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## What is a shell? What shell am I using?

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A shell is the program that reads the text you type in a terminal window. There are a variety of shells used on the computer systems that support CIAO, the most popular being `csh`, `tcsh`, `sh` (the Bourne shell), `ksh` (the Korn shell), and `bash` (the GNU version of the Bourne shell). The shell version you use is reported by the `echo $0` command:

```
unix% echo $0
tcsh
```

Here we see that we use the `tcsh` shell.

The syntax for using CIAO tools is the same in all the shells. However, the syntax of the scripting language *does* change between different shells; for instance, in the [Running CIAO](#) section of the [Starting CIAO](#) thread, it is necessary to know which shell you are using.

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URL:  
<http://cxc.harvard.edu/ciao3.4/faq/shell.html>

Last modified: 26 October 2007

