Coming soon: Windows Terminal—finally a tabbed, emoji-capable Windows command-line

Enlarge / Windows Terminal, showing its support for themes and tabs.

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Details are currently scarce, but Microsoft has announced some big changes coming to its command-line interface. In Windows 10, Microsoft has been working to make the Windows command-line experience vastly improved, making it work much more like Unix command-line environments. But a couple of issues are still waiting to be fixed: people want tabs in their command-line, and they want support for emoji.

Coming in June, Windows Terminal will bring both of these. It sounds as if Windows Terminal will be able to replace the existing conhost console (the Windows component that's responsible for drawing command-line windows) with its limited feature set, ensuring that the new features are available to anything and everything that uses the command-line, including the traditional Windows NT cmd.exe but also including PowerShell and the Windows Subsystem for Linux.

Windows Subsystem for Linux is also in line for some big improvements. Also coming in June, Microsoft intends to add

full support for running containerized applications using Docker on WSL. This has been a much-requested piece of compatibility that developers have wanted in WSL.

Microsoft also plans to address a long-standing complaint about WSL: its file system performance is very slow, taking much longer to create, enumerate, and destroy files and folders than a comparable Linux machine. Some of these issues are likely due to the NTFS file system—its performance in these areas has long lagged behind that of Linux file systems—but a big portion of the overhead appears to be WSL itself. The improvements Microsoft is making should at least double the performance of these file system operations.

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