

15. Quick Reference

This table lists the most commonly used shell metacharacters and their functions.

Metacharacter	Function	Example
&	Background process (runs in the background)	ls &
&&	AND (logical conjunction)	if ["\$foo" -ge "0"] && ["\$foo" -le "9"]
	OR (logical disjunction)	if ["\$foo" -lt "0"] ["\$foo" -gt "9"] (not in Bourne shell)
^	Start of line (regular expression)	grep "^foo"
\$	End of line (regular expression)	grep "foo\$"
=	Equality test (cf. -eq)	if ["\$foo" = "bar"]
!	NOT (logical negation)	if ["\$foo" != "bar"]
\$\$	Current shell PID	echo "my PID = \$\$"
\$!	Most recent background process PID	ls & echo "PID of ls = \$!"
\$?	Exit status of the last command	ls ;
	Exit status of the last command	echo "ls returned code \$?"
\$0	Current shell name (script name)	echo "I am \$0"
\$1	First argument	echo "My first argument is \$1"
\$9	Ninth argument	echo "My ninth argument is \$9"
\$@	All arguments	echo "My arguments are \$@"
\$*	All arguments	echo "My arguments are \$*"

-eq	if ["\$foo" = "9"]	if ["\$foo" -eq "9"]
-ne	if ["\$foo" != "9"]	if ["\$foo" -ne "9"]
-lt	if ["\$foo" < "9"]	if ["\$foo" -lt "9"]
-le	if ["\$foo" <= "9"]	if ["\$foo" -le "9"]
-gt	if ["\$foo" > "9"]	if ["\$foo" -gt "9"]
-ge	if ["\$foo" >= "9"]	if ["\$foo" -ge "9"]
-z	if [-z "\$foo"]	if [-z "\$foo"]
-n	if [-n "\$foo"]	if [-n "\$foo"]
-nt	if ["\$filea" -nt "\$fileb"]	if ["\$filea" -nt "\$fileb"]
-d	if [-d /bin]	if [-d /bin]
-f	if [-f /bin/l	if [-f /bin/l
-r	if [-r /bin/l	if [-r /bin/l
-w	if [-w /bin/l	if [-w /bin/l
-x	if [-x /bin/l	if [-x /bin/l
function myfunc() { echo hello }		