

# Ghetto startup services using screen

November 19, 2013 / Gavin Jackson

daemon

fedora

ipython notebook

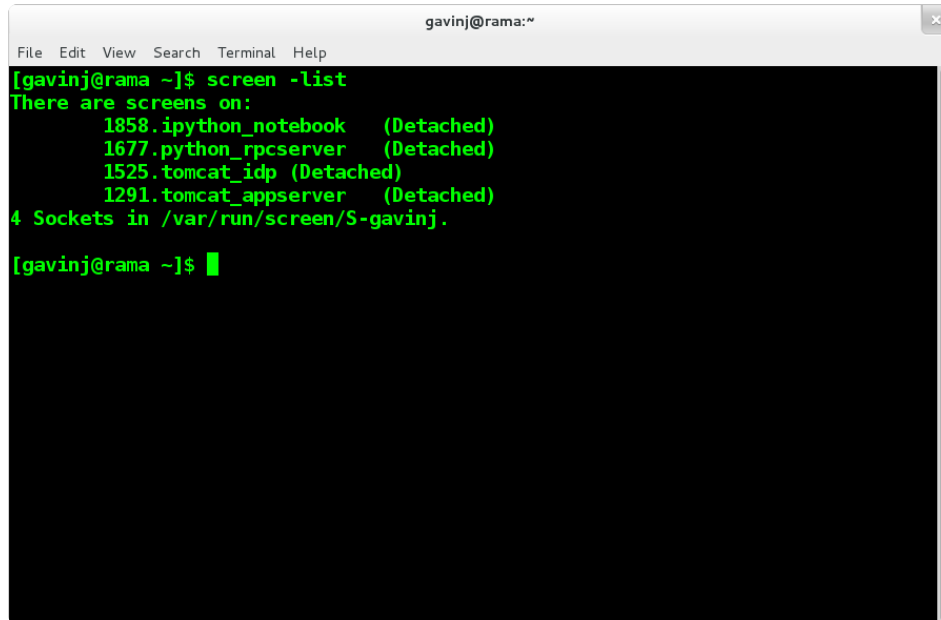
linux

rhel

screen

tomcat

unix



```
gavinj@rama:~$ screen -list
There are screens on:
 1858.ipython_notebook  (Detached)
 1677.python_rpcserver  (Detached)
 1525.tomcat_idp        (Detached)
 1291.tomcat_appserver  (Detached)
4 Sockets in /var/run/screen/S-gavinj.

[gavinj@rama ~]$
```

Screen is one of my favourite Unix/Linux command line tools. In a nutshell it lets you spawn an interactive terminal session, disconnect from it, and connect back to it at a later date (particularly useful over ssh!).

For a while I had been toying with the idea of using screen to daemonise startup processes at boot time - for example, I wanted to start a couple of tomcat instances and a python notebook server.

As these were only going to run on my development workstation, it seemed a bit overkill writing a systemd (or upstart) wrapper around these services.

Turns out that screen makes it trivial to launch these processes at boot time. Note that the following example works on Fedora/RHEL Linux flavours - but should be pretty easy to port to your favourite Linux distribution.

Add the following content to `/etc/rc.d/rc.local` (modern Fedora distributions do not have this file by default, you will have to create it and make it executable as root).

```
#!/bin/bash
```

```
su - -c "/bin/screen -dmS /path/to/shell/startupscript.sh"
```

```
exit 0
```

Important: you must have the `#!/bin/bash` and `exit 0` lines in this file, otherwise it won't work.

If all goes well, next time you reboot and log in as , **you will see the screen session named ""** when next you log in and execute **screen -list**. You can then reattach to the terminal session (using **screen -r** ).

The **-dm** option tells screen to launch a screen session, execute a script and detach (the same as hitting **ctrl-ad**).

**Tomcat gotcha** - for some reason `$TOMCAT_HOME/bin/startup.sh` wasn't working for me in screen, instead I had to create another shell script that executes `$TOMCAT_HOME/bin/catalina.sh` run.

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