

[544] Linux Pipelines

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Learning Objectives

- chain multiple Linux programs together into a pipeline
- redirect process output to a file
- observe resource consumption on Linux

Unix Philosophy

1. "Make each program do one thing well. To do a new job, build afresh rather than complicate old programs by adding new 'features'."
2. "Expect the output of every program to become the input to another, as yet unknown, program. Don't clutter output with extraneous information. Avoid stringently columnar or binary input formats. Don't insist on interactive input."



Supplemental Reading:

[Designing Data Intensive Applications \("Batch Processing with Unix Tools" of Chapter 10\)](#)

The Pipe

Simple Log Analysis

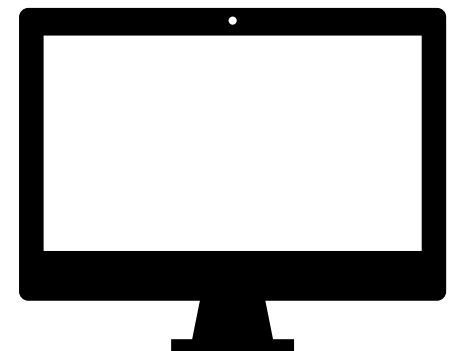
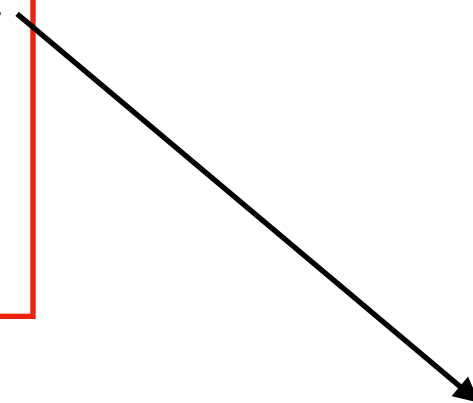
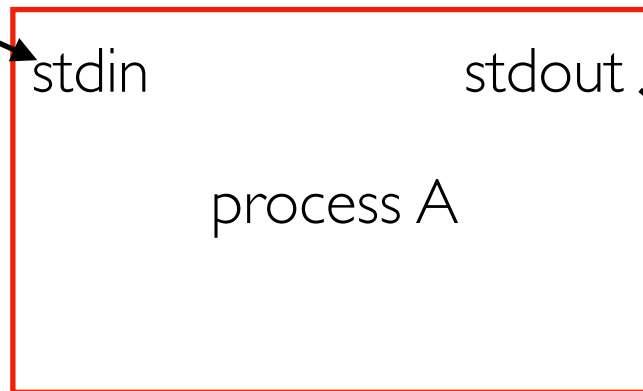
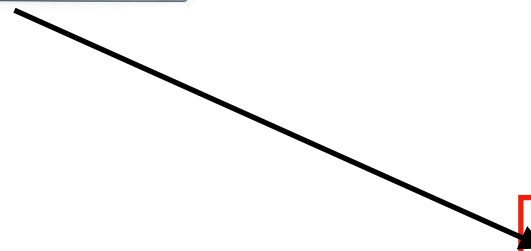
Various tools can take these log files and produce pretty reports about your website traffic, but for the sake of exercise, let's build our own, using basic Unix tools. For example, say you want to find the five most popular pages on your website. You can do this in a Unix shell as follows:¹

```
cat /var/log/nginx/access.log | ❶  
awk '{print $7}' | ❷  
sort | ❸  
uniq -c | ❹  
sort -r -n | ❺  
head -n 5 | ❻
```

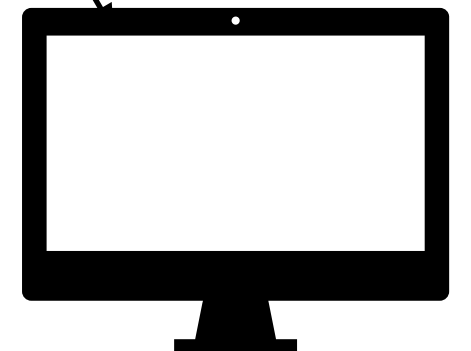
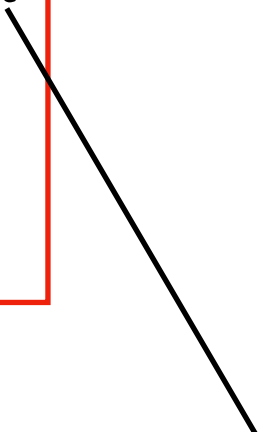
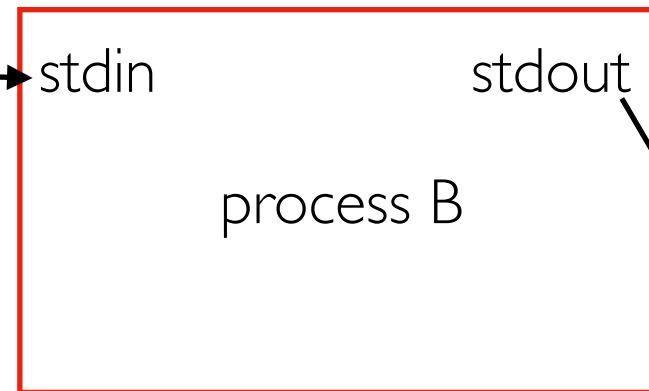
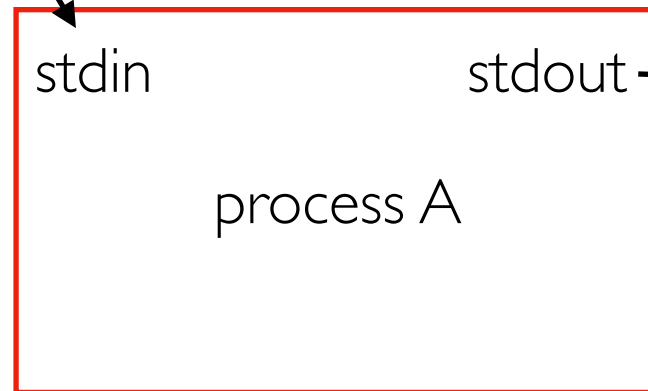


the pipe connects output of one process to input of the next

Standard Input and Output (I/O)



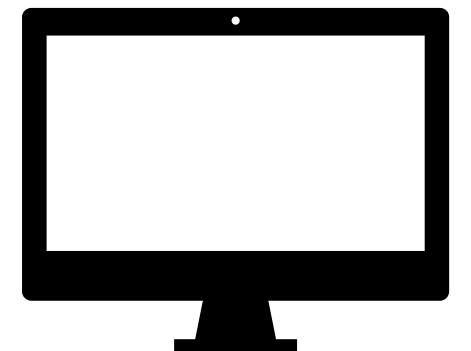
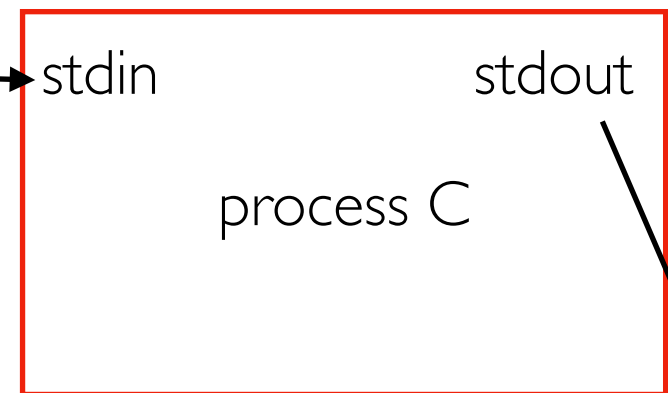
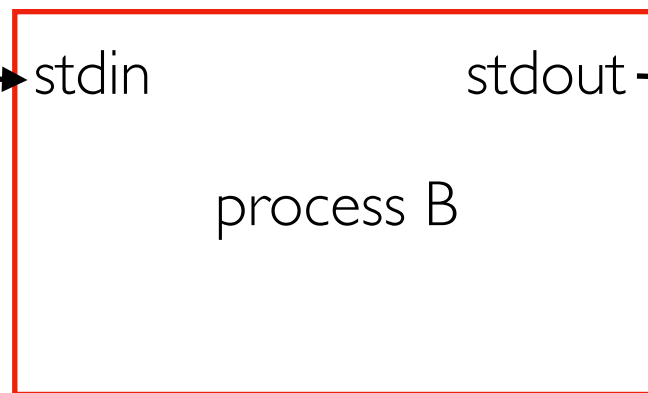
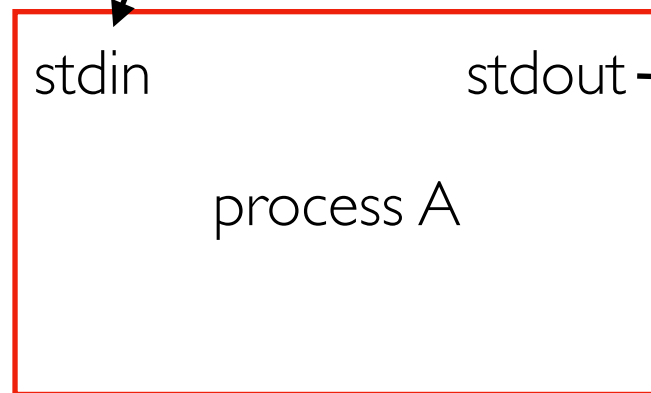
stdout => stdin



Command:

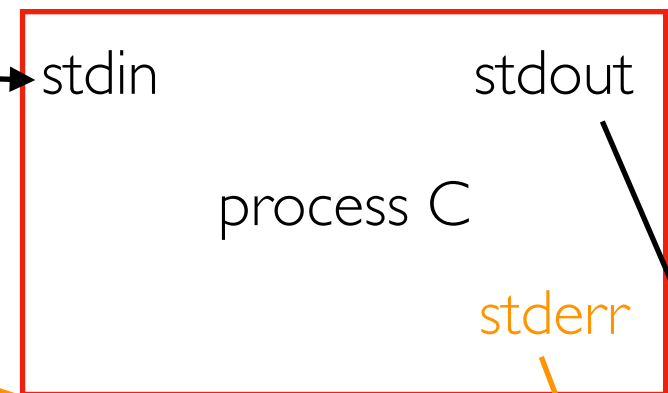
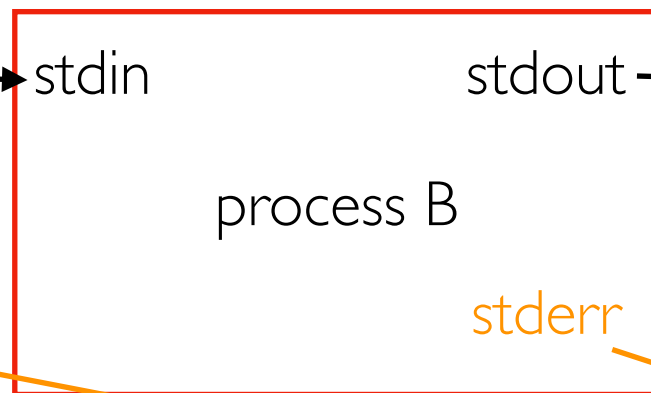
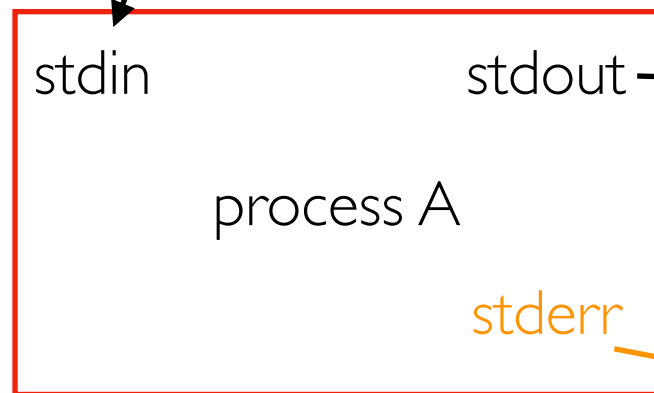
A | B

Chains can be long

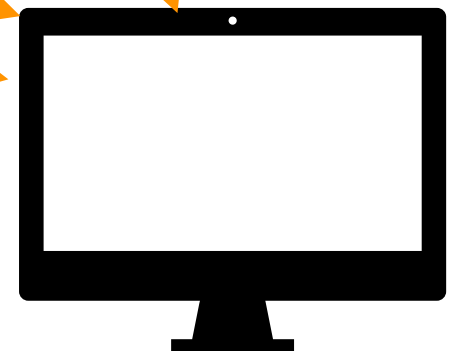


Command:
A | B | C

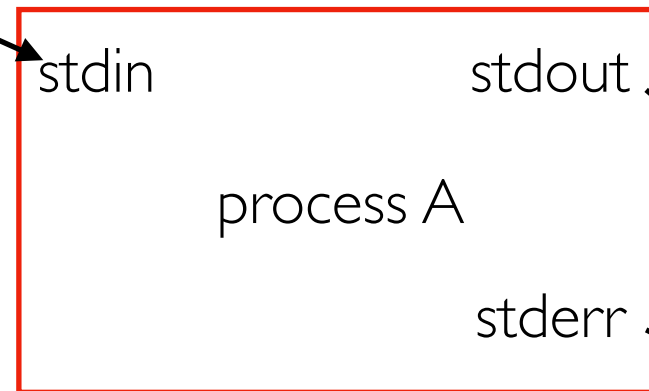
stderr (for things like warnings that shouldn't be chained)



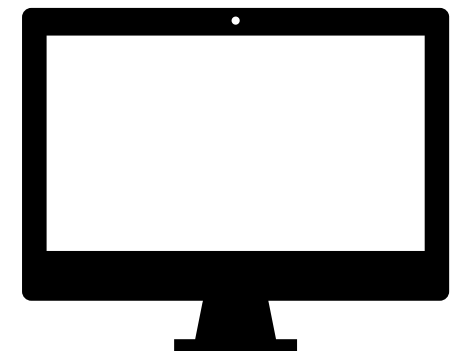
Command:
A | B | C



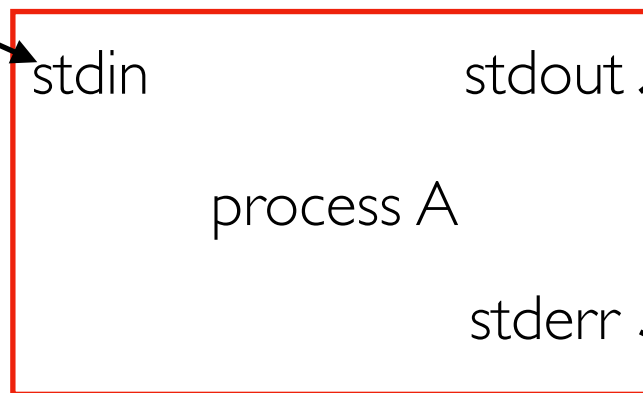
Redirection



Command:
A

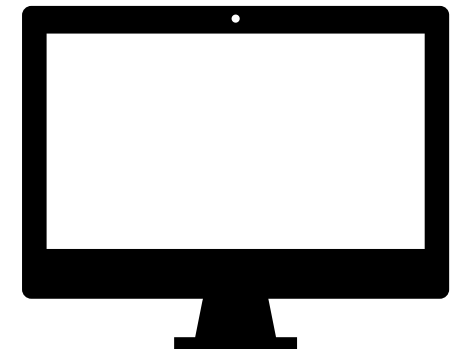


Redirection

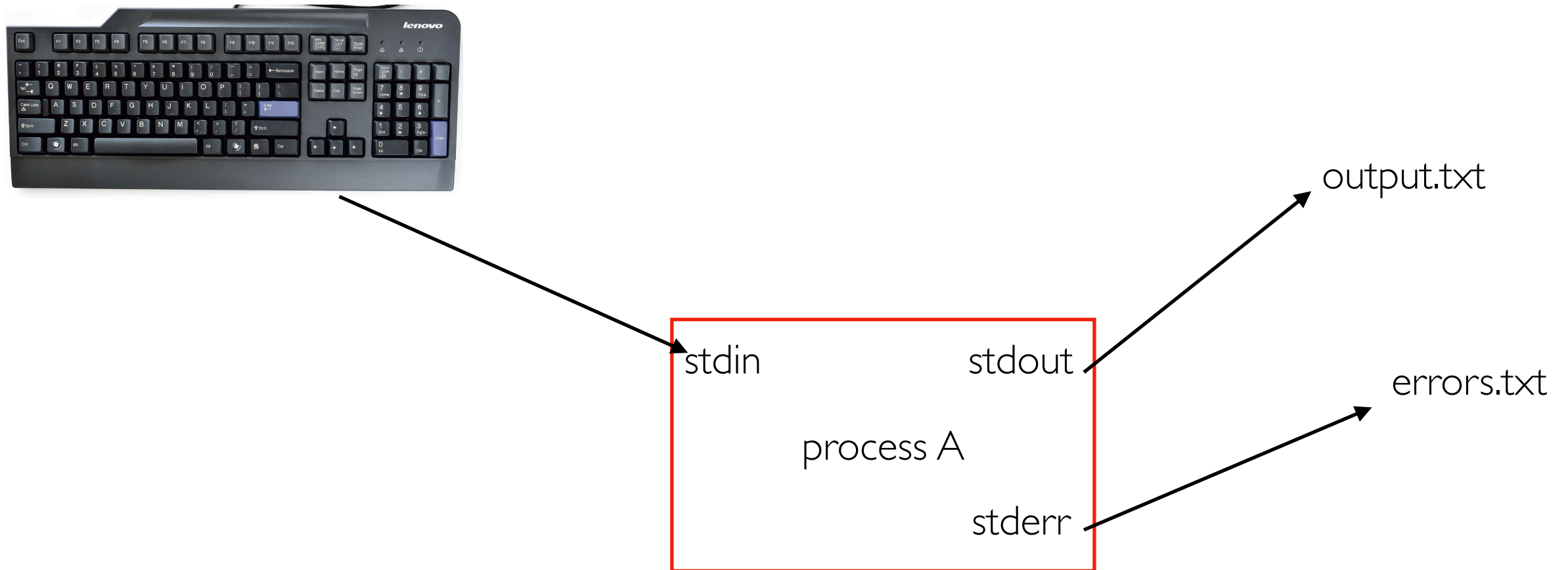


output.txt

Command:
A > output.txt



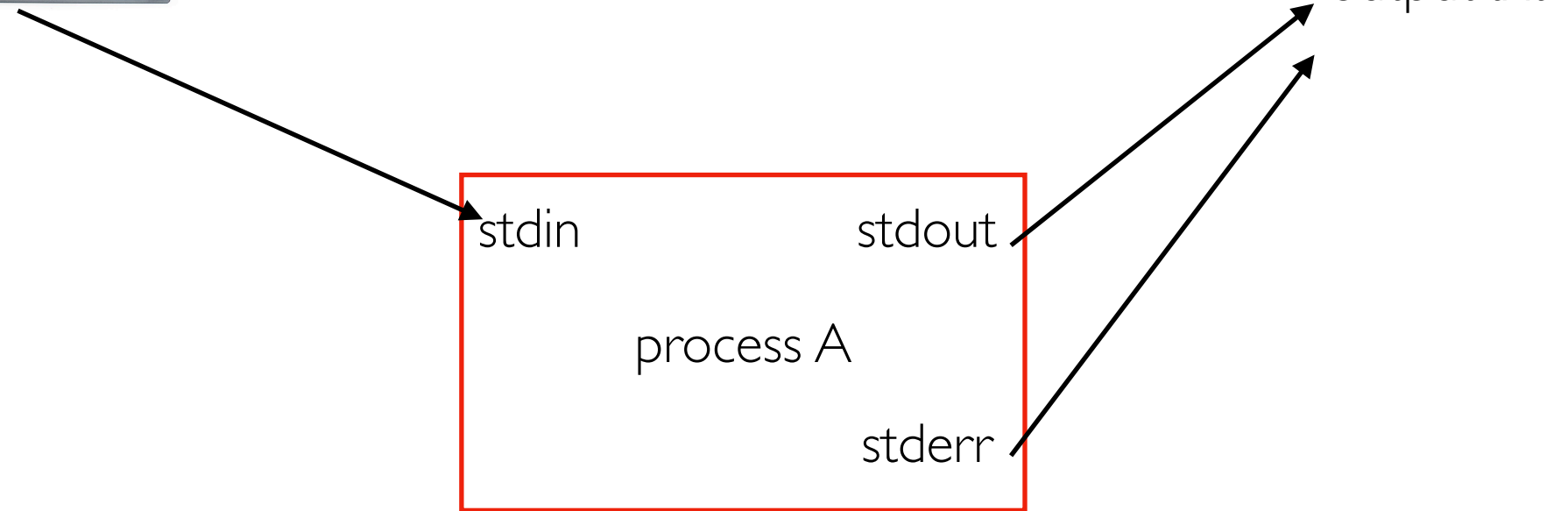
Redirection



Command:

```
A > output.txt 2> errors.txt
```

Redirection

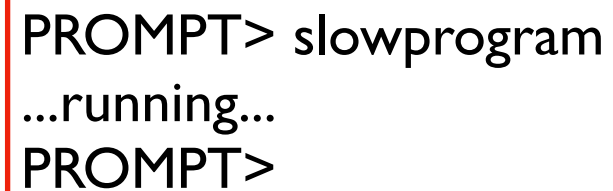


Command:

```
A &> output.txt
```

Async

normally, shells commands are synchronous, meaning you wait for the last command to finish before another prompt appears.



```
PROMPT> slowprogram
...running...
PROMPT>
```

A terminal window with a red border showing the command 'slowprogram' being entered. The output is '...running...' followed by a new prompt 'PROMPT>' on the next line. An arrow points from the explanatory text to this terminal window.

ampersand at the end runs it in the background. you get a prompt immediately



```
PROMPT> slowprogram &
PROMPT>
```

A terminal window with a red border showing the command 'slowprogram &' being entered. The output is a new prompt 'PROMPT>' on the next line. An arrow points from the explanatory text to this terminal window.

All together

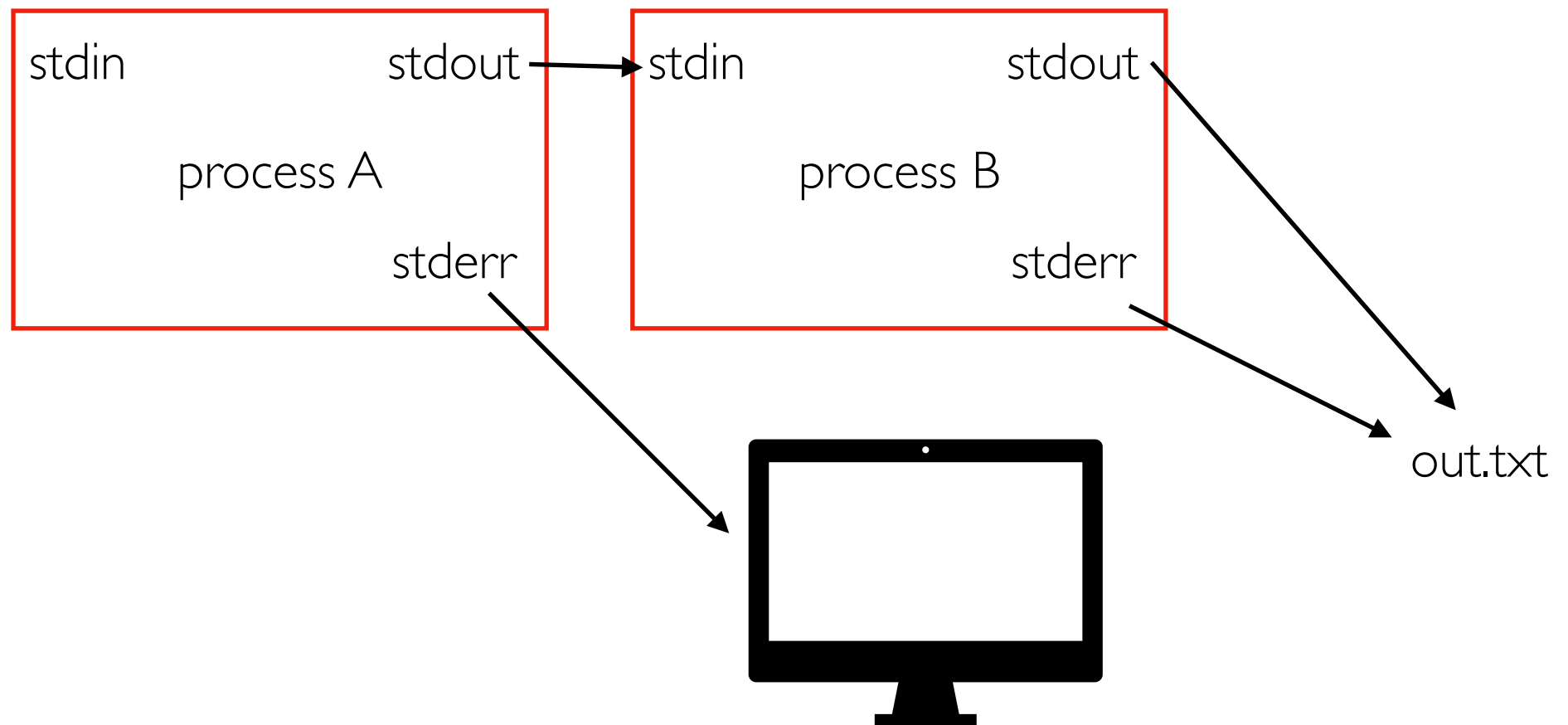
Command:

```
A | B &> out.txt &
```

All together

Command:

```
A | B &> out.txt &
```



This pipeline will run in the background (perhaps for a long time), and we won't see the output. BUT we can find it later in the `out.txt` file.

Demos...