

slrn - First Steps

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This document explains the first things you have to do after having installed `slrn`. It doesn't matter how you installed `slrn` (from source or using a binary package), the first steps remain the same on any Unix system. If you installed `slrn` as a binary package, however, it is possible that your distributor has already done some work for you.

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1 Checking the “rc” file

The first thing we want to do is to customize `slrn`'s configuration file.

If you installed `slrn` from source, you'll find an example `slrn.rc` at `$INSTALL_PREFIX/share/doc/slrn/-slrn.rc`.

If you installed `slrn` from a binary package, have a look whether your distributor has included a global `slrn.rc` and/or an example `slrn.rc`. If you cannot find a file named “`slrn.rc`” or any other file which seems to be a configuration file for `slrn`, you can get an example from <http://slrn.sourceforge.net/downloads/slrn.rc> .

If a global configuration file exists, it will also be read before your personal one on each startup, so you might want to look at the default settings it makes for you.

If you don't have a configuration file for `slrn` yet (check your home directory), you may copy the example configuration file and edit it with your favourite editor:

```
cp /path/to/slrn.rc ~/.slrnrc
vi ~/.slrnrc
```

For the exact syntax and descriptions of all variables, have a look at the “slrn reference manual” which comes with `slrn`, named “`manual.txt`”. An HTML version is also available from <http://slrn.sourceforge.net/docs/slrn-manual.html> .

If your “From:” header cannot be generated from your local account, you should at least set the following variables:

```
set hostname "doe.com" % sets the domain of your address to
                        %   'doe.com'
set username "john"    % sets the localpart of your address to
                        %   'john'
set realname "John Doe" % sets your realname to 'John Doe'
```

In this example, the resulting “From:” header is “John Doe <john@doe.com>”.

The sample `slrn.rc` file is well documented; feel free to make more changes to it if you like.

2 Choosing a newsserver

The second thing we want to do is to choose a newsserver to connect to. The easiest way to tell `slrn` which server to use is to set the environment variable “`$NNTPSERVER`” to the hostname of your preferred newsserver. In most cases, this is a server on a machine you have a permanent network connection to (or even localhost, if you are running a local server like Leafnode).

To set it permanently, add one of the following lines to the configuration file of your favourite shell:

```
NNTPSERVER='server_name' && export NNTPSERVER    (for sh/ksh/bash/zsh)
setenv NNTPSERVER 'server_name'                 (for csh/tcsh)
```

If you want to use more than one newsserver set the `$NNTPSERVER` to your primary server and access the other server by starting `slrn` with “`slrn -h server.name`”.

Note: When using different servers, you need to specify separate `newsrsc` files using the “`server`” configuration command or the “`-f`” command line switch.

If your newsserver requires authentication, you also need to use the “`nnrpaccess`” command. “`nnrpaccess`” and “`server`” are described in detail in the reference manual.

3 Connecting for the first time

Run “`slrn -create`” at your shell prompt to start `slrn` and retrieve a list of all active newsgroups from the server. This can take some time if your connection is slow; future startups (without that flag) are much faster.

Note: If using multiple servers, you will need to use the “`-create`” option for each of them.

When `slrn` switches to full screen mode, you can press “`q`” to exit it again.

4 Getting the newsgroups descriptions (optional)

Note: You only need to do this if you want to see the newsgroup descriptions in `slrn`. It works only if your newsserver has the group descriptions in its database.

Run “`slrn -d`” at your shell prompt and wait until `slrn` quits. This usually results in a large download which takes even longer than the “`-create`” step described before.

5 Choosing an editor

`slrn` has no builtin editor. That way, you can use any editor you like. There are two ways to tell `slrn` which editor it should use.

If you want to use the same editor for all applications on your system, just set the environment variables “`$EDITOR`” and/or “`$VISUAL`” to your preferred editor (if you haven’t done this already). `slrn` will heed this.

If you want to use a special editor or just pass special arguments to it, set the variable “`editor_command`” in your `.slrnrc`, e.g.:

```
set editor_command "vim '+set tw=72' +%d '%s'"
```

starts `vim` with a textwidth of 72 columns and the cursor on the first line of the message’s body. For a more detailed discussion of this, see the entry “`editor_command`” in the reference manual.

6 Subscribing to newsgroups

Start `slrn` from your shellprompt. Some groups which are useful for Usenet / `slrn` beginners should already be subscribed. You can now subscribe to any group you are interested in:

Press the “L” (capital-L!) key to list all groups matching a specified pattern, e.g. `comp.*unix*`; then, go through the list and use the “s” key to subscribe.

Now, you can start reading your news. To see the online help, press “?”.

7 Getting more information

At first, you should have a look at the “`README`” file from the source distribution. It gives an overview of all the documentation distributed with `slrn`. If you cannot find this file, <http://slrn.sourceforge.net/documentation.html> is a good point to start.

8 About this document

This document was written by Felix Schueller and has been updated for `slrn` version 0.9.9 and reformatted in SGML by Peter J Ross.