

Argument Syntax



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WP-CLI commands use a standardized syntax to describe their arguments and options. Understanding this syntax will help you use commands correctly and avoid confusion.

Syntax Conventions

The command synopsis uses specific formatting to indicate whether arguments are required or optional, and what type of values they accept.

Required Arguments

Arguments without square brackets are **required** and must be provided:

- `<argument>` - A required positional argument that needs a value.

- Example: `<hook>` means you must provide a hook name
- Usage: `wp cron event schedule my_hook`
- **`--option=<value>`** - A required option that needs a value.
 - Example: `--dbname=<dbname>` means you must provide the database name
 - Usage: `wp config create --dbname=mydatabase --dbuser=root`

Optional Arguments

Arguments enclosed in square brackets `[ ]` are optional:

- **`[<argument>]`** - An optional positional argument.
 - Example: `[<next-run>]` means this argument can be omitted
 - If omitted, a default value may be used
- **`[--option=<value>]`** - An optional option that accepts a value.
 - Example: `[--dbhost=<dbhost>]` means this option can be omitted
 - Often has a default value (e.g., `localhost` for `--dbhost`)
 - Usage: `wp config create --dbname=mydb --dbuser=root --dbhost=127.0.0.1`
- **`[--flag]`** - An optional boolean flag.
 - Example: `[--force]` means this flag can be included or omitted
 - When present, the flag is `true`; when absent, it's `false`
 - Usage: `wp config create --dbname=mydb --dbuser=root --force`

Boolean Flags

Boolean flags are switches that enable or disable a feature:

- **Enabling:** Include the flag to set it to `true`
 - Example: `--force` enables force mode
- **Disabling:** Most flags can be "reversed" with a `--no-` prefix
 - Example: `--no-force` explicitly disables force mode
 - Example: `--no-color` disables color output

Associative Arguments

Some commands accept arbitrary key-value pairs:

- **`[--<field>=<value>]`** - Accepts any field name with a value.
 - Example: `--foo=bar --baz=qux`
 - Useful for passing custom data or configuration

Repeatable Arguments

Arguments that can be provided multiple times:

- `[--<field>=<value>]` - When documented as repeatable, you can provide the option multiple times.
 - Example: `--require=<path>` can be used as `--require=/path/one.php --require=/path/two.php`

Variadic Arguments

Arguments that accept multiple values:

- `<argument>...` - The ellipsis (`...`) indicates the argument accepts one or more values.
 - Example: `<file>...` means you can provide multiple files
 - Usage: `wp plugin install plugin1 plugin2 plugin3`

Value Placeholders

The text inside angle brackets describes what kind of value is expected:

- `<id>` - Expects a numeric identifier
- `<file>` - Expects a file path
- `<url>` - Expects a URL
- `<name>` - Expects a name or label
- `<format>` - Expects a format type (often with available options listed)

Common Patterns

Required Database Connection

Many commands require database connection details:

```
--dbname=<dbname> --dbuser=<dbuser> [--dbpass=<dbpass>] [--dbhost=<dbhost>]
```

- `--dbname` and `--dbuser` are required
- `--dbpass` and `--dbhost` are optional

Format Options

Commands that output data often accept a format option:

```
[--format=<format>]
```

Common formats include: `table`, `csv`, `json`, `yaml`, `count`

Fields and Filtering

Commands that work with multiple fields:

```
[--fields=<fields>] [--field=<field>]
```

- `--fields` typically accepts a comma-separated list
- `--field` typically returns a single field value

Examples

Here are practical examples showing different syntax types:

```
# Required arguments (no brackets)
wp config create --dbname=mydb --dbuser=root

# Optional arguments with defaults
wp config create --dbname=mydb --dbuser=root --dbhost=localhost

# Boolean flags
wp plugin install hello-dolly --activate --force

# Negated boolean flags
wp plugin list --no-color

# Associative arguments
wp cron event schedule my_hook --foo=bar --baz=qux

# Multiple values
wp plugin install plugin1 plugin2 plugin3

# Optional fields with specific format options
wp post list --format=json --fields=ID,post_title,post_date
```

Tips

- Always check the command's `OPTIONS` section to see which arguments are required
- Use `wp help <command>` to see the complete synopsis and documentation
- When in doubt about a flag, try the `--help` option: `wp <command> --help`
- Default values for optional arguments are typically listed in the `OPTIONS` section
- Quote values that contain spaces or special characters: `--title="My Post Title"`

Related Documentation

- [Documentation Standards](#) - Standards for annotating WP-CLI commands
- [Commands Cookbook](#) - How commands work
- [Global Parameters](#) - Parameters available to all commands

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