

IDL 6.2 introduces a useful “preferences files” feature

- **When IDL starts, it reads certain preferences from a file**
 - A default file exists
 - Can override default with a command-line argument to IDL
- **Users can customize their preferences**
- **Administrators can set up system-wide settings in a single file**

The IDL preferences file brings advantages

- **Better than editing your .idl_startup**
 - Filled with commented-out pieces
 - Might forget and leave something in there
- **Can save custom files for future reference**
 - Duplicate past tests
- **Could assign preferences files to applications so that, on startup, they are sure to get the right settings**

IDL preferences files can be used to launch IDL in different ways for different situations

- Situation: I need to include some user routines for testing purposes
- Approach: save my special case IDL_PATH to a custom preferences file

```
hestia % cat > kitchen_sink
```

```
IDL_PATH : <IDL_DEFAULT>:+/link/idl:+/u/greenf/idl:+/u/hyatt/idl
```

- Use the `-pref=filename` argument to tell IDL to use this custom preferences file

```
hestia % idl -pref=kitchen_sink
```

IDL shows our “kitchen sink” path...

```
IDL> print, !PATH
```

```
/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib/hook:/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib/itools/framework:/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib/itools/components:/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib/itools/ui_widgets:/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib/itools:/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib/wavelet/data:/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib/wavelet/source:/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib/obsolete:/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib/utilities:/usr/local/rsi/idl/lib:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/sdf:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/plot:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/dicom:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/image:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/file_io:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/itools:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/objects:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/signal:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/language:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/widgets:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/project:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/doc/utilities:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/data:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/demo/demoslideshows/slideshowsrc:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/demo/demosrc:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/demo/demodata:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/demo:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/imsl:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/misc:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/HP_TIFF:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/widgets/wexmast:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples/widgets:/usr/local/rsi/idl/examples:/link/idl/4dlib/bin/lib:/link/idl/4dlib/lib/CROSSHAIRS:/link/idl/4dlib/lib:/link/idl/4dlib/COMBOLIB:/link/idl/4dlib/4dutils:/link/idl/4dlib/EFITLIB/kupfer/idl_geqds:/link/idl/4dlib/EFITLIB/kupfer/idl_math:/link/idl/4dlib/EFITLIB:/link/idl/4dlib/KAPLAN:/link/idl/4dlib/BEAMS:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/BES:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/CER:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/ECE:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/MDS:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/MHD:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/MSE:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/SXR:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/BOLO:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/HECE:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/XRAY:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/DOPPLER:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/SPRED:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/THOMSON:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/MDS_TANG:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS/MAGNETICS:/link/idl/4dlib/DIAGS:/link/idl/4dlib/ONETWO:/link/idl/4dlib/UTILITIES:/link/idl/4dlib/MDSPLUS:/link/idl/4dlib/FITTING/W_CH:/link/idl/4dlib/FITTING/PLASMA_ROTATION:/link/idl/4dlib/FITTING:/link/idl/4dlib/PROFILES:/link/idl/4dlib/PTDATALIB:/link/idl/4dlib/EFIT_KINETIC:/link/idl/4dlib/FUNCTIONS/AUXILIARY:/link/idl/4dlib/FUNCTIONS:/link/idl/4dlib/TERPSTRA:/link/idl/4dlib:/link/idl/backup:/link/idl/reviewplus:/link/idl:/u/greenf/idl/rf/fw/from_linliu/fastcd_d3d:/u/greenf/idl/rf/fw/from_linliu/fastcd:/u/greenf/idl/rf/fw:/u/greenf/idl/rf/ech:/u/greenf/idl/gks:/u/greenf/idl/tmp:/u/greenf/idl/SPEC:/u/greenf/idl/demo:/u/greenf/idl/efit:/u/greenf/idl/sips:/u/greenf/idl/wade:/u/greenf/idl/4dutils:/u/greenf/idl/4dfix:/u/greenf/idl/4dlib:/u/greenf/idl/transp_manipulation:/u/greenf/idl/cerquick:/u/greenf/idl/eps96:/u/greenf/idl/utills:/u/greenf/idl/scratch:/u/greenf/idl/thomson:/u/greenf/idl/shot_specific:/u/greenf/idl/coyote:/u/greenf/idl/iaea98:/u/greenf/idl/public/co2:/u/greenf/idl/public/ech:/u/greenf/idl/public/gks:/u/greenf/idl/public/nml:/u/greenf/idl/public/ops:/u/greenf/idl/public/efit:/u/greenf/idl/public/diags:/u/greenf/idl/public/image:/u/greenf/idl/public/paleo:/u/greenf/idl/public/mdsplus:/u/greenf/idl/public/cerfit:/u/greenf/idl/public/jhuapl:/u/greenf/idl/public/onetwo:/u/greenf/idl/public/ptdata:/u/greenf/idl/public/ufiles:/u/greenf/idl/public/transp_plugins:/u/greenf/idl/public/transp:/u/greenf/idl/public/profiles:/u/greenf/idl/public/reviewplus:/u/greenf/idl/public/data_access:/u/greenf/idl/public/cer_idl:/u/greenf/idl/public/plotting:/u/greenf/idl/public:/u/greenf/idl/transp_multi:/u/greenf/idl/transp_utils:/u/greenf/idl/transp:/u/greenf/idl/ufread:/u/greenf/idl:/u/hyatt/idl/bolo:/u/hyatt/idl/fitbeta.0:/u/hyatt/idl/fitbeta:/u/hyatt/idl/shapes/sphere:/u/hyatt/idl
```

The `pref_*` routines are available as an alternative to editing the preferences file

- **These routines are used with preferences:**
 - `pref_get()` to get preferences
 - `pref_set` to set preferences
 - `pref_commit` to commit changes in preferences
- **Less error-prone than editing a text file by hand**