

NAME

visudo — edit the sudoers file

SYNOPSIS

visudo [**-chqsv**] [**-f** *sudoers*] [**-x** *output_file*]

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.

There is a hard-coded list of one or more editors that **visudo** will use set at compile-time that may be overridden via the *editor sudoers* Default variable. This list defaults to `/usr/bin/editor`. Normally, **visudo** does not honor the VISUAL or EDITOR environment variables unless they contain an editor in the aforementioned editors list. However, if **visudo** is configured with the `--with-env-editor` option or the *env_editor* Default variable is set in *sudoers*, **visudo** will use any the editor defines by VISUAL or EDITOR. Note that this can be a security hole since it allows the user to execute any program they wish simply by setting VISUAL or EDITOR.

visudo parses the *sudoers* file after the edit 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 care 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).

The options are as follows:

-c, --check

Enable *check-only* mode. The existing *sudoers* file will be checked for syntax errors, 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. With this option, **visudo** will edit (or check) the *sudoers* file of your choice, 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, the argument to **-f** may be ‘-’, indicating that *sudoers* will be read from the standard input.

-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 used before it is defined, **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.

-x output_file, --export=output_file

Export a *sudoers* in JSON format and write it to *output_file*. If *output_file* is '-', the exported *sudoers* policy will be written to the standard output. By default, */etc/sudoers* (and any files it includes) will be exported. The **-f** option can be used to specify a different *sudoers* file to export. The exported format is intended to be easier for third-party applications to parse than the traditional *sudoers* format. The various values have explicit types which removes much of the ambiguity of the *sudoers* format.

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:

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

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

FILES

<i>/etc/sudo.conf</i>	Sudo front end configuration
<i>/etc/sudoers</i>	List of who can run what
<i>/etc/sudoers.tmp</i>	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.

`{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.

`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.

`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 variable not recognized by **visudo**.

`/etc/sudoers: input and output files must be different`

The **-x** flag was used and the specified *output_file* has the same path name as the *sudoers* file to export.

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:

Todd C. Miller

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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