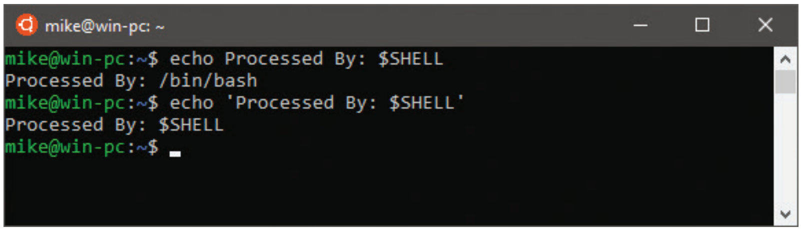
Quoting Phrases

The metacharacters that have special meaning to the Bash shell can be used literally, without applying their special meaning, by enclosing them within a pair of **' '** single-quote characters to form a quoted phrase. For example, to include the name of a shell variable in a phrase without interpreting its value:

1. At a prompt, type **echo Processed By: $SHELL** then hit **Return** to see the shell variable get interpreted in output

2. Now, enter **echo 'Processed By: $SHELL'** to see the shell variable printed literally in output



```
mike@win-pc:~$ echo Processed By: $SHELL
Processed By: /bin/bash
mike@win-pc:~$ echo 'Processed By: $SHELL'
Processed By: $SHELL
mike@win-pc:~$ _
```

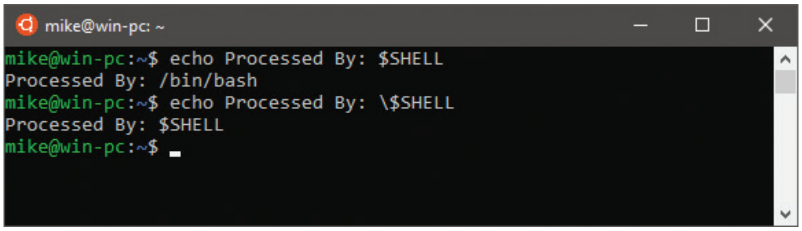
Beware

Always enclose phrases you want to use literally within single quotes to avoid misinterpretation.

Alternatively, the significance of the leading **$** metacharacter of a shell variable can be ignored if preceded by a \ backslash character to "escape" it from recognition as having special meaning:

3. At a prompt, type **echo Processed By: $SHELL** then hit **Return** to see the shell variable get interpreted in output

4. Now, enter **echo Processed By: \$SHELL** to see the shell variable printed literally in output



```
mike@win-pc:~$ echo Processed By: $SHELL
Processed By: /bin/bash
mike@win-pc:~$ echo Processed By: \$SHELL
Processed By: $SHELL
mike@win-pc:~$ _
```

Hot tip

The newline **\n** and tab **\t** sequences can be included in phrases if preceded by a backslash – for example, **echo \\nNEWLINE \\tTAB**.

...cont'd

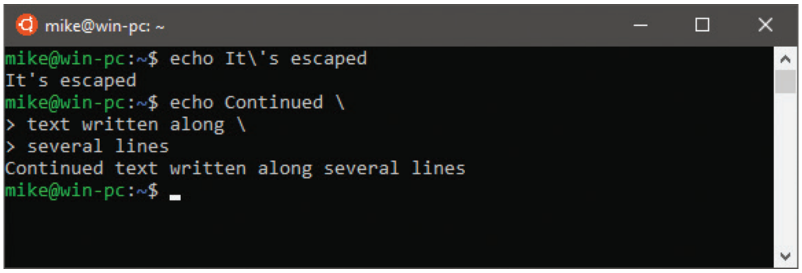
It is necessary to precede a single-quote character with a \ backslash when it is used as an apostrophe, so it is not interpreted as an incomplete quoted phrase. An incomplete quoted phrase or a \ backslash at the end of a line allows a command to continue on the next line as they escape the newline when you hit Return:

5. At a prompt, enter **echo It\'s escaped** to see the apostrophe appear in output

6. Next, type **echo Continued \** then hit **Return**, type **text written along \** then hit **Return**, and type **several lines** then hit **Return** to see the continued phrase in output

Hot tip

Notice that the shell prompt string changes to a **>** to indicate it is awaiting further input.



```
mike@win-pc: ~
mike@win-pc:~$ echo It\'s escaped
It's escaped
mike@win-pc:~$ echo Continued \
> text written along \
> several lines
Continued text written along several lines
mike@win-pc:~$ _
```

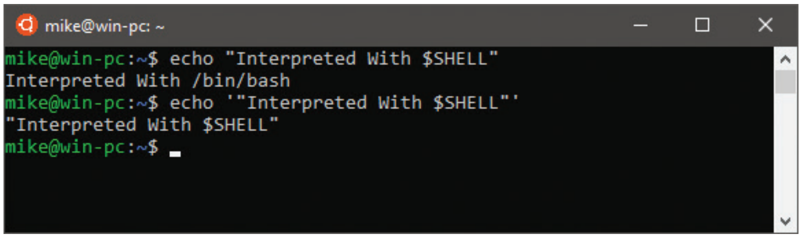
Double-quote marks " " are regarded as weak by the Bash shell as they do allow the interpretation of shell variables they enclose. They can, however, be useful to print out a quoted string if the entire string (and its double quotes) are enclosed in single quotes:

7. Type **echo "Interpreted With $SHELL"** then hit **Return** to see the shell variable get interpreted in unquoted output

8. Now, enter **echo '"Interpreted With $SHELL"'** to see the shell variable printed literally in quoted output

Don't forget

You could alternatively escape double-quote characters with a backslash to print them in output – for example, **echo \\"With \\$SHELL\\"**.



```
mike@win-pc: ~
mike@win-pc:~$ echo "Interpreted With $SHELL"
Interpreted With /bin/bash
mike@win-pc:~$ echo '"Interpreted With $SHELL"'
"Interpreted With $SHELL"
mike@win-pc:~$ _
```