

# Fun With The 'AWK' Command

Today, I'll show you a real-world use of the venerable AWK command. I use the AWK command fairly regularly.

First, a little about AWK. The AWK command has been around since 1977 and is named after the three people who wrote the original version: Alfred Aho, Peter Weinberger, and Brian Kernighan. It was first officially released in Version 7 Unix (V7) and has been a valuable text processing program ever since.

This is just one instance of how I used it to process some text.

I was going through the statistics at the Music For Us site. Among the statistics is a list of countries from which MFU has had visitors. Given the age of the site, it's a fairly long list.

The format of the text was as follows:

```
[code]1 United States United States 8,645
2 Germany Germany 1,044
3 China China 846
4 France France 672
5 Canada Canada 538[/code]
```

I only cared about the name of the countries, but it was a very long list (more than 100 entries) and I didn't want to edit them out manually. So, it was a pretty easy decision to use AWK to process it.

First, I copied the text into a document called 'countries.txt'. I then opened my terminal and headed to that directory. This was the command I used:

```
[code]awk '{ print $2 }' countries.txt > finished.txt[/code]
```

So, I basically told it to use AWK to process countries.txt, to extract the second column, and to write that data to a file called finished.txt. In this case, I could have easily extracted any of the columns without much difficulty. You simply need to change the \$2 to whichever column you want.

If you'd like a full explanation of the command, you can actually check it out on one of my favorite sites, [explainshell.com](http://explainshell.com). (That link will take you directly to the explanation of this specific command.)

Anyhow, the output was as expected. It looks like:

```
[code]United  
Germany  
China  
France  
Canada[/code]
```

(If you want to see the full list, check out the paste [here](#). By the way, you can feel free to use that site for your own paste needs. We have our own free pastebin service.)

I guess the final verdict is that Linux really lets me be lazy! Instead of processing that text manually, I used the AWK command and processed it all in less than a second. I didn't have to sit there and copy/paste. I didn't have to spend the time verifying it. I just had to run one simple command and I had the data I needed, nice and neat.

The thing is, I really only need the basics so I have giant holes in my knowledge – and yet, I know enough to do things like that, making my life easier. There's always so much more to learn, and that's awesome.