
Managing Accurate Date and Time

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Suggestion to use pool.ntp.org and NTP's stratum 2 public time servers: Brad Knowles

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Why do We Need a Precise Clock?

If our computer never connects to other computers (or other devices that use a clock), the precision of the clock is not critical itself, it depends on the need of the user. However, programs that some way use the net are dependent on a precise date and time. Some examples, when you may need precise clock:

- Softwares that deal with transactions
- Commercial applications (e.g. eBay)
- Mail and messaging-related client and servers
- Websites that use cookies
- Distributed web applications
- Web services
- Distributed component-based applications as J2EE, .NET, etc
- Advanced modern and paralel filesystems, as AFS, DFS, GFS, GPFS, etc

And of course, to use the computer to adjust our wristwatch clock.

On What Factors Does the Hardware-Clock Depend?

Here we talk a little about the hardware-clock precision.

In PCs we find quartz-oscillators maintaining the hardware clock. The frequency of the oscillator is divided, and at the end we get a counter stepping once in one second (in reality it is more complicated, but now it's enough for us). The clock-oscillator runs even if the computer is switched off, so after starting the computer (and starting Linux) the hardware clock can give the values of the actual time. The stability of this clock is mostly dependent on the temperature of its surroundings, but it is also dependent on the air-pressure and the stability of the power supply voltage. The hardware clock is inaccurate in short term, however in the long term it shows a certain difference from the exact time. As we continuously can compare the frequency of our hardware clock and an exact clock, we can calculate the frequency of the hardware clock and so to create the exact time. If this exact clock is inside your LAN (local area network), the accuracy of your Linux machine clock is within 0.01 sec. If you use the internet for this purpose, the accuracy of your clock will be within 0.2 sec regarding to the exact time.

Computer Global Date and Time Concept

To determine the current time for some planet region, a computer needs exactly this two informations:

1. Correct UTC (universal time as in Greenwich, but not GMT) time
2. Region's current Time Zone

For computers, there is also the hardware clock, which is used as a base by the OS to set its time.

OS date and time (we'll use only date *or* time from now on) is set on boot, by some script that reads the hardware clock, makes Time Zone calculations (there is no time zone data stored in BIOS) and sets the OS. After this synchronization, BIOS and OS time are independent from each other. So after a while they may have some seconds of difference. Which one is correct? If you don't make special configurations, none of them.

We'll discuss here how to make them both *globally 100% accurate*.

What are Time Zones?

Time Zones are a geographical world globe division of 15° each, starting at Greenwich, in England, created to help people know what time is it now in another part of the world.

Nowadays it is much more a political division than geographical, because sometimes people needs to have the same time as other people in not-so-far locations. And for energy savings reasons, we have today the Daylight Savings Time, that are also a Time Zone variation.

Time Zones are usually defined by your country government or some astronomical institute, and is represented by 3 or 4 letters. See the section called "Time Zones Examples" for examples.

Use the [timezoneconverter.com](http://www.timezoneconverter.com/) [http://www.timezoneconverter.com/] to know what time is it now at any part of the globe.

Daylight Savings Time

For energy savings reasons, governments created the Daylight Savings Time. Our clocks are forwarded one hour, and this makes our days look longer. In fact, what really happens is only a Time Zone change. The primitive time (UTC) is still, and will allways be, the same.

Later we'll see how to enable and disable DST automatically in Linux.

Time Zones Examples

There is nothing better than examples:

Table 1. Brazilian Time Zones. Shifts relative to UTC

Name and Shift	DST Name and Shift	Locations
BREST -2:00	BREDT -1:00	Fernando de Noronha
BRST -3:00	BRDT -2:00	São Paulo, Rio, Brasilia, Minas Gerais, North East Region, South Region,etc
BRWST -4:00	BRWDT -3:00	West Region
BRAST -5:00	BRADT -4:00	Acre

Please send me contributions like this table for US Time Zones.

Time Zone Mechanism on Linux

Linux systems uses the GLIBC dynamic Time Zones, based on `/etc/localtime`. This file is a link to (or a copy of) a zone information file, usually located under `/usr/share/zoneinfo` directory.

From a geophysical perspective, there is only $360^{\circ}/15^{\circ}=24$ Time Zones in the world. But to make things easy to people, and to accommodate all the political variations (like Daylight Savings Time), you'll find hundreds of zoneinfo files in `/usr/share/zoneinfo`, each for every world city, country, etc.

Some countries, like Brazil, don't have a fixed day to start Daylight Savings Time. It is defined every year, a couple of months before summer, and you may end up in a situation you'll have to change your zoneinfo file, which was compiled by `zic` from a text file like this.

Example 1. Brazilian Zone Info text file

```
# Brazil Time Zones
#
# Brazilian Time Zones are:
```

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```
# BREST: East of Brasilia. Fernando de Noronha.
# BRST: Brasilia, São Paulo, Rio, Northeast, South etc
# BRWST: West of Brasilia. Mato Grosso, Manaus
# BRAST: Acre.
#
# In daylight saving time, letter 'S' changes to 'D'.
# All the brazilian daylight changes can be found here:
#   http://pcdsh01.on.br/
#   http://pcdsh01.on.br/veraol.html
#
# To install, make:
#
# # zic Brazil.txt
#
# Zone files will be installed in /usr/share/zoneinfo (depends on your
# distribution). Then, make a symbolic link from your zone to /etc/localtime:
#
# # cd /etc; ln -sf /usr/share/zoneinfo/Brazil/Brasilia localtime
#
#
# If you have updates and new standards to this file please send to
# Avi Alkalay (avi @ unix.sh)
# Fred Neves (fneves @ registro.br)
#
# Last update: 12 Oct 2005
#
#
# This file is available at
#
# http://avi.alkalay.net/software/zoneinfo/
#

# Rule  NAME    FROM    TO      TYPE    IN      ON      AT      SAVE    LETTER/S
Rule   Brazil  1931    1932    -       Oct     3       00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1932    1933    -       Mar     31      00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1949    only    -       Dec     1       00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1950    only    -       Apr     30      00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1950    1952    -       Dec     1       00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1951    only    -       Apr     16      00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1952    only    -       Mar     31      00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1953    only    -       Feb     28      00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1963    only    -       Oct     23      00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1964    only    -       Mar     1       00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1965    only    -       Jan     31      00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1965    only    -       Mar     31      00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1965    only    -       Dec     1       00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1966    1968    -       Mar     1       00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1966    1967    -       Nov     1       00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1984    only    -       Nov     2       00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1985    only    -       Mar     15      00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1985    only    -       Nov     2       00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1986    only    -       Mar     15      00:00   0        S
Rule   Brazil  1986    only    -       Oct     25      00:00   1:00    D
Rule   Brazil  1987    only    -       Feb     14      00:00   0        S
```

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Rule	Brazil	1987	only	-	Oct	25	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1988	only	-	Feb	7	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1988	only	-	Oct	16	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1989	only	-	Jan	29	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1989	only	-	Oct	15	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1990	only	-	Feb	11	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1990	only	-	Oct	21	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1991	only	-	Feb	17	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1991	only	-	Oct	20	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1992	only	-	Feb	9	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1992	only	-	Oct	25	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1993	only	-	Jan	31	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1993	only	-	Oct	17	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1994	only	-	Feb	20	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1994	only	-	Oct	16	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1995	only	-	Feb	19	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1995	only	-	Oct	15	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1996	only	-	Feb	11	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1996	only	-	Oct	06	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1997	only	-	Feb	16	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1997	only	-	Oct	06	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1998	only	-	Mar	01	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1998	only	-	Oct	11	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	1999	only	-	Feb	21	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	1999	only	-	Oct	3	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	2000	only	-	Feb	27	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	2000	only	-	Oct	8	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	2001	only	-	Feb	18	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	2001	only	-	Oct	14	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	2002	only	-	Feb	17	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	2002	only	-	Nov	3	00:00	1:00	D
Rule	Brazil	2003	only	-	Feb	16	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	2003	only	-	Oct	19	00:00	1	D
Rule	Brazil	2004	only	-	Feb	15	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	2004	only	-	Nov	2	00:00	1	D
Rule	Brazil	2005	only	-	Feb	20	00:00	0	S
Rule	Brazil	2005	only	-	Oct	16	00:00	1	D
Rule	Brazil	2006	only	-	Feb	19	00:00	0	S

#	Zone	NAME	GMTOFF	RULES/SAVE	FORMAT	[UNTIL]
	Zone	Brazil/DeNoronha	-2:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	posix/Brazil/DeNoronha	-2:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	right/Brazil/DeNoronha	-2:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	America/Sao_Paulo	-3:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	America/Rio_de_Janeiro	-3:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	America/Brasilia	-3:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	posix/America/Sao_Paulo	-3:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	posix/America/Rio_de_Janeiro	-3:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	posix/America/Salvador	-3:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	posix/America/Brasilia	-3:00	Brazil	BR%ST	
	Zone	posix/Brazil/Central	-3:00	Brazil	BR%ST	

```

Zone    posix/Brazil/Brasilia      -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    posix/Brazil/Sao_Paulo    -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    posix/Brazil/Salvador     -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    posix/Brazil/Rio_de_Janeiro -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/America/Sao_Paulo   -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/America/Rio_de_Janeiro -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/America/Salvador    -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/America/Brasilia    -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/Brazil/Central      -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/Brazil/Brasilia     -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/Brazil/Sao_Paulo    -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/Brazil/Salvador     -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/Brazil/Rio_de_Janeiro -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    Brazil/Central            -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    Brazil/Brasilia           -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    Brazil/Sao_Paulo         -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    Brazil/Rio_de_Janeiro     -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    Brazil/Salvador          -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    Brazil/East               -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    posix/Brazil/East        -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST
Zone    right/Brazil/East        -3:00  Brazil  BR%ST

Zone    Brazil/West              -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    Brazil/Manaus            -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    Brazil/Rondonia         -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    Brazil/Roraima          -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    Brazil/Mato_Grosso       -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    posix/Brazil/Manaus      -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    posix/Brazil/Mato_Grosso -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    right/Brazil/Manaus      -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    right/Brazil/Mato_Grosso -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    posix/America/Manaus     -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST
Zone    right/America/Manaus     -4:00  Brazil  BRW%ST

Zone    Brazil/Acre              -5:00  Brazil  BRA%ST

```

The **Rule** block defines the date and time we change the Time Zone, while in the **Zone** block we reference the **Rule** will manage it. Note that the **Zone** name is actually the file name under `/usr/share/zoneinfo` directory, and here we defined several different names for the same Time Zone, just to be easier for people to find their zone.

This file's comments explains how to install these time zones, using the **zic** zoneinfo compiler (which already installs them also). To make it effective, you only have to link (or copy) the zoneinfo file to `/etc/localtime`. In some distributions, there is a higher level (and preferred) way to set the Time Zone, described in the section called "Setting Time Zone".

After making `/etc/localtime` pointing to the correct zoneinfo file, you are already under that zone rules and DST changes are automatic -- you don't have to change time manually.

The following command sequence shows Linux Time Zone mechanics dynamism. Note they were all issued in less than one minute:

```
bash$ ls -al /etc/localtime
```

```
lrwxrwxrwx 1 root root 35 May 22 2001 /etc/localtime -> /usr/share/zoneinfo/Braz
bash$ date
Fri Mar 29 20:13:38 BRST 2002
bash# ln -sf /usr/share/zoneinfo/GMT /etc/localtime
bash$ date
Fri Mar 29 23:13:47 GMT 2002
bash# ln -sf /usr/share/zoneinfo/Brazil/Brasilia /etc/localtime
bash$ date
Fri Mar 29 20:14:03 BRST 2002
```

At 20:13, I was in my default brazilian Time Zone (BRST), then I switched to GMT and my system time changed to 23:13! When your Time Zone enters DST, you'll see a similar effect, but the rules are all inside your Time Zone (/etc/localtime link doesn't change like this example).

An application running in this machine (eg. web-server generating access logs) will feel this change, so it is very important for developers to remember that the full Time Concept is the current *time* plus current *Time Zone*, as described in the section called “Computer Global Date and Time Concept”.

In the end, I switched back to my correct Time Zone.

The Correct Settings for Your Linux Box

For any OS installation, you must know your Time Zone. This is expressed in terms of a city, a state or a country. You must also decide how to set BIOS time, and we may follow two strategies here:

Linux Only Machine

In this case you should set BIOS time to UTC time. DST changes will be dynamically managed by Time Zone configurations.

Dual Boot Linux and MS Windows Machine

Windows handles time in a more primitive way than Linux. For Windows, BIOS time is always your local time, so DST changes are more aggressive because they directly change hardware clock. And since both Linux and Windows initially get and set time from the hardware, when they are together, Linux must handle it in the same way. So set BIOS time to your localtime.

Setting Time Zone

On Red Hat Linux and derived systems, you can set the hardware clock strategy and Time Zone using the **timeconfig** command, that shows a user-friendly dialog. You can also use it non-interactively:

Example 2. Time Configuration Tool

```
bash# timeconfig "Brazil/East" # set HC to localtime, and TZ to "Brazil/East"
bash# timeconfig --utc "Brazil/East" # set HC to UTC, and TZ to "Brazil/East"
```

Anyway, it changes /etc/sysconfig/clock file that is read at boot time. You can edit it by hand, and that is how it looks:

Example 3. /etc/sysconfig/clock file

```
ZONE="Brazil/East"
UTC=true
ARC=false
```

Setting the Hardware Clock

I encourage you to set your hardware clock only after understanding how to get accurate time, described on the section called “Accurate Global Time Synchronization”.

The **hwclock** command reads and sets the hardware clock, based on several options you give to it, documented in its man page. But you don't have to use it if you have a modern Linux distribution. After defining your hardware clock strategy and Time Zone, you can use the high level **setclock** command to correctly set your hardware clock. You don't need to pass any parameters because **setclock** intelligently calls **hwclock** to set the BIOS based on your OS current date and time. *So you should always use the **setclock** command.*

But if you are a minimalist and prefer hard work, here are some **hwclock** examples:

Example 4. setclock and hwclock usage

```
bash# setclock      # The easy way to set HC
bash# hwclock       # reads HC
bash# hwclock --systohc --utc # set HC with UTC time based on OS current time
bash# hwclock --systohc      # set HC with local time based on OS current time
bash# hwclock --set --date "21 Oct 2004 21:17" # set HC with time specified on str
```

Since the OS time is independent from the hardware clock, any BIOS change we make will take place in the next boot.

Another option to change HC is rebooting and accessing your computer BIOS screens. On IBM e-server zSeries [<http://ibm.com/servers/eserver/zseries/os/linux/>] platforms you'll have to do it on z/VM level, because Linux here runs on virtual machines created by z/VM.

Accurate Global Time Synchronization

To have accurate time in all your systems is as important as having a solid network security strategy (achieved by much more than simple firewall boxes). It is one of the primary components of a system administration based on good practices, which leads to organization and security. Specially when administering distributed applications, web-services, or even a distributed security monitoring tool, accurate time is a must.

NTP: The Network Time Protocol

We won't discuss here the protocol, but how this wonderful invention, added to the pervasiveness of the Internet, can be useful for us. You can find more about it at www.ntp.org [<http://www.ntp.org/>].

Once your system is properly setup, NTP will manage to keep its time accurate, making very small adjustments to not impact the running applications.

People can get exact time using hardware based on atom's electrons frequency. There is also a method based on GPS (Global Positioning System). The first is more accurate, but the second is pretty good also. Atomic clocks require very special and expensive equipment, but their maintainers (usually universities and research labs) connect them to computers, that run an NTP daemon, and some of them are connected to the Internet, that finally let us access them for free. And this is how we'll synchronize our systems.

Building a Simple Time Synchronization Architecture

You will need:

1. A direct or indirect (through a firewall) connection to the Internet.
2. Choose some NTP servers. You can use the public server `pool.ntp.org` [<http://www.fortytwo.ch/time/>], or choose some from the stratum 2 public time servers [<http://www.eecis.udel.edu/~mills/ntp/clock2a.html>] on NTP website. If you don't have an Internet access, your WAN administrator (must be a clever guy) can provide you some internal addresses.
3. Have the NTP package installed in all systems you want to synchronize. You can find RPMs in your favorite Linux distribution CD, or make a search [<http://rpmfind.net/linux/rpm2html/search.php?query=ntp>] on rpmfind.net [<http://rpmfind.net/>].

Here is an example of good architecture:

Figure 1. Local Relay Servers for NTP

If you have several machines to synchronize, *do not* make them all access the remote NTP servers you chose. Only 2 of your server farm's machines must access remote NTP servers, and the other machines will sync with these 2. We will call them the *Relay Servers*.

Your Relay Servers can be any machine already available in your network. NTP consumes low memory and CPU. You don't need a dedicated machine for it.

Tip

It is a good idea to create hostname aliases for your local Relay Servers like `ntp1.my.com` and `ntp2.my.com`, and use only these names when configuring the client machines. This way you can move the NTP functionality to a new Relay Server (with a different IP and hostname), without having to reconfigure the clients. Ask your DNS administrator to create such aliases.

NTP Configurations

For Your Relay Servers

Edit `/etc/ntp.conf` and add the remote servers you chose:

Example 5. Relay machines' `/etc/ntp.conf`

```
.  
.br/>server otherntp.server.org # A stratum 1 server at server  
server ntp.research.gov # A stratum 2 server at research.  
.br/>.
```

Again, you can use the public server `pool.ntp.org` [<http://www.fortytwo.ch/time/>], or get a list of public stratum 2 time servers [<http://www.eecis.udel.edu/~mills/ntp/clock2a.html>] from NTP website.

For Your Clients

Edit `/etc/ntp.conf` and add your Relay Servers with a standard name:

Example 6. Client machines' `/etc/ntp.conf`

```

.
.
server ntp1.my.com # My first local relay
server ntp2.my.com # My second local relay
.
.

```

If your machine has a UTC time difference bigger than some minutes comparing to the NTP servers, NTP will not work. So you must do a first full sync, and I recommend you to do it in a non-production hour. You need to do it only when you are making the initial NTP setup. Never more:

Example 7. First sync

```

bash# ntpdate otherntp.research.gov
24 Mar 18:16:36 ntpdate[10254]: step time server 200.100.20.10 offset -15.266188 s
bash# ntpdate otherntp.research.gov
24 Mar 18:16:43 ntpdate[10255]: adjust time server 200.100.20.10 offset -0.000267

```

First full sync. We were 15 seconds late.
 Second full sync, just to be sure. Now we are virtually 0 seconds late, which is good.

The last step is to start or restart the NTP daemons in each machine:

```
bash# service ntpd restart
```

Watching Your Box Synchronizing

Now you have everything setup. NTP will softly keep your machine time synchronized. You can watch this process using the NTP Query (**ntpq** command):

Example 8. A time synchronization status

```

bash# ntpq -p
      remote           refid      st t when poll reach  delay  offset  jitter
=====
-jj.cs.umb.edu    gandalf.sigmaso  3 u   95 1024  377   31.681 -18.549  1.572
  milo.mcs.anl.go ntp0.mcs.anl.go  2 u  818 1024  125   41.993 -15.264  1.392
-mailer1.psc.edu ntp1.usno.navy.  2 u  972 1024  377   38.206  19.589 28.028
-dr-zaius.cs.wis ben.cs.wisc.edu  2 u  502 1024  357   55.098   3.979  0.333
+taylor.cs.wisc. ben.cs.wisc.edu  2 u  454 1024  347   54.127   3.379  0.047
-ntp0.cis.strath harris.cc.strat  3 u  507 1024  377  115.274  -5.025  1.642
*clock.via.net    .GPS.           1 u  426 1024  377  107.424  -3.018  2.534
  ntp1.conectiv.c 0.0.0.0         16 u    - 1024    0    0.000   0.000 4000.00
+bonehed.lcs.mit  .GPS.           1 u  984 1024  377   25.126   0.131 30.939
-world.std.com    204.34.198.40  2 u  119 1024  377   24.229  -6.884  0.421

```

The meaning of each column

- remote* Is the name of the remote NTP server. If you use the **-n** switch, you will see the IP addresses of these servers instead of their hostnames.
- refid* Indicates where each server is getting its time right now. It can be a server hostname or something like **.GPS.**, indicating a Global Positioning System source.

<i>st</i>	<i>Stratum</i> is a number from 1 to 16, to indicate the remote server precision. 1 is the most accurate, 16 means 'server unreachable'. Your Stratum will be equal to the accurate remote server plus 1. Never connect to a Stratum 1 server, use Stratum 2 servers! Stratum 2 servers are also good for our purposes, and this policy is good for reducing the traffic to the Stratum 1 servers.
<i>poll</i>	The polling interval (in seconds) between time requests. The value will range between the minimum and maximum allowed polling values. Initially the value will be smaller to allow synchronization to occur quickly. After the clocks are 'in sync' the polling value will increase to reduce network traffic and load on popular time servers.
<i>reach</i>	This is an octal representation of an array of 8 bits, representing the last 8 times the local machine tried to reach the server. The bit is set if the remote server was reached.
<i>delay</i>	The amount of time (seconds) needed to receive a response for a "what time is it" request.
<i>offset</i>	The most important value. The difference of time between the local and remote server. In the course of synchronization, the offset time lowers down, indicating that the local machine time is getting more accurate.
<i>jitter</i>	Dispersion, also called Jitter, is a measure of the statistical variance of the offset across several successive request/response pairs. Lower dispersion values are preferred over higher dispersion values. Lower dispersions allow more accurate time synchronization.

The meaning of the signs before server hostname

- Means the local NTP service doesn't like this server very much
- + Means the local NTP service likes this server
- x Marks a bad host
- * Indicates the current favorite

Configure to Automatically Run NTP at Boot

You may want to have NTP running all the time even if you reboot your machine. On each machine, do the following:

```
bash# chkconfig --level 2345 ntpd on
```

This will ensure autostart.

If your machine is up and running for a long time (months, years) without rebooting, you'll find a big discrepancy between the inaccurate hardware clock and the (now very accurate) system time. Modern Linux distributions copy OS time to the HC everytime the system is shutdown, using a mechanism similar to the **setclock** command. This way, in the next OS boot, you'll get date and time almost as accurate as it was when you shutdown the machine.

Precise Time with the chrony Program

How chrony Differs from the ntp Suite?

chrony also uses the NTP protocol, and is also designed to make Linux clock more accurate. It is also suitable for systems that do not have an Internet connection. Then the source of the exact time can be any

accurate clock, from which we can read the time and type it to the program. In addition, it is also capable of calculating the inaccuracy of the hardware clock, and based on that, adjust the hardware clock at boot time.

chrony 1.20 does not support built-in hardware clocks like GPS and DCF receivers, but the structure of the program makes such development possible.

How to Use chrony?

chrony consists of two parts: **chronyd** daemon and a user interface **chronyc**.

You can find **chrony** at chrony.sunsite.dk/index.php [<http://chrony.sunsite.dk/index.php/>]

A. About this Document

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