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# tmux 3

Productive  
Mouse-Free  
Development



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## Customizing the Status Line's Content

The tmux status line can display nearly any information you want. You can use some predefined components or create your own by executing shell commands and pulling in the results.

The status line consists of three components: a left panel, the window list, and a right panel. By default, it looks like this:

```
[development] 0: bash*                               "example.local" 13:37 14-Jun-24
```

On the left side, you have the name of the tmux session followed by the list of windows. The list of windows shows the numerical index of the current window and its name. On the right side, you have the hostname of your computer followed by the date and time. Now let's customize the content of the status line.

### Configuring Status Line Items

You can change the content in the left or right panels of the status bar using a combination of text and variables. The following table shows some of the most useful variables you can use in your status line.

Variable	Description
host or #H	Hostname of local host
host_short or #h	Hostname of local host without the domain name
window_flags or #F	Current window flag
window_index or #I	Current window index
pane_index or #P	Current pane index
session_name or #S	Current session name
pane_title or #T	Current pane title
window_name or #W	Current window name
pid	tmux process ID
version	tmux version
##	A literal #
\$(shell-command)	First line of the shell command's output
#[attributes]	Color or attribute change

Table 1—Status Line Variables

For example, if you wanted to show just the name of the current tmux session on the left, you'd use the `set -g status-left` option with the `#S` value, like this:

```
set -g status-left "#S"
```

But you can also make it stand out more by using an attribute to set the foreground color, like this:

```
set -g status-left "#[fg=green]#S"
```

You can add as many attributes and items to the status line as you want. Try this out by altering the left side of the status line so it shows the session name in green, the current window number in yellow, and the current pane in cyan. Add this line to your configuration file:

```
set -g status-left "#[fg=green]#S #[fg=yellow]#I #[fg=cyan]#P"
```

You can add any arbitrary text into the status line, too. Add text to make the session, window, and pane more noticeable, like this:

```
config/tmux.conf
# Status line left side to show Session: [name] [window] [pane]
set -g status-left-length 40
set -g status-left "#[fg=green]Session: #S #[fg=yellow]#I #[fg=cyan]#P"
```

This sets the `status-left-length` option because the specified output is too long for the default length, so you have to make that region wider.

You can configure the right side of the status line too. Add the current date and time with the following line::

```
config/tmux.conf
# Status line right side - 31-Oct 13:37
set -g status-right "#[fg=cyan]%d %b %R"
```

This formats the date as "31-Oct 13:37," but you can format it however you'd like, using the standard `strftime()` time formatting mechanism used in many programming languages.<sup>3</sup> Your status line should now look like the following image:

```
Session: 0 2 11:~ - 2:~* "puzzles" 23:42 30-Sep-24
```

You can also incorporate shell commands into the mix by using the `$(shell-command)` variable to return the result of any external command-line program into the status line. You'll do this in [Adding Battery Life to the Status Line, on page ?](#).

3. See <http://www.foragoodstrftime.com/> for a handy tool to help you find the perfect time format.

If you've enabled status lines for your panes, you can use the `pane-border-format` option to customize the pane status line using the same approach.

## Centering the Window List

You can also control the placement of the window list. By default, the window list is left-aligned, but you can center the window list in between the left and right status areas with a single configuration change. Add this line to your configuration:

```
config/tmux.conf
# Center the window list in the status line
set -g status-justify centre
```

Save and refresh your configuration, and the window list appears centered:

```
Session: 0 2 1          1: bash- 2: bash*          30 Sep 23:46
```

As you create new windows, the window list will shift accordingly, staying in the center of the status line.

## Keeping Status Line Info Up to Date

You've added the current time and some other dynamic information to your status line. By default, tmux refreshes the status line every 15 seconds, which is a reasonable default.

You can specify exactly how quickly tmux refreshes its status line with `set -g status-interval` followed by the refresh interval in seconds. Add the following line to refresh the status line every 60 seconds.

```
# Update the status line every sixty seconds
set -g status-interval 60
```

Keep in mind that if you're firing off shell commands as part of your status bar, those will be executed once per interval, so be careful not to load too many resource-intensive scripts.

## Identifying Activity in Other Windows

When you're working with more than one window, you'll want to be notified when something happens in one of the other windows in your session so you can react to it. You can do that by adding a visual notification.

The `monitor-activity on command` highlights the window name in the status line when there's activity in that window. The `visual-activity on line` tells tmux to show

a message in the status line as well. Add the following line to configure those options:

```
config/tmux.conf
# Enable activity alerts
set -w -g monitor-activity on
set -w -g visual-activity on
```

Reload your configuration file. Now when one of the other windows has some activity, it'll stand out with a cyan background, like the topwindow shown in the following image:

```
Session: 0 2 1          1: bash  2: bash*  3: top#-          30 Sep 23:58
```

Once you switch to that window, the colors will revert back to normal. If you want to configure different colors, you can do so with `set -w -g window-status-activity-style` and the colors of your choice.

## Using Customize Mode

You've explored some of the more common configuration options, but there are many more tweaks you can make. Using the "customize mode," you can view and change many of the settings and key bindings for the active pane and window.

To access this mode, press `PREFIX :` to enter the tmux command prompt, and then type `customize-mode`, or press `PREFIX C`. The current pane will be replaced with an interface that shows the options:

```
(0) + Server Options
(1) + Session Options
(2) + Window & Pane Options
(3) + Key Table - copy-mode
(4) + Key Table - copy-mode-vi
(5) + Key Table - prefix
(6) + Key Table - root
```

Use the up and down arrow keys to navigate the interface and use the left and right arrow keys to expand and collapse the sections. The bottom pane shows a description of the option along with any notes.

Changing values in this mode will not save them to your configuration file, but this is a good way to explore the available options and experiment.