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Identification

Control Argument Conventions

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A control argument is an argument to a command which alters the way the command behaves. For example, in the command list "list -all" the control argument "-all" tells the list command to list all the entries in the user's current working directory rather than just the non-directory segment entries.

In order to make the system self consistent and easy to use, system commands must use only registered control argument names (see MSPM Section on registered control argument names). If a new control argument is needed, it should be given as general a name as possible (so other programs can use it) and should be registered in advance of the submission of the module which needs it. In addition, every control argument of four or more characters must have an associated abbreviation formed as in command abbreviations by taking the first character of the first two or three syllables of its name. Commands must accept both the name and the abbreviation and no other variant of the name. For example, if a command accepts "-link", it must also accept "-lk" and must not accept anything else (e.g., "-l") as equivalent to "-link". No abbreviation may be only one character long; the only exception is "-a" for "-all"; this is to prevent confusion (e.g., does "-l" mean "-link", "-list", "-last" or "-long"). The long name is provided for use in demonstrations and as an aid to memory. The abbreviations are provided for ease of typing.

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