

IEEE Standards Interpretations for IEEE Std 1003.2™-1992 IEEE Standard for Information Technology--Portable Operating System Interfaces (POSIX®)-- Part 2: Shell and Utilities

Copyright © 1996 by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc. 3 Park Avenue New York, New York 10016-5997 USA All Rights Reserved.

Interpretations are issued to explain and clarify the intent of a standard and **do not** constitute an alteration to the original standard. In addition, interpretations are not intended to supply consulting information. Permission is hereby granted to download and print one copy of this document. Individuals seeking permission to reproduce and/or distribute this document in its entirety or portions of this document must contact the IEEE Standards Department for the appropriate license. Use of the information contained in this document is at your own risk.

IEEE Standards Department, Copyrights and Permissions, 445 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, New Jersey 08855-1331, USA

Interpretation Request #99

Topic: set -x **Relevant Clauses:** 3.14.11

POSIX.2 requires that "set -x" will write a trace for each command after the shell expands the command and before it executes it. The following script indicates that execution occurs before the trace is written, as the call to "set +x" is not recorded: set -x VAR1=1 VAR2=2 set +x VAR3=3 This behaviour is different to present Korn Shell, which has historically treated set +x specially; not tracing this. Several tools uses this to do selective tracing. We see that the standard doesn't specify a special case for this, but we know that it will break existing practice if we change this behavior. All other commands are traced before execution. Did the standard really intend to mandate the Bourne Shell behavior over Korn Shell, or was it just an oversight that they did not single out set +x as a special case?

Interpretation Response

The standard clearly states the behavior of set +x, and conforming implementations must conform to this. However, concerns have been raised about this which are being referred to the sponsor.

Rationale for Interpretation

None.