for anything you do on that system. If you want to override this with a different name or email address for specific projects, you can run the command without the `--global` option when you're in that project.

Many of the GUI tools will help you do this when you first run them.

Your Editor

Now that your identity is set up, you can configure the default text editor that will be used when Git needs you to type in a message. If not configured, Git uses your system's default editor.

If you want to use a different text editor, such as Emacs, you can do the following:

```
git config --global core.editor emacs
```

On a Windows system, if you want to use a different text editor, you must specify the full path to its executable file. This can be different depending on how your editor is packaged.

In the case of Notepad++, a popular programming editor, you are likely to want to use the 32-bit version, since at the time of writing the 64-bit version doesn't support all plug-ins. If you are on a 32-bit Windows system, or you have a 64-bit editor on a 64-bit system, you'll type something like this:

```
git config --global core.editor "'C:/Program Files/Notepad++/notepad++.exe' -multiInst -
nosession"
```

If you have a 32-bit editor on a 64-bit system, the program will be installed in `C:\Program Files (x86)`:

```
git config --global core.editor "'C:/Program Files (x86)/Notepad++/notepad++.exe' -multiInst
-nosession"
```

	Vim, Emacs and Notepad++ are popular text editors often used by developers on Unix-based systems like Linux and macOS or a Windows system. If you are not familiar with these editors, you may need to search for specific instructions for how to set up your favorite editor with Git.

	You may find, if you don't setup your editor like this, you get into a really confusing state when Git attempts to launch it. An example on a Windows system may include a prematurely terminated Git operation during a Git initiated edit.

Checking Your Settings

If you want to check your configuration settings, you can use the `git config --list` command to list all the settings Git can find at that point:

```
$ git config --list
user.name=John Doe
user.email=johndoe@example.com
color.status=auto
color.branch=auto
color.interactive=auto
color.diff=auto
...
```

You may see keys more than once, because Git reads the same key from different files (`/etc/gitconfig` and `~/.gitconfig`, for example). In this case, Git uses the last value for each unique key it sees.

You can also check what Git thinks a specific key's value is by typing `git config <key>`:

```
$ git config user.name
John Doe
```

	Since Git might read the same configuration variable value from more than one file, it's possible that you have an unexpected value for one of these values and you don't know why. In cases like that, you can query Git as to the *origin* for that value, and it will tell you which configuration file had the final say in setting that value:
	`$ git config --show-origin rerere.autoUpdate`
	`file:/home/johndoe/.gitconfig false`

Getting Help

If you ever need help while using Git, there are two equivalent ways to get the comprehensive manual page (manpage) help for any of the Git commands:

```
git help <verb>
man git-<verb>
```

For example, you can get the manpage help for the `git config` command by running

```
git help config
```

These commands are nice because you can access them anywhere, even offline. If the manpages and this book aren't enough and you need in-person help, you can try the `#git` or `#github` channel on the Freenode IRC server, which can be found at https://freenode.net. These channels are regularly filled with hundreds of people who are all very knowledgeable about Git and are often willing to help.

In addition, if you don't need the full-blown manpage help, but just need a quick refresher on the available options for a Git command, you can ask for the more concise "help" output with the `-h` or `--help` options, as in:

```
git add -h
sage: git add [<options>] [--] <pathspec>...

    -n, --dry-run         dry run
    -v, --verbose         be verbose

    -i, --interactive     interactive picking
    -p, --patch           select hunks interactively
    -e, --edit            edit current diff and apply
    -f, --force           allow adding otherwise ignored files
    -u, --update          update tracked files
    --renormalize         renormalize EOL of tracked files (implies -u)
    -N, --intent-to-add   record only the fact that the path will be added later
    -A, --all             add changes from all tracked and untracked files
    --ignore-removal      ignore paths removed in the working tree (same as --no-all)
    --refresh             don't add, only refresh the index
    --ignore-errors       just skip files which cannot be added because of errors
    --ignore-missing      check if - even missing - files are ignored in dry run
    --chmod (+|-)x        override the executable bit of the listed files
```

Summary

You should have a basic understanding of what Git is and how it’s different from any centralized version control systems you may have been using previously. You should also now have a working version of Git on your system that’s set up with your personal identity. It’s now time to learn some Git basics.

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